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Editorial

In this edition of Social Orbit, we are honored to present an insightful compilation of articles in the discipline of sociology. Our contributors have explored diverse sociological inquiries that look into various aspects of Kerala society and beyond, employing an interdisciplinary approach to offer profound insights into the complex realities of our world.

Sociological research provides us with a powerful lens through which we can dissect, interpret, and understand the intricate social dynamics that shape our lives. As we go deeper into the realms of human society, we encounter numerous complexities intertwined with elements of culture, power, and identity. Through empirical inquiry, critical analysis, and theoretical exploration, sociologists examine the vast terrain of social reality, challenging existing assumptions, probing paradigms, and charting pathways towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable society.

The focal point of the articles in this issue is the societal landscape of Kerala. Here, the authors address the unique challenges and opportunities that define its socio-cultural milieu. From questioning prevailing development paradigms to advocating for gender-inclusive policies, our authors investigate various social issues, providing thorough analyses and innovative solutions. Whether exploring cultural rituals, scrutinizing violence against women, or interrogating contemporary societal norms, each article reflects the depth and breadth of social science research within the Kerala context.

Furthermore, our contributors not only study pressing social issues but also illuminate the resilience and agency within marginalized communities. Through meticulous research and compelling narratives, they magnify the voices often muted by society, fostering empathy and understanding among our readers.

As we engage with these articles, we are reminded of the potential of social science research to challenge assumptions, inspire change, and foster a more inclusive society. We encourage our readers to critically engage with the ideas presented here, reflect on their own roles within our social fabric, and join us in envisioning pathways towards a brighter future for all.



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Empowering Youth for Sustainable Living: A Critique of the Modern Development Paradigm and Future Direction

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Abstract

Youth are the future leaders and have the potential to drive positive changes for desired social transformation. Being the agents of change, empowering youth for a sustainable future seems to be very significant. The term sustainable development which has become a catchword in recent times emerged in the context of the impending ecological crises during the last decades of the 19th century. However, the concept of sustainable development remains a highly contested term, and delineating the path towards this goal appears to be a challenging task. The present conceptual paper aims to propose future directions for empowering youth for sustainable living, grounded in a critique of the current paradigm of modern development. The paper specifically aims to study the limitations in the concept of sustainable development, to propose the significance of culture of sustainability, and to analyze the necessary nature of change needed to empower youth for sustainable living. The study utilizes Derrida's concept of deconstruction and Habermas's theoretical concepts of legitimation crisis and communicative action as the underlying theoretical framework. The paper envisages the necessity of deconstruction of the modern development paradigm in search of an alternative paradigm rooted in sustainable practices and ways of living. Further, building sustainable societies through rational discourse as suggested by Habermas is also projected in the paper.

Keywords: Modern development paradigm, Sustainable development, Sustainable living, Culture of sustainability, Deconstruction, Legitimation crisis and Communicative action

Youth as the future leaders have to play a key role in desired social transformation. The term Youth connotes energy, enthusiasm, cre-

ativity, vitality, hope, optimism, etc. The unique combination of physical strength and proactive spirit makes the Youth the most dynamic and vibrant segment of the population. The future of humanity and the whole globe lies in the hands of today's youngsters. Youth have the potential to drive positive changes and can provide new energy, creativity, and dynamism to address the countless number of issues that today's world faces. Youth make up 16% of the global population (Hwang & Kim, n.d) whereas youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5% of the population in India (Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014). The formal definitions of the term 'Youth' are based on age criteria. For example, the UN defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24, the period of transition from childhood to adulthood (Hwang & Kim, n.d). National Youth Policy of 2014 in India defines 'youth' as persons in the age group of 15-29 years (Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014). Apart from the age-based definitions of youth, some perspectives define youth in terms of mental attributes. A frequently used expression, such as 'young at heart,' is employed to characterize individuals who retain youthful traits regardless of their age. Young people are the core of our present and the key to determining if there will be a future (Canclini, 2007, as cited in Mouchrek, 2018). Given the leading role of youth as agents of change, empowering youth for a sustainable future seems to be very significant.

Sustainable development has become a widely shared and defining concept in recent decades. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN, as well as the global challenge of climate change, have demanded increased attention to the term. An overview of the historical origins behind the emergence of the concept of sustainable development appears relevant at this juncture. The concept evolved in the context of impending environmental crises resulting from technological advancement and industrial expansion with the emergence of Western modernity over the last 250 years.

Western modernity and the belief in progress are almost synonymous.... During the Enlightenment and its aftermath (1750 – 1900) the idea of progress reached its zenith in the Western civilization.... As the Industrial Revolution was unfolding on the world stage from the 18th century, irrevocably transforming human societies, human progress was also linked to economic growth and material advancement. Donald Worster (1993: 178, 179, 180) describes how industrialization

caused 'the greatest revolution in outlook that has ever taken place' by leading people to think that it is right for them to dominate the natural order and radically transform it into consumer goods.... (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 84).

The unprecedented increase in production, consumption, and wealth for the first time in human history during the Industrial Revolution necessitated unlimited extraction, exploitation, and destruction of the natural environment. With the industrial and commercial expansion and affluence during the 1950s and 60s, widespread environmental catastrophes and terrible damage to nature began to be evident in a frightening manner. The Enlightenment promise of the linear and continuous improvement of the human condition had proved to be a Myth of Progress (Du Pisani, 2006). The awareness about the imminent ecological crisis led to the fear that the economic growth driven by scientific and technological advances might endanger the survival of the human race and the planet. The growing environmental concern began to manifest itself in various intellectual works, such as books and reports, as well as through global summits, movements, organizations, and day observances during the 1970s. Serious thoughts and deliberations for new models of development began to surface. It is in this backdrop of the growing international environmental consciousness during the last decades of the 20th century, the term sustainable development emerged.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report to the UN known as the Brundtland Commission report entitled 'Our Common Future' proposed the desirability of Sustainable development. The report defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).

However, charting out an effective action plan for the realization of sustainable development seems to be a challenging task. The term sustainable development is critiqued on many bases. For example, there are arguments that the definitions of sustainable development are vague and full of contradictions (Qizilbash, 2001; Redclift, 1987, as cited in Foley, Bogue, & Onakuse, 2016). According to (Jabareen, 2008 as cited in Foley, Bogue, & Onakuse, 2016), the literature on sustainable development lacks a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of sustainable development. Thus even though the use of the term has become institutional, its meaning is vague, undefined, and

often contradictory (O’Riorden, 1985, as cited in Fergus & Rowney, 2005) and has become a cliché. (Lele, 1991; Mitcham, 1995, as cited in Fergus & Rowney, 2005).

Accordingly, the concept of sustainable development is a highly contested term, and delineating the path towards this goal appears to be a cul-de-sac. The general objective of this conceptual paper is to propose future directions for empowering youth for sustainable living, grounded in a critique of the current paradigm of modern development. The paper specifically aims to study the limitations in the concept of sustainable development, to propose the significance of culture of sustainability, and to analyze the necessary nature of change needed to empower youth for sustainable living. The study utilizes Derrida’s concept of deconstruction and Habermas’s theoretical concepts of legitimation crisis and communicative action as the underlying theoretical framework.

I. Limitations in the current paradigm of sustainable development

i. Based on the idea of economic growth

One of the major limitations of sustainable development is that it agrees with the ideology of unlimited economic growth which is a project of Western modernity. The Cartesian division of the self from the context (Capra, 1975, as cited in Fergus & Rowney, 2005), and the notions of rational knowledge that came with this philosophical framework, in particular instrumental rationality, were fundamental in the progress of the European Enlightenment and the resulting Industrial Revolution (Fergus & Rowney, 2005). Hence, western modernity which has been founded on the dualistic understanding and the dominance of rational knowledge led to the sovereignty of scientific knowledge. The belief system, world view, and the resultant constructed reality of the modern capitalist paradigm rest on the assumption of the superiority of culture of science to nature. The anthropocentric philosophy emanating from this assumption permits plunder and domination of nature for the ‘survival of the fittest’ (Abraham, 2023). The belief is that ever-advancing technological production and unlimited material progress are the boons of modernity, following a linear progression. Traditional cultures, rooted in different philosophies and perspectives, have often been unfairly labeled as ‘underdeveloped’ within the scale of progress under modernity. Therefore the very concept of Western development has been based on unlimited linear progress in the economy. Economic growth requires increased plunder and ex-

exploitation of nature to expand industrial production. This results in environmental destruction, climate change, depletion of resources, etc. The Brundtland Report also continues to emphasize 'sustainability for the possibility for a new era of economic growth' (WCED 1987, 1). As a result, there is a conceptual and strategic bias towards economic growth (Reid 1995; Reed 1996, as cited in Haque, 2000). Thus the meaning of Sustainable Development has been constructed within an instrumental rational framework. The dogmatic power of the dominant scientific-industrial paradigm, where instrumental rationality and the cognitive framework of neo-classical economics dominated the validity and creation of new knowledge related to sustainable development (Fergus & Rowney, 2005). The observations of Du Pisani (2006) on sustainable development also highlight this view:

Sustainable development was not ideologically neutral, because it was intended as an alternative to the zero growth option and was therefore positively inclined towards the growth and modernization viewpoints.... It has become more or less an ornamental term to give an environmental cast to development over time. In other words, the term sustainable development seems to be a mere compromise between development and conservation rather than calling for a fundamental change in the existing paradigm of modern development.

ii. Agrees with consumption-centered development

As the concept of sustainable development is concerned about the fact that the excessive consumption of the present generation may affect the consumption capacity of the future generation, the belief in the consumption based development is noticeable (Haque, 2000). The modern development promotes economic growth which requires expansive industrialization and tremendous consumption. Both these in turn lead to rapid depletion of resources and environmental pollution. The major critiques of sustainable development were that it did not question the ideology of economic growth did not adequately challenge the consumer culture, and was thus serving neo-liberal interests (Euractiv 2002 as cited in Du Pisani, 2006). The present mode of consumption pattern is not viable for the whole world.

iii. Does not address existing inequality

Even though intergenerational equity is addressed in the concept of sustainable development the existing structures of interclass and international inequalities adversely affecting the environment are little addressed (Haque, 2000). Excessive production and consumption in

advanced industrial societies lead to the exhaustive depletion of environmental resources and exacerbate environmental degradation. For instance, the advanced industrial nations that represent about 22% of the world's population consume, on average, 80% of the world's goods (UNDP 1997 as cited in Haque, 2000). The wide awakening lies in recognizing that the prevailing mode of production and consumption is neither universally sustainable nor generalizable for the entire world. The widening gap and inequality in the consumption pattern between the West and the rest indeed raise the issue of intra generational equity.

II. Significance of culture of sustainability

The present concept of development which is based on Cartesian dualism and instrumental rationality views other indigenous cultures based on traditional beliefs in the satisfaction of basic needs, minimal use of resources, maintenance of the ecosystem, and preservation of nature as backward and underdeveloped (Haque, 2000). The theoretical concept of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida seems to be useful here. The deconstruction of the term 'modern development' can undermine its implicit claims of superiority within hierarchical dualisms such as, developed vs underdeveloped, culture vs nature, modern vs traditional, etc. This facilitates questioning the dominant narratives about modern progress and development. Exposing biases embedded in the concept of development can indeed alter the emphasis from 'sustainable development' to a broader focus on 'sustainability'. Hence instead of sustainable development cultivating a culture of sustainability is crucial.

The term sustainability means 'lastingness' (Du Pisani, 2006) or continuation of anything. The term 'sustainability', is used in ecology to refer to a state or condition that can be maintained over an indefinite period. Sustainability is commonly understood in terms of environmental sustainability. But sustainability is a multidimensional concept that encompasses not only ecological considerations but also economic and social dimensions. Sustainability mainly includes the 'Three Es'? - Economics, Ecology, and (social) Equity (Passerini, 1998). As social sustainability connotes equity, it is being conceived simply in terms of poverty reduction or redistribution of wealth only. Also, it is often understood as a separate dimension without much connection to the other two dimensions of sustainability. Indeed, there are strong social foundations that influence economic and environmental sustainability. According to Du Pisani (2006):

How society responds to environmental issues often has social found-

ations rather than technical foundations, involving social action, institutions, organizations, relationships, culture, motivation, values, meaning, norms, and other social processes; human reactions to nature, science, or sustainability involve natural systems, but they also involve complex normative principles (whether explicit or concealed)..... We need to examine the fundamental assumptions behind the dominant mode of social organization in terms of its implications for sustainability.

However, the major theories and models of development under the conservative-capitalist perspective overlook the socio-cultural roots affecting sustainability. Barbier (1987) defines social sustainability as the ability to maintain desired social values, traditions, institutions, cultures, or other social characteristics (as cited in Lele, 1991). Therefore, the existence of desired values and institutions are fundamental in achieving a sustainable lifestyle. However, such socio-political as well as cultural dimensions have been ignored in the modern development. To achieve social change towards sustainable ways of living, it is essential to promote a culture of sustainability among young people (Mouchrek, 2018). Thus achieving a sustainable lifestyle and fostering a culture of sustainability is crucial in confronting the dilemmas created by modern development. The idea of promoting a culture of sustainability encompasses all the factors of sustainability since culture embodies the meaning people give to their lives, the values they share, and how they express their vision for the future, to be conveyed to future generations (Hawkes 2001, as cited in Mouchrek, 2018). The culture of sustainability and a sustainable way of living are therefore mutually reciprocal and give the promise of a more stable and enduring nature and society.

III. Nature of change needed to empower youth for sustainable living

Youth should be informed and engaged in this process of creating a culture of sustainability. This cultural change necessarily encompasses a radical re-evaluation of the hierarchy of values that give meaning to life and determine society's priorities (Brown 1981, as cited in Mouchrek, 2018). Further, lifestyle changes will need to be accompanied by a new ethical awareness (Unesco 1997 as cited in Mouchrek, 2018). Sustainable ways of living demand a fundamental shift in core values and perspectives. It is especially regarding the new generations that the changes towards healthier, integrated, and sustainable lifestyles are fundamental (Mouchrek, 2018).

However, this transformation is not as easy as the whole world has internalized hegemonic modern values and ways of life. Under the influence of this hegemonic culture, inequality, and social injustices are being legitimized, no longer causing disturbance among the youth. A sustainable world will be more fair, just, and peaceful. Environmental destruction, exclusion, poverty, gender violence, terrorism, etc. are the different dimensions of the same malignant worldview. Hence, to empower youth for a sustainable way of living, they must be aware of the inherent danger in the prevailing culture of modernity. Sustainable ways of living aim to bridge the value-action gap and to develop sustainable competencies (Mouchrek, 2018) and attributes. Sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing key issues underpinning unsustainable development (Foley, Bogue, & Onakuse, 2016). This necessitates a revolution in institutions, systems, lifestyles, and values of modernity. Delineating the socio-cultural attributes that are fundamentally detrimental to holistic sustainability seems to be useful. It is especially important to promote healthier, sustainable, and integrated lifestyles for newer generations.

i Obsession with Consumerism

The Youth of the contemporary world is under the spell of consumerist culture. Consumer culture is unsustainable as it places high value and the purchase of goods and services. It is detrimental to the environment as it leads to environmental consequences such as excessive exploitation of nature, depletion of natural resources, increased production of waste, etc. However, the socio-psychological effects of consumerism are rather under-addressed. The consumer culture becomes deeply ingrained in the values, behaviors, and identities of youngsters. Acquisition and accumulation of goods become the central aspects of one's identity and self-worth under this culture. Materialism becomes the basis of the meaning of life and happiness turns out to be transient. The pioneering Critical thinkers Horkheimer and Adorno explain the deception of the masses by Enlightenment through the Culture Industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/2002). The 'false psychological needs' that are created by the modern media can only be satisfied through the products of capitalism. The manipulation of the mass society into passivity and the simultaneous production of a consumerist culture is one of the major crises of the present society. The post-modern thinker Jean Baudrillard also mentioned the production of a consumer society due to the consumption of simulations and the production of hyperreality through media (Doshi, 2003). The internalization of the hegemonic

consumer culture reduces the youth into passivity and turns their attention away from the ground realities of life. Sustainability will not be achieved without addressing key issues underpinning unsustainable development. Exposing and recognizing the formidable barrier created by consumerism is very crucial in realizing a sustainable way of life.

ii. Legitimation of injustice

Injustice is inherently unsustainable and perpetuates imbalances within society. Injustice, ingrained and legitimized within societal structures, becomes a terrible block in the path toward sustainability. Injustices such as inequality, discrimination, or environmental degradation, disrupt the delicate equilibrium necessary for sustainability. There is a complex interplay between the legitimation of injustices and the perpetuation of unsustainable lifestyles and societal norms. The role of youth in perpetuating or challenging injustices is crucial. However, when youth are unable to identify structural injustices they may perpetuate an unsustainable culture. The prevailing values of consumerism and individualism in modern society often divert attention from structural injustices. Under the spell of desire for personal consumption and individual success, systemic issues are often overlooked. This diversion prohibits the efforts to address the root causes of unsustainability.

A cultural shift toward sustainability demands challenging and reshaping societal values. This requires moving away from the legitimization of injustices towards a culture that values equity, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility. Thus addressing the legitimation of injustices is inexorable for advancing sustainability. A concerted effort to dismantle unjust structures, empower the youth, and foster a cultural shift that prioritizes more social equity is needed for a sustainable future.

iii. Internalization of Ideological Extremism

Internalization of ideological extremism leads individuals to agree with extreme belief systems, with rigid and uncompromising views on political, social, or cultural issues. This socio-cultural attribute is generally viewed to have little consequence on sustainability. However, understanding the intricate relationship between ideological extremism and sustainability is significant in empowering youth for sustainable living. Ideological extremism perpetuates parochial thoughts, narrow world views, rigidity, exclusion, and intolerance with far-reaching consequences upon sustainability. Social polarization, violence, terrorism, and war are being justified under this situation. All these

have severe implications for social equity, stability adaptability, and common ground for the efforts toward sustainability. Extremism and homogeneity are innately unstable and unsustainable. Ideological extremism among youth contributes to social fragmentation by fostering divisions based on identity, ethnicity, religion, or other narrow criteria. Fundamentalism, ethnocentrism, racism, and other manifestations stemming from ideological extremism have been confirmed to result in disastrous consequences for sustainability. The inability of youth to rise above extreme ideologies and propaganda poses a serious threat to the realization of a sustainable future. Developing critical thinking, global awareness, and an appreciation for diversity and heterogeneity enable the youth to develop tolerance and flexibility for transcending these threats. Social organization based on adaptability, inclusivity, and commitment to dialogue are generally more resilient and sustainable.

In the era of dominance of scientific knowledge, looming crises are dealt with through technological solutions. The dilemma of ‘legitimation crisis’ due to the domination of the system over the life world in the modern capitalist society as proposed by Habermas is evident here (Abraham, 2023). The socio-cultural foundations that define human interaction with nature are often considered trivial. Hence, along with desirable norms, values belief systems, etc., appropriate institutional structures that promote socio-cultural processes are also necessary. Based on the framework of Habermas, structural arrangements that promote communicative action for rational discourse and debate seem to be relevant. As the current development model which represents a weak sustainability perspective, has left the existing way of living unquestioned, critical discourses become particularly significant. It has become evident that the present developmental model which is beyond the capacity of nature and is neither generalisable nor sustainable. The idea of a new paradigm emerges in this context...and a more just and sustainable paradigm would continue to see humans as an essential part of nature (Abraham, 2023). Rather than being mere adherents or followers of the hegemonic modern culture, youth should have the determination to create ‘counter-cultures’ that promote sustainable ways of living. An authentic model of sustainable development should make sure that it represents a holistic development perspective beyond economic growth, recognizes multiple cultural traditions and beliefs, transcends consumerism and provides a framework of a more desirable lifestyle, emphasizes structural reforms for internal and international equality, and delineates effective legal and institutional devices for en-

vironmental sustenance (Haque, 2000).

Conclusion

Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of modern development calls for reference to alternative paradigms rooted in sustainable practices and ways of living. Instead of the current anthropocentric perspective, a sustainable society is characterized by a holistic perspective sensitive to the organic connection between various parts of nature. Drawing the wisdom of sustainable indigenous practices that have been rejected by modernity can provide great insights in this regard. However, there is no readymade formula for sustainable ways of living. Habermas's perspective of communicative action indeed offers valuable means in building sustainable societies through rational discourse. Rather than given models and answers, youth may resort to the means of dialogue and critical discourse to reach sustainable ways of living. This will enable them to challenge and question the existing norms and find out innovative practices that can lead to 'counter cultures' for sustainable alternative ways of living. Reaching out the socio-cultural foundations is key to sustainable living. Youth who refrain from committing their intellectual abilities, who can rise above the rigid and parochial ideologies, who envision a world based on the principles of justice, pluralism, and co-existence, who uphold a holistic perspective, who can dream of a revolution in institutions, lifestyles, and values have the potential to create miracles in living a life of sustainability.

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Gaps' and 'Traps' in practices of Women Citizenship : Investigations and Evidences on lived experiences of Women Self Help Group members

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Abstract

The concept of citizenship brings in an intersectionality perspectives to locate political, legal, social, cultural and historical contexts to examine the lived experiences of citizenship. There is a need for complex analyses of differential subjects, sites, acts, responsibilities and answerabilities in relation to gender equitable citizenship. The present research employs the conceptual framework of the 'gaps' and 'traps' of invisible women labour (Lister, 2011) to examine the lived experiences of women members of Self Help Groups in Kerala. The study was carried out among women SHGs sponsored by different organisational framework like Kudumbashree, Janasree, Community based and Non Governmental agencies. The major argument this paper puts forth is need for more studies for documentation of the public interventions of women members in SHGs, thus reinforcing their role in promoting civil activism for practicing citizenship at local levels

Citizenship is a catchword that includes all aspects of origin, existence, and survival strategies adopted by people in a nation-state. The term citizenship is being framed and used by nation-states as a gender-neutral term, associated with its rights, duties, and responsibilities. T.M. Marshall (1950) proposed that Citizenship is constituted of three elements, Political and Social. Civil elements are rights to individual freedom, Political elements as participation in the exercise of political power, and Social elements as the right to share the social heritage and to live the life of civilized beings. The social element of citizenship was to be attained through the active intervention of the state in the form of a welfare state and through the educational system.

Based on the development of ideas around the evolution of citizenship, two dominant strands or traditions of rights and citizenship have been developed: first, *Civic republicanism* characterised by ideas

of common good, public spirit, political participation, and civic virtue; second *Liberal citizenship* with an emphasis on individual rights and private interests (Roy,2005). These aspects of citizenship have been primarily critiqued by Marxists and Feminists. The Marxian criticism is mainly centered around the proposition that more than political emancipation in citizenship, general human emancipation wherein the persons are freed from private property and its associated institutions. Feminist criticism is based on the argument that concepts of citizenship had been inimical to women, either by excluding them or by relegating them to socially useful and dependent roles as mothers or wives.

Feminist Critique of Citizenship

The feminist critique of citizenship is centered around the rigid separation between the public and the private sphere. The Classical Republican notion of citizenship, differentiated between the public sphere *polis*, where men engage in political activities, and the domestic *oikos*, where women engage in productive/reproductive activities. The liberal model of citizenship is based on the division between the public as constituted by the state and the private as different from the state, relegated to the sphere of household. Liberal feminists have raised their concerns on how the private and public are inextricably connected and how much personal problems have a wider significance that can only be solved through political action. The boundaries between ‘the public’ and ‘the private’ were challenged by the feminists by making a call for ‘the personal is political’ to make both spheres more democratic and inclusive.(Pateman,1989,Muller Oiken,1992)

Feminist scholars across the globe have tried to bring in intersectional perspectives to locate political, legal, social, cultural, and historical contexts to examine the lived experiences of citizenship. Feminists have raised reservations about citizenship on two grounds (1) integrating women indirectly as citizen-consorts and (2) incorporating them based on their socially useful and dependent roles as mothers and wives placing them outside the sphere of politics and distancing from opportunities such as education, property, etc, which equips them for political participation (Roy,2005).

Different routes were taken by feminists to overcome their exclusion from the political community(1) One strand of feminists approaches citizenship as an aspect of political activity and looks forward to women’s inclusion as equals in public sphere (2) The second strand questioning the patriarchal state argues for the inclusion of women’s specific functions into the public realm of citizenship by -bringing

private sphere to political and making them both subject to norms of justice and equality and by *maternalist citizenship* which advocates women should value their particular skills and interests. Stressing the superiority of maternal qualities of caring, responsibility, and compassion as the key elements of citizenship, the materialists dissolve the distinction between male/public and female/private facets of life.

Unsettling Public-Private Dichotomy: 'Gaps' and 'Traps' for women

Lister(2011)has identified 'spaces and places' from intimate, local to global arenas to explain how gendered citizenship bridges the public-private divide. The 'Public' side represented citizens who displayed necessary 'male' qualities of impartiality, rationality, independence, and political agency, and the 'Private' side embodied partial, irrational, emotional, and dependent women. Lister highlights the importance of political agency which provides the link between conceptualizations of citizenship as an active participatory practice and as a set of rights that are objects of struggle (Lister, 2011). The idea of 'spaces and places' of citizenship grounds citizenship as a practice and is also useful in thinking about how gendered citizenship practices bridge the public-private divide (Lister,2011). Lister reinforces that the local level provides the most conducive area for the practice of citizenship

The local level composed of women's civil society associations and informal forms of politics has often provided a congenial arena of political citizenship than formal politics or paid work (Lister,2011)

Lister asserts that women's civil society activism as a citizenship practice has become both a 'gap' and a 'trap' when women's unpaid, invisible labour fills the vacuum of the state's withdrawal from public service provision. Lister put forth that while it is important to recognize and value women's civil society activism as a citizenship practice, feminists must beware of the socio-economic gendered division of labour colluded with the political gendered division of labour which has weakened women's claims to citizenship(Lister,2011). She exhorts feminists to be aware of the ways in which women's marginalized citizenship status can be recreated by constructing civic activity as feminine and institutional politics as masculine(Lister, 2011)

Feminist Critique of Microcredit

The United Nations-General Assembly Resolution 52/194 set recommendations for the First United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty(1997-2006) and declared that " microcredit programmes have proved to be an effective tool in freeing people from the mainstream the

bondages of poverty, and have led to their increasing participation in the mainstream economic and political process of society”(UN,1998). Three paradigms have been out by Linda Mayoux(1999) to identify the relationship between microfinance and gender.

Financial self-sustainability paradigm-wherein donor agencies design the micro-credit programmes to use groups to decrease costs of delivery. It is assumed that increasing women’s access to micro-finance services will in itself lead to individual economic empowerment, well-being, and social and political empowerment. The underlying development paradigm is aimed at neoliberal market growth. Gender perspectives of this paradigm claim that women are being targeted for high repayment rates and contribution of women’s economic activity to economic growth.

Poverty alleviation paradigm-The main considerations are poverty reduction among the poorest, increased well-being, and community development. Gender lobbies claim that women are being targeted because of higher levels of female poverty and women’s responsibility for household well-being.

Feminist empowerment paradigm-the underlying paradigm is a structuralist and feminist critique of capitalism from the perspective of the gender impact of microfinance programmes. The basic concerns are gender equality and women’s human rights, micro credit is considered as an entry point to the wider strategy for women’s economic and socio-political empowerment. Effective ways to integrate gender awareness into programmes and for organisation of women and men to challenge gender discrimination through gender advocacy is the underlying assumption of this paradigm.

The studies conducted in many parts of the world place many reservations to this claim and provide evidence on how the participation of women in microcredit has brought almost no changes in the institutions that are oppressive to them. As less challenging the existing social hierarchies of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender(Batliwala & Dhanraj,2004), less provision of safety net for the poor(Kabeer,2005), as increasing debt-liability, increasing tensions and producing new forms of dominance over women and increasing violence(Rahman,1999)

Practicing citizenship at the Local level: The case of Self-Help Groups in Kerala

The combination of top-down state policies and bottom-up social activism has generated remarkable social gains in Kerala. Decentral-

ized participatory planning known as people's planning has created an enabling environment for local self-governance by building a sense network of associational life in Kerala (Heller,,1996). Self Help groups in Kerala are aided and abetted by many organisations - Non-Governmental Organizations, Government organized Non-Governmental Organizations (Kudumbasree), Caste based Organisations (SNDP), and Political parties. The Kudumbashree project, well integrated with local panchayats, has been a strategy of the state to appropriate civic space and to bring it under administrative surveillance capitalizing on the general faith in government institutions (John & Cathukulam,2003)

An analysis of the performance of Kudumbashree SHGs has led Devika & Thampi(2007) within a feminist political agenda to finalize three channels of inquiry. First, whether the money income has enabled SHG members to maneuver and be able to 'bargain with patriarchy'. Second, the crucial link between the SHG members and local self-governments and bureaucracies. Third, how a political action that seeks to appropriate patriarchal power or even to challenge it emerges in fundamental ways can be achieved via SHGs. A decade later, based on research done on Kudumbashree women, Devika(2016) remarks on the state's eagerness to set up women as agents of welfare and that there are three kinds of political authority compete to utilize the services of Kudumbashree women- political parties, the panchayat, and the Kudumbashree Mission.

A comparative analysis of three Self Help Groups promoted by Catholic Dioceses, Caste based and Kudumbashree indicates that among the three, Kudumbashree does not seem to have the mechanism of stronger external control and strict hierarchies embedded in the rigid social institutions of religion or caste. On the contrary, Kudumbashree is least hierarchical and more amenable to individual well-being, all the while remaining largely apolitical(Devika & Nair,2018)

Devika(2016) proposes that as the standard form of organizing women, Kudumbashree women have the potential to form a 'voluntary community' who enjoy an official, public recognition of the agency of women workers in national life', but largely demand full citizenship is still absent. Kudumbashree women can function as a civil-political society, composed of legal entities with which the state can negotiate directly.

The 'Gaps' and 'Traps' in Self Help Group based activism

The present study is an attempt to investigate and to find evidence

on whether the formation of Self Help Group(SHG) and its engagements have been trapping women into both individualised activities and at large enabling their entry into the public domain. The study was conducted using a mixed research design among the members of SHGs promoted by the Self Help Promotion Institutions(SHPIs) namely Kudumbasree, SNDP Microfinance, Janasree Sustainable Mission, and three NGOs from three districts of Kerala. The NGOs that were included in the present study were the Centre for Overall Development (COD) Thamarassery, Ernakulam Social Service Society, Ernakulam, and Neyyatinkara Integral Development Society, promoted by Catholic Dioceses. The SHPIs selected for the study come under the four broad categories of the organizational setting – Governmental, Non-Governmental, Caste, and Political party-based. The research was carried out in 2013-15 in three districts of Kerala, namely Kozhikode, Ernakulam, and Thiruvananthapuram, through multi-stage stratified simple random methods to identify the five SHGs from each of these organisational settings. Responses collected from Self Help Groups members from different organisational settings throw light on how they perceive the membership in SHGs and analyze both benefits as well as disadvantages of involving themselves in SHGs.(Nair, 2015)

Adopting the concept of ‘gaps’ and ‘traps’ of Lister(2011), the present study seeks to analyse how women’s unpaid labour is being utilised by microcredit. Evidence on how women’s engagements are made invisible by entitling most of them as feminine has been probed into. The proxies used for analysis of the invisible and unpaid labour exerted by women in SHGs are, the reasons they assume that would have motivated them to join the SHGs, the factors that led them to participate in all the SHG activities, the reason they assign for the successful functioning of the group and the possible public presence they sought for their groups

Initiative for starting the groups

The respondents enquired about the person or persons who took the initiative to start their group. The responses were very varied and ranged across five options - panchayat members, local leaders, parish priests, animators, and community leaders. The analysis of data shows that most of the respondents have cited the Panchayat members or representatives at the grassroots level as prime motivators for forming groups. Among the respondents from Kudumbasree, about 83.3 percent have cited that it was the Panchayat member that took the initiative to organise them in groups. In the case of the NGO, 86.7 percent

opined that it was the Animators who inspired them to start the group. In the case of the Janasree groups it was mostly the local political leaders who took the initiative in organising them into groups and among the respondents from SNDP microfinance, it was mostly Community leaders. The most important factor that motivated the women to become members of SHGs was mostly external interferences, thus like Lister's assumption the gaps in the local civic activism were identified to be filled in by the SHGs, predominantly women

Reasons for joining SHGs

Becoming economically self-reliant was cited as the reason behind joining the group by 47.1 percent, closely following 42.5 percent have opined that the groups were formed to build a collective feeling. When the responses were analysed based on the membership in a different organisation it was found that a large segment of respondents belonging to Kudumbasree(66.7 percent) and NGO(56.7 percent) thought that it was to become economically self-reliant that they formed into groups. In the case of SNDP Microfinance majority of respondents (68.3 percent) opined that it was for building a collective feeling in the community. Among the respondents from Janasree apart from being economically self-reliant (33.3 percent) and building a community feeling (35 percent) and significant percentage (25 percent) reported that political affiliation was the most important reason for launching the group. On the whole, being economically self-reliant is the prime reason for a large segment of respondents irrespective of organisational differences, to launch the group. The language of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and empowerment through microfinance provides legitimacy for the withdrawal of the state and creates the condition for capitalist expansion(Fernando,2006). The present study adds to this observation, as SHG members internalise the norm of being self-reliant, their resources are tapped for fathering the cause of capitalism and also as a cushion for the state's declining funding for welfare activities.

Unanimous participation in all group activities

The opinion of the respondents on the most important reason for the participation of the members of the group in the group-related activities. Most of the members (38.3 percent) reported that it has become a habit for them; they consider it as a routine activity internalising them as part of daily chores. 21.3 percent consider it as their responsibility and regard their participation in group activities as a duty. Thus the data analysis indicates that the groups formed under different organisational settings have come of age in Kerala, where a significant

percentage consider participation in group activities as part of their habit or even as their moral responsibility. The data collected on this query was further analysed based on the organisational setting they belonged to. The analysis of the data shows that in the case of the largest percent of respondents from NGO it was strict rules that were cited as the reason for the participation of all members in the group. A large percentage of respondents from SNDP cited that participation in group activities has become a habit to them, at the same time 30 percent of respondents have opined that it is due to their community feeling that they participate more in the group-related activities. 40 percent of respondents from Kudumbasree reported that they participate in groups because they assume it is their responsibility. Regarding the respondents from Janasree, 51.7 percent participate in group-related activities as they have grown a habit of participating in group activities. Thus on the whole it can be seen most of the respondents irrespective of the organisational background, most of them considered participation in group-related activities as a habit and to some, it was a responsibility too. Participation in group-related activities has been internalised by most of the members as a normal activity and even as a responsibility.

Reason for successful functioning of SHG

A cooperative mentality was cited as the most important reason for the successful functioning of the group by 57.5 percent. Role of leaders was mentioned by a significant percentage of respondents. The univocally highest percent of the respondents from different organisations reported that it was the cooperative mentality that was the most important reason for the successful functioning of the group. The second most important reason for the successful working of the group varies from organisation to organisation. In the case of NGOs it is the thrift and the saving habits (23.3percent), for the SNDP microfinance it is group prayer (38.3percent), in Kudumbasree it is due to strict adherence to rules, and for the respondents from Janasree it was due to the role played by the leaders. Henceforth the nature of the different groups becomes evident when the data is further probed. Group prayer was considered as a binding force for the successful functioning of the group by a significant percentage of respondents from SNDP microfinance.

Making a presence in public

The pro-activeness of the members of the group in organisation of collective action was analysed to understand whether the group has

interfered in any collective action to seek more access to public services. The respondents were asked about the process that they think has contributed to their increased ability to make a presence in the public domain. The respondents have pointed out many reasons for their increased ability to make a public presence. At the same time, a significant percentage has also mentioned that they have not yet started to make a presence in public life. 22.9 percent mentioned that it was the participation in the community meeting that has led to their increased presence in the public domain. 18.8 percent have mentioned their participation in the protest movements.

The analysis of the data shows that in each organisational setting, the reason most of the respondents presented was different. In the case of NGO the highest percent of respondents (43.3 percent) mentioned that it was the participation in the protest movements that increased their ability to make a presence in the public domain. A majority of respondents from SNDP Microfinance mentioned that it was participation in community meetings that has increased their presence in the public domain. Among the respondents from Kudumbasree, the opinions of the respondents varied. The highest percentage (25 percent) reported that it was the training in the local bodies that provided them the ability to occupy public domain, participation in organisational meetings was also mentioned by a significant percent (23.3 percent), 21.7 percent have also reported that they participate in protest movements which have increased their presence in the public domain. In the case of Janasree the highest percent (38.3 percent) mentioned that they have not yet started to appear in the public domain. Thus a close analysis of the reason perceived by the respondents on how their presence is marked in the public domain provides an understanding of the undercurrents that occur in different organisational settings. In the case of NGO it was participation in protest movements and for SNDP it was participation in community meetings and prayer meetings, Kudumbasree respondents have mentioned some interventions for making their presence in the public domain, and for many of the respondents from Janasree, they have not yet made their presence in the public domain as of yet.

Conclusion

Naila Kabeer (2004) in her elaboration on the concept of 'inclusive citizenship' indicates that capacity to exercise agency at the individual level may be important, but it is the collective struggles of excluded groups that have historically led to social transformation.

‘Everyday makers’ is a term coined by Birte Sam(2000) to refer to mainly women ‘citizens engaged in politics about everyday life problems’. The platform provided by SHGs has enabled collective struggles among women from excluded groups. The empirical analysis of the women members from SHGs functioning under different organisational settings too vindicates this fact. But the trajectories employed by the SHGs also point out that women are filled in the ‘gaps’ and are ‘trapped’ as invisible labour. Participation in the SHGs has become habitual, and members have internalised the group norms, thus the most important reason for the continued successful performance of the SHG is attributed to the cooperative mentality. The reasons SHG members assign for their presence in the public domain indicate, that, it varies based on the organisational setting, at the same time a significant percent of respondents have reported that they had not made any public presence. As civil activism mediated by women-based grassroots-level organisations is considered as a mode for practicing citizenship, more studies are needed on the public interventions of women members of SHGs.

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Ritualization and Theorization of the Ritual AyyappanThiyyattu

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Abstract

Rituals as a tool of cultural management and a strategy for maintaining social control. The concept of three different stages of rituals was put forward by Arnold Van Gennep a Belgian scholar, pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal. But this concept was borrowed by Victor Turner and changed to separation-liminality or transition-incorporation. All these processes of ritualization can apply to AyyappanThiyyattu. The ritualization process allows ThiyyadiNambiar to exist with separate entities and due to that they keep their own identity.

Keywords: AyyappanThiyyattu,ThiyyadiNambiar&Liminality

Introduction

In the historical process, ritual was reinforced as both a central sociological concept and a universal category of social life. Hence ritual is how individual perception and behavior are socially appropriated or conditioned. Victor Turner portrays ritual as the affirmation of communal unity in contrast to the friction constraints and competitiveness of social life and organization. Ritual emerges as the means for a provisional synthesis of some form of the original opposition(Turner,1977:103). Emile Durkheim analyzed ritual as the central but most blurred and unconvincing part of society and religion. Ritual as an integrative mechanism is a synchronic force within the society, rendering it roughly equivalent to what is called culture(-Durkheim,1965:67). Although it is fairly clear that ritual facilitates change.

Ritualization

The term ritualization has some relevant history that needs to be reviewed. Two schools are employing the term ritualization and the first has developed from the work of MaxGluckman(Gluckman,1962:20). He is best known as the founder of the Manchester School of Anthro-

pology. The second is more or less linked to the ethological perspective pioneered by Julian Huxley. Gluckman contrasted the ritualization of social relationships with ritualism to extend the notion of ritual beyond a narrow and somewhat traditional connection with organized religious institutions and formal worship. Sir Julian Huxley explained the term ritualization to indicate adaptive formalization(Huxley,1966:41). As a practical consciousness of the system of power relations and as a framework for action, redemptive hegemony helps to save someone from evil or error, suggests that human practice is characterized by relations of dominance and subjugation. These relations however are present in practice employing the practical values, obligations, and persistent envisioning as both an assumption and an extension of the system of a state of prestige within this ordering of power.

Huxley uses the term ritualization, which has also served to extend the traditional notion of ritual. Through his influence ritualization has been adopted by those who explicitly acknowledge the relevance of the study of ritual as human activity. The term ritualization is commonly and somewhat more simply used to emphasize ritual as an activity. Some others argue against the effectiveness of a delimited category of action called ritual and earlier ritualization is a more or less phenomenon that should be compared to other types of social interactions in terms of texture, not structure.

Murray Edelman defines the notion of ritualization to describe a process to which a conflicted relationship is subjected to facilitate both the escalation and resolution of a struggle that otherwise would destroy the relationship(Edelman,1971:13). Eric Hobsbawm speaks of ritualization to describe the process of inventing traditions in modern societies. Ritualization appreciates how sacred and profane activities have differentiated the performing of them and thus how ritualization gives rise to the sacred as much by its sheer differentiation from the profane(Hobsbawm,1983:4). Ritualization is very much concerned with power. The objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption of the way things are, ritualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations. Hence the relationship of ritualization and social control may be better approached in terms of how ritual activities constitute a specific embodiment and exercise of power. Ritualization can be defined only as a way of acting that makes distinctions like the foregoing ones using culturally and situational relevant categories and nuances. Ritualization will sometimes be used to the point of creating certain impressions, but then stop short of provoking

a controversy about its appropriateness. The deployment of ritualization consciously or unconsciously is the deployment of a particular construction of power relationship, a particular relationship of domination, consent, and resistance. As a strategy of power, ritualization has both positive and effective aspects as well as specific limits to what it can do and how far it can extend (Frits Stall, 1975:16). While it may be an effective way of acting in certain places at certain times under other conditions it may be useless or counterproductive. It is necessary to explore the relationships of power constituted through ritualization and the circumstances in which these relationships are effective or ineffective forms of social interaction.

Theorizing the Ritual *AyyappanThiyyattu*

As a divine ritual, *AyyappanThiyyattu* has some specific meaning and social content. Each *ThiyyadiNambiar* family was attached to a *Sastha* temple or *Ayyappankavus* because Lord *Ayyappa* was the *irkuladaivam*. It was a social obligation for them to perform *AyyappanThiyyattu* in the particular places. As a hereditary right *thiyyadis* perform *Thiyyattu* in Sasta temples, their places of worship. *AyyappanThiyyattu* mainly intended to propagate *ThiyyadiNambiar*s deep-rooted faith in Lord *Ayyappa*. It is only a medium of communication, where the ritual was a sacred center of social organization. Social organization meant the participation of various communities in this ritual. For example, rice husks and tender coconut leaves are the contributions of lower caste people who centered in the neighborhood of *ThiyyadiNambiar*-houses. Another participation in the field of decoration of pandal and *koorayidal* ceremony was by *Ezhava* community. The special attire of *AyyappanThiyyattu* was washed by *Mannancaste*. This interactive participation of all these lower caste people in the ritual indicates the social power-sharing dynamics of *AyyappanThiyyattu*. *ThiyyadiNambiar*s were the permanent staff of the temple with a small regular salary besides paddy and coconut.

Rituals as a tool of cultural management and a strategy for maintaining social control. In this context, Murray Edelman describes ritualization as a means of preserving strained social relations by simultaneously escalating and orchestrating conflict in such a way that it has to be and can be resolved. Victor Turner addressed social and structural conflicts rather than psychological conflict within individuals, their general approach has tended to direct attention to the individual as an entity controlled by the group process. Ritual integrates the social and the individual both externally and internally. Rituals are the central

act of a cultural system generated by different stages of performance. Ritualization is central to culture as the means to dominate nature and the natural violence within human beings. Ritual obscures a very basic issue namely the particular types of social arrangements in which ritual activities are an effective way of defining reality.

Another factor ritual has no intrinsic priority as a social strategy in establishing and maintaining such societies. Rather it works in concert with many other forms of activity and types of attitudes. Hence ritualization is not a single-handed method of social control, it is one of several ways of reproducing and manipulating the basic cultural order of a society as it is experienced embodied in, and reproduced by persons. Ritual is a matter of programmed learning through activities that involve the appreciation of codes principles, concepts, and their reproduction in practice in action (Smith, 1987:11). Ritual has generally been thought to express beliefs in symbolic ways for their continual re-affirmation and inculcation. This relationship is particularly prominent in theories of ritual as a form of social control. More frequently belief systems are understood to be a matter of cultural worldviews.

Victor Turner identified the symbol as the smallest unit of ritual and therefore the smallest mechanism of the transformation and integration effected in ritual (Turner, 1983:107). Ritualization is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations. Rituals have assumed the close association of rites with belief. Ritual forms of solidarity are usefully promoted because they rarely make any interpretation explicit that is they focus on common symbols not on statements of belief. The power structure in the ritual e.g. oracle, the existence of freedom is necessary to the exercise of power or else what might be thought to be power is something much more like the force of necessity. Power must be grasped as quite different from the forces of violence or coercion. Every power relationship implies the potential for struggle or confrontation.

The dynamics of the social body depend in its projection and embodiment of a structured environment. Ritualization in this dimension as we have seen is a process that works below the level of discourse. It produces and objectifies construction of power, which the social agent then re-embodies. The ultimate purpose of ritualization is neither the immediate goals avowed by the community nor the more abstract functions of social solidarity and conflict resolution (Rappaport, 1979:76). It is nothing other than the production of ritualized

agents, persons who have an instinctive knowledge of these schemes embedded in their bodies in their sense of reality and in their understanding of how to act in ways that both maintain and qualify the complex micro-relations of power. Ritualization is not a matter of transmitting shared beliefs instilling a dominant ideology as an internal subjectivity or even providing participants with the concepts to think with(Douglas,1973:99). Ritualized practices require the external consent of participants while simultaneously tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance. Ritual symbols and meanings are too indeterminate and their schemes too flexible to lend.

All these process of ritualization can be applicable to *AyyappanThiyyattu*also. From the historical times onwards man started his life in traditional groups or *gotras*and these traditional groups have different identity. The rituals, customs, rites, etc. to be considered as the important identity factor which given separate entity to each groups. The ritualization process provides *ThiyyadiNambiar* to exist with the separate entity and due to that they keep their own identity. Ritual gave meaning to their community and has a co-operating link with the past and future. *AyyappanThiyyattu*was the family vocation of the eight *Thiyyadi* families which centered in Thrissur district.

In the 19th century ritual denote a universal category of human experience. Religion explains the most emotional factor in life and most scholars stress the primacy of religious ideas born-off pseudo-scientific explanations or emotional experience as the basis of religion. From the viewpoint of Ervin Goffman, the Canadian Sociologist of the 20th century, ritual acts as a sociological interaction. Through the ritual, they communicate different ideas to the community in their surroundings and there is a kind of sociological interaction among the people of that particular locality(Goffman,1970:113)Besides through the ritual they are establishing their supremacy over the other castes. Above all rituals are an important factor that helps to establish individual relations with society. Rituals maintain a harmonious balance in the society. Perform ability of the rituals is accepted by the common people(Tambiah,1979:14). This type of establishing supremacy and sociological interaction can be seen in the case of *AyyappanThiyyattu*. It automatically gave high status and recognition to the *ThiyyadiNambiar* community. In another way, people recognize the unquestioned authority of *ThiyyadiNambiar*. From the initial phase of this ritual, *ThiyyadiNambiar*isin is a stage of liminality or thresholds(Turner,1967:90). It took many years to get separate entities and recognition from the

people and society.

The concept of three different stages of rituals was put forward by Arnold Van Gennep a Belgian scholar, pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal. But this concept was borrowed by Victor Turner and changed as separation-liminality or transition-incorporation. In a real sense, the process of potential change was called liminality, as it involved an in-between state betwixt and between. Victor Turner argued that communities were more dominated by dynamic change processes than they were with static structures, as contemporary structuralists taught. Its thresholds lie between states or statuses, which the individual needs to cross the community and recognize the change. The ritual process describes change as a dynamic process. Structure means the social and power structure. This produces social action and co-operation which Turner calls *communitas* means all the positive aspects of community and togetherness. He used the Latin term *communitas* instead of community to represent an active partnership process rather than to describe a particular community. The partnership which is *communitas* is positive community action. This is in short all members of the community discussing together what is holistically right for everyone and listening to everyone who is affected.

The phase of separation or separation-liminality can apply to the case of *AyyappanThiyyattu* we can see the separation period or a period of spiritual retreat. In this stage, nobody has recognized their entity or existence. Actually, they were in a period of confusion and conflict. This complication led to a period of transition. This confused situation never gave them social status or real identity. With the passage of time, they reached a period of incorporation or aggregation. People recognized their identity and social status with this ritual. Before this, there was a period of liminality for those who stand in the corridor. Liminality can perhaps be described as a futile chaos and a store house of possibilities. The concept of liminality views the performance as a conduit of meaning which changes something within both devotees and performers.

When the *ThiyyadiNambiar* performs as an oracle in the ritual *Ayyappan Thiyyattu*, then he has transformed himself into a divine being. This is the particular moment that gives respect and social status to the *ThiyyadiNambiar*. This divine character has given a separate identity and a spiritual power to the performer and he can make prophetic utterances and also can invoke the divine blessings. The process of ritualization in the ritual *AyyappanThiyyattu* is completed only with

this act. The *ThiyyadiNambiar* performs the role of oracle in the ritual *Thiyyattu*, his being had been elevated as a god or god-like figure. At that time everybody respected him and sought his blessings as god. Through this oracle, the identity of the *ThiyyadiNambiar* developed as a complete or perfect divine being. The whole community of that locality accepted the indomitable position of the *ThiyyadiNambiar* through this ritualization. Spirituality and the divine power of the community have increased through this ritual.

From the ideas of Catherine Bell everything including religion, society, and culture will be explained through ritual. Ritual is an inevitable part in the life of mankind (Bell, 1992:212). In the relationship of myth and rites ritual was used to explain the social existence and influence of religious ideas. In the historical process, ritual was reinforced as both as a central sociological concept and a universal category of social life. Hence ritual is the means by which individual perception and behavior are socially appropriated or conditioned. The simplest ritual activities are seen to fuse a people's conception of order and their dispositions for action. Ritual activity can then become meaningful to the theorist. Thus a cultural focus on ritual activity renders the rite a veritable window on the most important process of cultural life.

Ritual as an integrative mechanism is a synchronic force within the society, rendering it roughly equivalent to what he considers culture. Although it is fairly clear that ritual facilitates change, we logically kept from such a conclusion by the description of the rites. Ritual comes to be seen as performance in the sense of a symbolic act specifically meant to have an impact on an audience and entreat their interpretative appropriation. Cultural knowledge constituted through the study of ritual and performance appears to experiment with a new sense of community between theorists and performers, characterized by modest mutual dependence and shared problems of meaning epistemology and critical self-reflection.

Maurice Bloch interpreted ritual from a Marxist perspective. Rituals are an important and effective means of social control in only certain types of societies. Such societies must have a marked hierarchical structure of differentiated positions as well as a strong sense of corporate identity both evidenced in an assumption that interpersonal relations should be subordinated to the ordering of roles or positions. Ritual obscures a very basic issue namely the particular types of social arrangements in which ritual activities are an effective way of defining reality.

Ritual is a matter of programmed learning through activities that involve the appreciation of codes principles, and concepts and their reproduction in practices in action. Ritual has generally been thought to express beliefs in symbolic ways for the purposes of their continual re-affirmation and inculcation. The relationship is particularly prominent in theories of ritual as a form of social control. More frequently belief systems are understood to be a matter of cultural worldviews. Ritualization is first and foremost strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations. Every power relationship implies the potential for struggle or confrontation.

James Frazer has elaborated on the concept of ritual and spirituality theory. In every case, the ritual appears to be explained simply and naturally by the supposition that the performers believe themselves to be freed from certain evils actual or threatened through the beneficent agency of fire which either burns up and destroys the noxious things or all events repels and keep them at bay (Frazer, 1894:410). On the other hand, there is much to be said for the view that the fire walk is a form of purification, the flames being thought either to burn up or repel the powers of evil. The fire walking and whirling of *thiri* or torch in the last stage of the *AyyappanThiyyattu* is a clear indication of warding off diseases and give solace to their family problems. Actually, *Thiyyattu* has performed as an offering to lord *Ayyappa*, with the Customs of stepping over fire for the purpose of getting rid of a ghost. The custom of passing images of gods through the fire may be simply a form of purification. The fertility of the land is supposed to depend on this ritual performance.

Thus it shows that almost all rituals came into existence from the earliest times of human settlement or at some point in social evolution. They performed these rituals to the village gods and goddesses for their protection, for begetting children, warding off evils, getting rid of epidemics, and for successful culmination of individual and social desires. In the case of particular ritual, or popular rituals have many social functions in the society. Participation of all sections of the society in these rituals sowed the seeds of communal harmony and mutual co-operation among the people. Actually, the rituals are part and parcel of their life; it gave meaning to their life. It provided solutions to the social, political, economic, and cultural problems of these people. In a sense, the performance of each ritual give solace to their material problems, and above all, this deep rooted and firm

belief in rituals gave an emotional satisfaction and mental caliber to face daily problems. All rituals are visual extravaganza, and above all a meeting ground where high and low, rich and poor, performers and art lovers of all castes and demarcations gather to celebrate in a very special manner a mega festival of far-reaching religious, social, and environmental consequence while embracing much of the lands cultural lore and exceptional art. Most of the rituals of Kerala are virtually vanishing. Their existence is greatly threatened by the process of modernization and commercialization of life in the contemporary age and the accompanying changes in social and economic structure. In this context, it is not easy to find an effective way of preserving our rituals. The problem is more acute in the case of rituals because preserving them also means preserving the belief that gave birth to them. To preserve the old beliefs would perhaps be an unscientific and obscurantist approach. The total eradication of smallpox-like diseases has made it impossible to revive the rituals. Similarly, the rural life of Kerala was sustained by agriculture and rituals thrived under the feudal structure prevalent at that time.

The same problem is everywhere in the case of almost all rituals. On the one hand,, efforts are being made to bring all rituals in the mainstream of the society. The other, we cry ourselves hoarse about the need to present the traditional rituals. As they get modernized, the uniqueness of their life is lost. This process takes its toll on their rituals by creating a kind of composite culture. However, there appears to be no consensus regarding the mode of preservation of rituals. Some expect them to change with times whereas others want them to be kept in their pristine form. There are still others who demand that such outdated rituals should be discarded totally. Theoretical synchronization is applied in the Ritual *AyyappanThiyyattu*. There are too many theories regarding the ritual practice, this ritualization provides a kind of social entity to *AyyappanThiyyattu*.

Conclusion

It would be a futile attempt or exercise to either preserve rituals in their original form or to improve upon them. Rituals are inseparably united so it would not be feasible to remove the ritual component and preserve the art form alone. Many scholars felt that once a ritual takes shape, it will pass on from one generation to the next. Superficial changes that overcome society cannot remove deep-rooted beliefs and the rituals that protect them. Time instead will decide their fate. Neither blind acceptance of the village rejection of tradition is desirable. Only

if tradition is understood thoroughly, can the good elements be preserved and the bad discarded. What we need is not a complete revival but collection, documentation and objective analysis of rituals leading to dissemination of knowledge about them. They should be studied with scientific insight and in relation to modern trends. Further, monographs on extinct and extant rituals should be prepared they should be recorded in audio and video and preserved in archives as well as museums. When we go through all the important theories related to rituals, it shows that rituals play an important role in the life of human beings and it is difficult to surpass that.

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Violence against Women in Kerala: Trends, Intersections and Lived Experiences

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Abstract

Violence against women, a pervasive issue with global impact, encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and economic manifestations, affecting millions of women worldwide. Violence against women cannot be treated as something that exists in the same manner for everybody. There are layers to it that overlap and intersect, and this is precisely what the intersectional perspective, coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It seeks to explain, highlighting the 'multidimensionality' of marginalized subjects' lived experiences. This study seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of violence against women by examining how various social categories intersect and shape individuals' experiences as survivors of gender-based violence. Employing a case study method, the study utilised in-depth interviews and secondary data (NCRB Report, 2021) to comprehend the latest trends in the issue. This study found that the persistent vulnerability of women to various forms of violence within society evidently exists. To effectively address this issue, it advocates for a humanizing approach that recognizes the unique experiences and needs of women affected by violence. The paper highlights the necessity of shifting the narrative surrounding violence against women, emphasizing the importance of understanding their experiences within the broader societal context.

Key Words: Gender, Gender Violence, Intersectionality, Lived experiences, Social Categories

Introduction

In today's world, violence against women continues to be a pervasive issue that affects the lives of countless individuals. This deeply rooted problem transcends borders, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds, persisting as a violation of human rights and a barrier to achieving gender equality. However, it is crucial to recognize that the experiences of violence against women are not homogeneous. The complexity of these experiences necessitates an intersectional lens to

understand the unique challenges faced by women who are marginalized due to multiple aspects of their identity, such as caste, religion, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, and more. Intersectionality recognizes that multiple forms of discrimination and oppression can intersect to shape a person's experiences and vulnerabilities. For instance, a woman's race or ethnicity can intersect with gender-based violence, leading to specific forms of discrimination and unique challenges in seeking help and justice. Similarly, factors such as socio-economic status, age, immigration status, or disability can compound the vulnerabilities and barriers faced by women in violent situations. The paper highlights the necessity of bringing the marginalized narratives within the broader discourse on violence against women.

Conceptual Framework

Intersectionality recognizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously and that these forms of oppression are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. It is a concept and analytical tool that highlights how different forms of social inequality, oppression, and discrimination interact and overlap in complex ways (Bosch & Booysen 2021). It provides a framework for understanding how different dimensions of identity intersect and contribute to experiences of discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw 1991). Collin's (1990) insight highlights the inadequacy of reducing oppression to a single fundamental type. He argued for addressing the broader narrative that emphasizes the interconnected nature of oppression and injustice. Hulko (2009) emphasizes that intersectionality and interlocking oppression are time and context-contingent, rather than fixed and ahistorical. Young (2020) discusses how an intersectional lens can expose hidden inequities in health systems, demonstrating how overlapping social stratifiers can result in mutually enforced vulnerabilities. Luiz (2022) explores the fluidity of oppression in the workplace, particularly in the context of race, gender, and sexuality, and how historical modes of oppression manifest in institutional and organizational practices. Rice (2019) discusses the challenges and debates surrounding the translation of intersectionality into research methods, emphasizing the need for ethical principles in conducting intersectional research.

Coming to the history of sociology as a discipline, the idea of intersectionality complements the sociological imagination (Mills 1960). He suggested recognizing that the complexity of society, the historical construction of inequalities, and people's biographies are intricately intertwined (Adele et al 2007). Mills introduced sociological imagin-

ation as a way of connecting personal troubles to larger social issues. Misztal (2016) argues for the value of literary insight in sociological analysis, suggesting that literature can invigorate sociological imagination. McCoy (2012) emphasizes the importance of cultivating sociological imagination in students to better understand contemporary events and social problems. All these works emphasize that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and that multiple forms of oppression intersect and work together to produce injustice.

Concerning violence against women, there are several studies that explore the pervasive issues of violence, its human rights implications, societal causes, and the crucial role of intersectional framework in understanding the issue. Violence against women and girls is widely recognized as a violation of human rights, causing significant social and economic costs (Michau et al., 2015). UN Women (2020) emphasizes that women and girls, especially those facing additional challenges like low income, age, race, location, migration status, disability, and health issues, bear disproportionate impacts of violence. Ravneet & Suneela (2008) argue that domestic violence is a global problem, spanning national borders and affecting various socio-economic, cultural, racial, and class distinctions. George (2023) critically analyzes the intersectionality principle to describe the different layers of marginalization of women in India within the patriarchal, caste-based, and feudal societal framework.

When analysing the violence against women in Kerala it is evident that it is on an increasing level. Varghese (2021) highlights the rising number of crimes against women in Kerala over the years. Mundodan (2021) and Raheela (2020) discussed on domestic violence in different parts of Kerala. Sudan (2018) emphasizes that violence against women is understood as one of the most significant, yet little-acknowledged areas that takes a lead role in the marginalization of women in the developmental process. This evidence supports the notion that violence against women and girls in Kerala is a concerning issue that requires attention and intervention. Multiple interconnected institutions, social norms, and cultural factors have contributed to the vulnerability of women to such violence.

Methodology

I begin with quantitative data to demonstrate the trends in violence against women in Kerala. I do it by looking into the latest reports of the National Crime Record Bureau (2022). Here, I put numbers in comparative terms between county-wide cases for India in general and

that of Kerala in particular. Looking at these numbers the reader can obtain a broader perspective on the nature and prevalence of violence against women in society. Then I move to qualitative aspects to delve into those aspects that the numbers cannot simply convey in numerical terms. For this, this study brings four specific cases in detail. These cases likely represent different contexts, circumstances, and forms of violence against women, providing a diverse range of insights.

Analyzing Trends

Violence against women, a pervasive issue with global impact encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and economic manifestations, affecting millions of women worldwide. For analyzing the trends, the researcher used the report of the National Crime Records Bureau published in 2022. The NCRB report provides statistical data and trends related to crimes against women, including information on the types of crimes, their prevalence, and the regions most affected. It offers insights into the magnitude and nature of violence, helping identify patterns and areas that require attention and intervention.

Table No.1: Total crimes registered and crimes registered against women

Year	Total crimes registered	Total crimes registered against women in India	Total crimes registered against women in Kerala
2021	60, 96, 310	428278	13539
2020	66,01,285	371503	10139
2019	5156158	405326	11462
2018	5074634	378236	10461
2017	5007044	359849	11057
2016	4831515	338954	10034

Source: National Crime Records Bureau, data form 2016-2021

The data from 2016 to 2021 in the Indian context reveals notable trends in total crimes registered and crimes against women. Over the years, the total crimes exhibit a fluctuating pattern, with a marked decrease in 2021 compared to 2020. However, crimes against women show a consistent upward trajectory, reaching their highest at 428,278 in 2021. The year-on-year analysis underscores specific shifts: in 2021, while total crimes decreased by approximately 5.4%, crimes against women increased by about 15%. This pattern contrasts with the increase in total crimes from 2019 to 2020, suggesting a need for focused attention on crimes against women. The persistent rise in crimes against women, even during periods of overall crime reduction, signals a concerning trend that necessitates comprehensive strategies. Addressing

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these challenges requires not only law enforcement measures but also enhanced social awareness, victim support systems, and targeted interventions to ensure the safety and well-being of women in the country.

In the specific context of Kerala, the data spanning from 2016 to 2021 reveals trends in crimes registered against women. Notably, there has been a gradual increase in such crimes over the years. In 2021, the reported crimes against women reached 13,539, marking a noticeable rise compared to the preceding year, 2020, which had 10,139 reported cases. The year 2019 recorded 11,462 cases, indicating a continual upward trend. While 2018 reported 10,461 cases, 2017 witnessed 11,057 cases, and in 2016, there were 10,034 reported crimes against women. This ascending pattern suggests an increasing prevalence of crimes against women in Kerala, warranting attention and strategic interventions to address the root causes and enhance the safety of women in the state. The data highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach involving law enforcement, community awareness, and support systems to effectively curb and prevent crimes against women in the Kerala region.

Coming to the nature of crime faced by women encompasses a wide range of offenses that specifically target or disproportionately affect women. These crimes reflect the unequal power dynamics, societal norms, and gender-based discrimination that women encounter in various contexts. From physical violence and sexual assault to psychological abuse and economic exploitation, the nature of crime against women highlights the persistent challenges they face in achieving safety, equality, and justice.

Table No.2: Nature of Crime registered against women

Nature of Crimes	Number of Crimes Registered in India	Number of Crimes Registered in Kerala
Rape murder	284	2
Dowry Deaths	6753	9
Abetment to Suicide of Women	5292	25
Miscarriage	196	1
Acid Attack	102	1
Attempt to Acid Attack	48	3
Cruelty by Husband or his relatives	136234	4997
Kidnapping & Abduction of Women	75369	179
Human Trafficking	914	60
Selling of Minor Girls	12	0
Buying of Minor Girls	2	0
Rape	31677	771
Attempt to Commit Rape	3800	61
Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	89200	4059
Insult to the Modesty of Women	7788	504
Total SLL Crimes against Women	70607	2867
Total	4,28,278	13539

Source: National Crime Records Bureau, data from 2016-2021

The comparative data on crimes against women in both the Indian and Kerala contexts depicts the complex and varied challenges faced by women in different regions. The table presents a range of crimes

committed against women, including rape, murder, dowry deaths, abetment to suicide, miscarriage, acid attacks, cruelty by husbands or relatives, kidnapping and abduction, human trafficking, assault, and insult to modesty. This diverse range of crimes reflects the various forms of violence and abuse that women experience in society. The table indicates a significant number of crimes registered against women across different categories. Notable crimes with higher numbers include cruelty by husband or relatives (136,234), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (89,200), rape (31,677), and kidnapping and abduction of women (75,369). These numbers highlight the alarming frequency of violence against women. Certain crimes, such as rape, murder, dowry deaths, abetment to suicide, and acid attacks, are particularly severe and have a profound impact on the well-being and safety of women. These crimes require urgent attention and effective measures for prevention, investigation, and punishment. The table also reveals social challenges faced by women, including human trafficking, selling and buying of minor girls, and insults to the modesty of women. These crimes reflect underlying issues related to gender inequality, exploitation, and social norms that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women. The total number of crimes registered against women (4,28,278) indicates the magnitude of the problem and the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address violence against women.

In Kerala, while the total number of crimes against women is 13,539 cases, still faces concerning issues such as cruelty by husbands or relatives (4,997 cases) and assault on women with the intent to outrage her modesty (4,059 cases). The total number of crimes registered against women indicates the magnitude of the problem and the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address violence against women. It is essential to provide support services, improve reporting mechanisms, enhance legal protections, and promote awareness to combat these crimes effectively. It is important to note that the table presents data on registered crimes, and the actual prevalence of violence against women may be higher due to underreporting and other factors. Below, I am moving to discuss the qualitative aspects of field which I draw from four cases. Here, I focus on those aspects that quantitative data presented above are not capable of unpacking in its own terms in number.

Case studies and their implications

Case 1

The victim, in this case, hails from a rural family, which is edu-

cationally backward and economically weak. She was tragically subjected to sexual abuse from her neighbor. The abuse resulted in the birth of a child, compounding her challenges and leaving her without a voice in her orthodox family. Someone in her family took the initiative to keep her child safe and protect their identity by keeping it a secret. The unknown identity of the perpetrator further compounded her struggles, as her account remained disbelieved, leaving the perpetrator left safe. Reflecting on her experiences, the woman expressed deep regret over her limited education, believing that a better education might have prevented the tragedy she endured. As a divorcee, despite the hardships she faced, she remains determined to break the cycle of hardship for her child girl child. Recognizing the transformative power of education, she aspires to secure a proper education for her daughter, hoping to equip her with the tools needed to overcome adversity and build a brighter future. In this case her the overlapping identities such as woman from lower class, residing in rural area, amplifies her sufferings. In this particular case, the intersectionality of educational and economic backwardness further accelerated the disadvantages that she faced.

Case 2

In this particular case, a physically challenged girl, barely 15 years old when she faced the hardships, experienced sexual exploitation by her neighbor, resulting in a pregnancy. Shockingly, her parents only discovered the abuse after she became pregnant. Following intense conflicts between the families, the boy, out of obligation, married her. However, he never fulfilled his responsibilities as a husband and soon abandoned her by leaving their native village. Tragically, she lost the child due to a premature delivery. She is still alive with her old parents and her parents are deeply worried over their daughter's future. It is understandable that the multiple burdens and marginalized identities can be overwhelming for individuals and their parents to navigate the complex challenges. Here this woman experienced intersectional oppression, where the challenges associated with her gender, disability, and potentially other factors such as socio-economic status compound, creating a more complex web of disadvantages. Women with physical and mental challenges are more vulnerable to abuse due to physical limitations or cognitive impairments, making it difficult for them to defend themselves or seek help.

Case 3

Her father had abandoned the family, and her mother had entered

into a new relationship, resulting in a complex and challenging home environment. She endured mental and physical harassment from her own family, which led her to feel immense frustration and desperation. In an attempt to escape her difficulties, she made the decision to leave her home. However, she found herself without any viable solutions or support networks to rely on. Feeling hopeless, she contemplated suicide and stood in front of a heavy vehicle. Thankfully, a truck driver noticed her distress and intervened, rescuing her and offering her a place to stay in his home. Unfortunately, her relief was short-lived, as the truck driver soon attempted to sexually harass her. Recognizing the danger, she managed to escape from that situation and sought asylum with the assistance of her friends. It was with their support that she found refuge and security. Later on, she became involved with an organization that specifically catered to the needs and rights of individuals who are blind, joining their cause. Through her affiliation with this organization, she took a significant step forward toward pursuing her education and personal growth. A woman with a disability encounters distinct forms of discrimination that arise from both her gender and disability. The experiences of disability cannot be fully grasped without considering the broader social contexts in which individuals live and navigate multiple aspects of their identity.

Case-4

Born into a financially disadvantaged family, lacking access to education beyond primary school, and burdened with societal pressures, this woman in my case study faced numerous challenges. Forced to work alongside her mother at a young age, she yearned for a chance to continue her education. However, dire economic circumstances thwarted her dreams, compelling her to make difficult choices that would shape her future. Her life took a more complex turn when she married a man significantly older than her. Devoid of a stable home and facing continuous pressure from her husband for additional dowry, she also battled with insecurities surrounding her dark-skinned body. Trapped in her circumstances due to limited support from her paternal family and lacking employable skills, she found herself at a crossroads. The situation escalated to a critical point when her husband threatened her life. However, through a conciliation process, the tensions subsided, allowing her to regain some semblance of control over her life. Although she endured immense mental and emotional strain, she made the courageous decision to prioritize her children's well-being and safety. Driven by her love for her children and the desire for a better

future, she sought avenues to uplift her family's socioeconomic status. Despite limited options, she managed to secure employment as a domestic worker in her neighborhood, balancing her responsibilities as a mother and provider. This newfound stability became a stepping stone towards self-sufficiency and independence.

Conclusion

The existence of a diverse range of violence in society can be examined from multiple perspectives, providing insights into the different manifestations of violence and abuse that women encounter. Studying violence against women from a sociological perspective is imperative as it reveals the complex web of structural inequalities, power dynamics, and cultural norms that contribute to its prevalence. Sociologists seek into the roots of violence by examining how gender roles and economic disparities create systemic injustices, and they analyze power imbalances within relationships and society that sustain such violence. The exploration of cultural norms and values is paramount, revealing how societal expectations and beliefs about gender roles shape attitudes and responses to violence against women. Sociologists also scrutinize institutional responses, evaluating the effectiveness of legal systems, law enforcement, and healthcare in providing support and justice to victims. The reported crimes against women (NCRB,2022) not only exemplify the immediate acts of harm but also reveal deeper societal issues pertaining to gender inequality, exploitation, and the perpetuation of violence and discrimination against women. The convergence of multiple marginalized identities among women further exacerbates their suffering. In order to effectively address the violence faced by women and girls, it is imperative to comprehend the interconnected nature of inequalities and oppression they encounter. Taking a humanizing approach becomes pivotal in recognizing and acknowledging the unique experiences and specific needs of women who have been affected by violence.

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Conceptualising and Theorising Contemporary “Society”. Paradigms and Perspectives

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Ever since the emergence of social sciences, there have been serious attempts from many prominent scholars to define, conceive, conceptualise, perceive, perpetuate, and even theorise the social dimensions of human beings and natural entities. These efforts gradually gave birth to new branches of knowledge like Sociology, Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Ecology, etc. Scientific spirit and academic rigor have an innate tendency to define everything, even abstract entities like human ‘collectivities’, collective consciousness, institutions, and interaction patterns. Different scholars held varied and sometimes contradictory views on these aspects, thus making academia a contested territory of ideas. This paper looks into the emerging conceptualisations of human collectivities with an effort to lay bare the inherent complexities of those forms of knowledge. What is the best way to refer to the pivotal nature of the contemporary social situation?, what are the justifiable choices? these striking questions echoing in academia are the major concerns of this paper.

In contrary to natural science where quantitatively definable conceptualisations constitute the foundations of academic knowledge, social sciences always find an alternative way to define (if there is no absolute definiteness) various things, processes, forms and functions by taking into account of the necessary and sufficient conditions to conceptualise those entities. But in practice, we can see that these conditions vary with space and time and therefore it is meaningless and illogical to “define” social entities as natural sciences do. In social sciences, such an effort will always be reductionistic as it curtails the latent dimensions which are generally expressed as qualitative dimensions. Therefore, the so-called “definitions” in social sciences are more or less semantic expressions or reference terms carrying few manifestable characteristics. For example, the concept of “society” only implies a mental construct having few necessary and sufficient conditions such as a “collectivity”, having some sort of structural or functional con-

nectivity and a common identity in terms of any objective criteria like people belonging to a specific territory, place, etc. Ever since the emergence of Sociology as an academic discipline, thinkers like Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, etc tried their best to define Sociology without referring the term society. For example, Comte defined Sociology as the scientific study of “social phenomena” but for Weber it is the study of “social action”. Durkheim defined Sociology as the study of “social facts” which he conceptualised as a collective way of thinking, feeling, and acting. It is with the emergence of the structural-functional perspective proposed by Talcott Parsons that the concept of Society became the major concern of Sociology. Thereafter, Sociology is broadly referred to as the scientific study of “society”. That is, when the major concern of a discipline itself is ill-defined, it affects the consistency and rigour of theoretical perspectives also. It is evident in the case of Sociology as most of its major theoretical perspectives fail to develop a coherent view of the concept of society. Later, when the post-structuralist and post-modernist perspectives dominated the theoretical realm in Sociology academia, most of the constituent characteristics of the concept of society were questioned. Therefore, now even though sociological theories extensively deal with societal aspects, there are deliberate efforts to give up the concept of society. Therefore, it will be interesting to look into the various ways by which the present-day social situation is interpreted by various social scientists.

Among the various sociologists, it was Henri Lefebvre who put forward a new conceptualisation of social spaces which was more dynamic than the equilibrium model of the social system. Later, many thinkers like Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, etc., tried to theorise the innate capacity of social spaces to reproduce in accordance with the power interventions. Even though these theoretical perspectives were more insightful, in-depth, and intricate, it was found to be under-utilised especially in the research arena as a theoretical framework. The reason for this scenario was primarily due to its complexity in dealing with qualitative dimensions of human affairs that are close to individualistic and behaviouristic aspects. For example, the concept of habitus proposed by Pierre Bourdieu is an interesting tool to deal with the micro-macro linkage of societal affairs. At the same time, in a research endeavour it is hard to use it as a part of a theoretical framework because of its abstractness and subjective dispositions. In short, we can say that even though there are numerous theoretical perspect-

ives in Sociology, only a few are used as a constituent part of research frameworks. Same is the case when academicians try to conceptualise the present-day social situation. There are plenty of new concepts like hyper reality, information society, risk society, heterotopia, liquid modernity, late capitalism, post-fordism, etc.

Among the above concepts Bauman's liquid modernity, Giddens' late modernity and Baudrillard's hyperreality are seemingly more close to the present scenario. By coining the term "liquid modernity", Bauman tries to encapsulate in a nutshell the characteristics of today's highly globalized and consumer societies. Boundaries have become fluid and we live in an age of uncertainty as in a globalized world grappling with contested and fragmented identities. Liquid modernity is a continuum of modernity or in other words, one can say that liquid modernity is a developed version of modernity. Individuals are provided with multiple choices and freedom to choose in a consumer society, but this freedom of choice also creates a chaotic situation whereby an individual can move from one social position to another in a fluid manner. This freedom of mobility creates a hierarchy where the affluent majority are benefited while the poor and marginalized are sidelined. Bauman provides us with a theoretical perspective of the condition of future of our society by coining the term liquid modernity, and engages with the dynamics of changing social relationships and loosening bonds between people (Bauman 2000).

Giddens has described the modern world as a juggernaut. It is the advanced stage of modernity. Because of its advanced stage, he calls it late modernity. Modernity is like a powerful machine. If it is not controlled meaningfully, it can be highly harmful to society. But, if taken up cautiously, it can be beneficial also. Juggernaut is a runaway engine of enormous power which collectively as human beings, we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of control and which could tend itself asunder. The juggernaut crushes those who resist it and while it sometimes seems to have a steady path, there are times when it veers away erratically in directions we cannot foresee. The uncertainties in explaining the direction of societal change is evident in the conceptualisation of modernity as juggernaut. Ulrich Beck opines that we are no longer in the era of industrial society, but moving towards "risk society". The risk society is a form of modern society or part of reflexive modernization. Giddens views modernity in terms of security versus danger and trust versus risk. He considers modernity as a double-edged phenomenon. Although modernity has

created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy, at the same time it has a somber side.

For Baudrillard, postmodern societies are characterized by dedifferentiation, the “collapse” of (the power of) distinctions, or *implosion*. In his society of simulation, the realms of economics, politics, culture, sexuality, and the social all implode into each other. In this implosive mix, economics is fundamentally shaped by culture, politics, and other spheres, while art, once a sphere of potential difference and opposition, is absorbed into the economic and political, while sexuality is everywhere. In this situation, differences between individuals and groups implode in a rapidly mutating or changing dissolution of the social and the previous boundaries and structures upon which social theory had once focused. This conceptualisation negates the notion of stable structures and objective “realities” and thus inevitably envisages a social condition heavily manipulated by media and communication.

The Coming of Post-Industrial Society by Daniel Bell was another significant effort to describe the impact of advanced technologies in regulating societal affairs. This work constitutes an attempt to describe a newly emerging social reality which while not determining political and cultural life (a point which Bell stresses but which is often implicitly ignored by others, including political scientists who have taken over his ideas) does at least strongly condition them. Its focus is on the changing nature of work and work relationships, on the increasing role of scientists and technicians in the social order, and on the allegedly central role increasingly played by theoretical knowledge in social change and the making of societal decisions, a role epitomized by the rise of social and economic planning as a tool of public policy. All these changes taken together—and the book is replete with empirical and statistical data (some of dubious cogency) attempting to illustrate them—constitute what Bell denominates the emergence of a new society that he calls post-industrial. The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism is a series of loosely related essays that seek primarily to defend post-industrial society—based as it is on rationalism and technical efficiency—against what Bell sees as a growing menace from irrational and hedonistic forces spawned by the very successes of advanced capitalism in creating affluence and opportunities for individual self-expression.

Most of these conceptualisations remain as reference terms without contributing much to the production of theories. It is mainly because of the inherent nature of present societies to deconstruct all

the institutional configurations through which these concepts are developed. For example, the term “post-truth” is still used as jargon since there is no precise definition for truth. In other words, we can say that the present social situation cannot be interpreted or intervened with the limited theoretical vocabulary hitherto developed in formal academia.

Towards a Hybrid Society?

We need to have new conceptualisations, especially in the context of the increasing influence of technology in societal life. Such a situation is more significant in the post-covid era in which the centers of power overwhelmingly used technology to monitor human affairs. Even though Michel Foucault talked about technology-driven power interventions by using the concept of panopticon, he never envisaged the technocratic social condition that we see now in the era of artificial intelligence. Here, the concept of “hybrid society” is more realistic to refer to the impact of mass media and digital devices in personal life as the present-day social situation indispensably led to the processes of atomisation and estrangement. “Hybrid society” allows getting into new ‘collectivities’ through virtual media. The concept of risk society by Ulrich Beck is also well connected with such hybridsocieties as the technology is always embedded with innate risks of external interventions. However the concept of risk society is more concerned with the anticipated hazards in a post-industrial society where the risks are more unpredictable and latent by nature. The proposal of this paper is to elaborate the efforts of existing theoretical perspectives to deal with the nuances of contemporary societal life. What we need is to have more insightful theory-driven conceptualisations, not reference terms or jargons.

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Review of the book ‘Viramma: Life of an Untouchable.’

Viramma: “How an oppressed woman thinks and lives?”

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The captivating tale of *Viramma: Life of an Untouchable* (1997) is the outcome of the prolonged relationship between Viramma and Josaine Racine, which showcases the frailties and resilience of a Dalit woman. Viramma, an untouchable, an agricultural worker, a mid-wife and a ‘Pariah’ woman from a village in Tamil Nadu, the southern part of India, recounted her life stories with the French ethnomusicologist Josiane Racine and Jean-Luc Racine between 1980 and 1990. In tandem, Viramma and Josiane Racine worked on an auto-ethnography that debunks caste politics and defends their cultural practices and ‘Pariah’ traditions. Viramma identifies herself as a “pariah,” a term used to describe a woman belonging to an untouchable category in the caste system. Many aspects posing significant concerns about vulnerability spurred on by external circumstances can be seen throughout Viramma’s life narrative. Further, since it is a translation from French to English, the translator has acknowledged the presence of some compromises and inaccuracies to reflect an oral culture in the written word.

Starting an in-depth conversation between Viramma and Rocine took enough time, as Goffman stated, people were highly bothered about the front-stage role-play and the consequent impression management. Eventually, they befriended and shared a sense of reliability and affection, leading to the birth of a comfortable space where Viramma shared her emotions, memories and life experiences in detail. As a result, Viramma’s voice travels through the unknown modern economic and cultural mediations of anthropologists, writers, and translators. This remarkable book is a live manifestation of the all-time popular

query posed by Gayathi Chakravathi Spivak (1987), “Can the subaltern speak?”; indeed, the subalterns can speak!

Exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation are the main themes that define Viramma’s life experiences. However, she raised her voice against caste oppression, marginalisation, degradation and its related inequalities. She reveals a profound awareness of the sexism that Dalits (Dalit patriarchy) face in their community. In a nutshell, she represents the voice of her community and turns herself into a resilient wall against the incoming oppression. Racine & Racine (1997:310) rightly noted that “it is a text which tells how an oppressed woman lives and thinks”.

Viramma’s trajectory of resilience can be likened to a lamp’s flame that is constantly facing a threat by the wind of vulnerability, yet it continues to spread the light. One crucial point that strike the reader is that, instead of lamenting the persisting discrimination on the grounds of class, caste, and gender, she highlighted the indigenous traditions and cultural aspects of her community. She is well-versed in the mythologies, customs, rituals and heritage of their community at various points in time and occasions. In accordance with their caste traditions, she performed rituals and rites at every level to satisfy/please the gods and to drive off the evil spirits. From the readers’ perspective, we can say that she has internalised the caste system in one way. But on a second note, one can see Virammahighlights the ‘Pariah’ identity that is embodied in traditions meant to nurture specific attributes.

Mariamman- mother of smallpox; IsriKatteri- the foetus eater; and other recollections support a more complex, compassionate, and inclusive understanding of history and myths of the pariah community. Historical event-based autobiographies serve a vital role in constructing our perspective of the past and its relevance to the present. They serve as a reminder that history is a complex fabric made up of the experiences and viewpoints of people, not merely a set of facts and dates. Virama further addresses the worth of money in leading a prosperous life and how upper-caste men utilise it to entice Dalit women. She always thinks back on her happy childhood memories in the comparable way that most poets capture the purity and beauty of childhood. Additionally, she glorifies the traditional periods while discussing the dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

Viramma’s tale kicks off during her early years in Velpakkam, and progresses with her arranged marriage to Manikkam, puberty after marriage, first sexual contact with her husband, and and birthing of

twelve children, and culminates with multiple traditions and ceremonies distinctive to her communities. The story becomes integral to her community's repertoire rather than revealing Viramma's life history. Moreover, virama is portrayed as a manifestation of fulfilment, efficiency, and optimism as opposed to a meek, unfortunate, untouchable woman. Viramma's narrative stands out as a crusade of intersectional feminism that operates as a dual-edged sword against the existing oppressive structure and regime that cooperates to discriminate, exploit, marginalise and exclude the Dalits in general and the Dalit women in particular. This autobiographical narrative holds the agency of a Dalit woman, who fights against the system in her own subtle ways, The tone of the narrative sets it apart from the dominant and elitist production of literature on Dalits written by the upper caste educated individuals. The voice of vulnerability and resilience showcased by Viramma, the illiterate Dalit woman, looms large against the existing set of literature produced by the 'haves' of the society by taking the form of a testimony that unveils the lived experiences of Viramma and the community that she is representing. Subjugated to the existing system by means of multiple forms of stratification, the vulnerability experienced by Viramma and the women in her community is intersectional in nature, in the sense that they are targeted on the basis of their caste, class and gender., which many of them, including Viramma, has internalised to a great extent.

To conclude, this work achieves a remarkable feat of emotional resonance, effectively conveying the realities not only of a Dalit woman's life but also of the entrenched caste system in India. By centering the emotional and cultural subjectivities of Viramma's experiences, the book establishes itself as a powerful testament to the growing body of Dalit auto-ethnographies in contemporary Indian literature. Furthermore, it transcends mere representation, functioning as a potent tool for advocacy, urging mainstream society to confront the injustices faced by Dalit women. The lasting impact of this work lies in its potential to foster empathy and ignite critical dialogue around the ongoing struggle for equality for Dalit women in India.

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A Study on Fans of Reality Show Celebrity: Personality Traits and Attachment Pattern

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Abstract

Reality shows such as Big Boss influence fandom behavior, especially among adults, by serving as role models and encouraging people to mimic their words and actions. The study examines the personality traits, attachment patterns, and fandom behavior among fans of celebrities in reality shows, particularly of Dr. Robin Radhakrishnan (Big Boss contestant). The research aims to highlight if there is any relationship between negative role modeling and examines similarities between fans' personality traits and Dr. Robin's. The study uses variables such as personality, attachment, narcissism, and fandom behavior. A sample of 80 participants aged 18-35 from Kerala was used for data collection. The results showed a significant relationship between fanship degree and narcissistic traits, as well as a positive association between fanship degree and attachment style. However, no relationship was found between fanship degree and personality traits. The study suggests a larger, more representative sample to further explore and confirm the results.

Keywords: Big Boss, Reality Shows, Personality, Fanship, Attachment, Narcissism

Introduction

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing people's perspectives. It serves as a platform for information dissemination, entertainment, and cultural expression.

People consume and interact with media, forming their beliefs, values, and attitudes based on the content they encounter. Media fandoms are formed by fans who are passionate about a particular franchise, celebrity, or cultural phenomenon. Fandoms can be found in various areas of entertainment, such as sports teams, movies, actors, games, and celebrities.

Fandoms are defined as cultural communities that share a common mode of reception and social norms, practices, and expectations (Jenkins, 1995, p. 144). Fans of a particular person, object, or culture are considered a community or subculture, connecting people of diverse cultures and cutting across geographic and generational boundaries. Technological advancements have expanded resources for fan involvement in fandoms, leading to new media-fandoms and expanding their fan base worldwide. Fandom behavior is the set of attitudes and actions exhibited by fans in their engagement with the object of their fandom. This includes active participation, dedication, and emotional investment in various ways, such as expressing enthusiasm, creating fan content, interacting with other fans, and supporting the subject of their fandom through various channels.

Media fandom often leads to negative role modeling, particularly in teenagers, which can promote unethical, irresponsible, or harmful actions (Cyrene Angela & Emmanuel Paciano. (2023). Television shows like Bigg Boss n Kaun Banega Crorepati have a great impact on cultivating model figures in people (Chumbhale, 2011). Factors contributing to the show's popularity include celebrity appeal, controversies, and the format of the show, which allows viewers to vote for their favorite contestants and generates buzz on social media platforms.

Bigg Boss is a popular show that combines emotional connections, active participation, and social interactions to shape individual perspectives and societal trends. Fans become emotionally invested in the show's participants, leading to passionate discussions and debates. Robin Radhakrishnan, a strong contestant in Bigg Boss Malayalam 4, was expelled from the show for allegedly hitting inmate Riyas, but he still gained a large fanbase across Kerala.

Review of literature

A 2010 study by Reysen and Branscombe found that sports fans share similarities and perceive themselves as part of a group. A 2018 study by Collisson, Browne, McCutcheon, Britt, and Browne examined the relationship between celebrity attraction and interpersonal trust. Study by Spinda, Wann, & Hardin (2016) found significant differ-

ences in points of attachment (POA) among sports fans. Roberts (2007) found a positive association between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance, suggesting a connection between stalking and celebrity harassment. Levental et al. (2021) found that fans with secure attachment styles exhibited higher self-esteem and devotion to their favorite sports team. Greenwood (2008) found adult attachment style predicts interpersonal engagement with fictional media personas, impacting emotional well-being. Cohen's (2004) study found negative reactions to the loss of favourite characters.

The variables used in this study are personality traits, attachment style, fandom behaviour, and narcissism. The study makes an effort to highlight the negative effects of negative role modelling. On social media, the celebrity focused in the study displays narcotic features such as extreme grandiosity, the need for excessive attention, a lack of empathy (despite the fact that he is a doctor), manipulation, fantasies of infinite achievement, and having difficulty taking criticism. Through this study, we look at whether this celebrity's personality and those of his admirers share any personality traits. Through this study, it is attempted to determine whether narcissism is becoming socially acceptable as a component of fandom

Objectives

- To assess the Degree of fandom behavior among fans of celebrity in bigbossrealityshow
- To find the relationship between the degree of fanship and the Big Five personality traits of fans
- To find the relationship between the degree of fanship and the attachment style of the fans
- To find the relationship between the degree of fanship and the narcissism of the fans

Statement of the problem

Considering the key objectives, the study has been entitled “*A Study on Fans of Reality Show Celebrity: Personality Traits and Attachment Pattern*”

Definition of key terms

Personality: “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought” (Allport, 1961). It is the “characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique” (Weinberg & Gould, 1999).

Attachment: Attachment is defined As “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194), and may be considered interchangeable with concepts such as “affectional bond” and “emotional bond.”

Fandom behavior: Fandom can be defined as a cultural community which shares a Common mode of reception, as well as a set of social norms, practices and expectations (Jenkins, 1995). Fanship or Fandom often leads to “fandom behavior,” which is the set of attitudes and actions exhibited by fans in their engagement with the object of their fandom

Narcissism: [FBSKP1] Narcissism is the excessive self-love or egocentrism. In psychoanalytic theory, the taking of one's own ego or body as a sexual object or focus of the libido or the seeking or choice of another for relational purposes on the basis of his or her similarity to the self. (APA)

Hypothesis

- There will be no significant relationship between the degree of fanship and the personality traits of fans
- There will be no significant relationship between the degree of fanship and the attachment style of the fans

participants

Eighty participants aged 18-35 from Kerala is taken for study. Data was collected via Google Forms questionnaires and phone interviews. The participants were required to finish 3 scales and personal data sheet. It took nearly 10 minutes to mark the responses. All participants voluntarily participated in the study.

Sampling procedure

Initially, consent of the participants was taken online via Google form sheet, which is an online platform for data collection. This was followed by measures used for the study which included Socio-demographic data, the Big Five personality inventory, the Revised Attachment scale, and The Narcissistic Personality Inventory. A total of 86 items were there for all the measures. Google forms were given to 130 participants and 80 responses were gained. In addition to this, an online data collection is carried out through phone interviews. Participants were free to answer and ask doubts if needed. More clarity about their fandom behaviour, personality, attachment styles, and narcissistic traits was gained through this method. To get a representative sample of the population (fans of big boss celebrity Dr. Robin Radhakrishnan), con-

tacted different fan group admins and fan association heads. This made data collection easier. The email ID of the researcher was also provided for contact, to clarify doubts, if any while filling out the forms. Participants were informed that they could contact the researcher for further clarification or assistance.

Big Five Personality Scale is a 44-item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality (Goldberg, 1993) of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. It is a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 5 (Agree strongly). On average across the five factors, the reliability coefficient is 0.88, which may be considered very high

The Fanship Scale is a unidimensional 11-item self-report scale measuring psychological fanship and was designed to facilitate any kind of fan interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Sample items on the Fanship Scale include: "I would devote all my time to my interest if I could" and "I want to be friends with people who like my interest, and all items are self-assessed on a likert scale ranging from one to nine. The scoring procedure for the Fanship Scale involves tallying up the item scores (one item is scored in reverse) and interpreting the final score as a level of fanship. The fanship scale is highly reliable according to a McDonald's Omega reliability computation (11-items, $\omega = 0.88$).

The revised Attachment scale by Collin contains three subscales, each composed of six items. The three subscales are CLOSE, DEPEND, and Anxiety. The CLOSE scale measures the extent to which a person is comfortable with closeness and intimacy. The DEPEND scale measures the extent to which a person feels he/she can depend on others to be available when needed. The ANXIETY subscale measures the extent to which a person is worried about being rejected or unloved. Cronbach's alpha coefficients in normal group are higher than 0.7. The discriminatory validity in anxiety and close-dependence dimension is good. The score of construct-related validity is high

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13; Gentile et al., 2013) is a 13-item shortened version of the 40-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI, NPI-40; Raskin & Terry, 1988), used to assess grandiose narcissism. The NPI-13 is based on the three-factor structure of the NPI-40: 1. Leadership/Authority (LA), 2. Grandiose Exhibitionism (GE), and 3. Entitlement/Exploitativeness (EE) (Ackerman et al., 2011). Expert ratings, item-response theory (IRT) analyses, and ex-

ploratory factor analyses were all employed to select the final 13-item measure, with 4 LA items, 5 GE items, and 4 EE items. Using samples of undergraduates, USadults, and clinical out patients, additional analyses revealed that theNPI- 13 has good convergent and discriminant validity and adequate overall reliability

Result and Discussion

Degree of Fanship

A total of 80 samples were taken and they were classified based on the Fanship scale by Reysen&Branscombe, 2010.84 % of the total sample exhibited High fanship and 16% exhibited low fanship

Table1:Pearson correlation degree Fanship and Big five personality traits

Variables		Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience
Fanship	Pearson's correlation	0.041	0.110	-0.108	-0.036	0.077
	Significant difference	0.742	0.374	0.384	0.769	0.534

Table2:Pearson correlation of Fanship and Attachment style

Variables		Close	Depend	Anxiety
Fanship	Pearson's correlation	0.422**	0.374**	-0.060
	Significant difference	0.000	0.002	0.627

Table3:Pearson correlation of Fanship and Narcissistic traits

Variables		Leadership/Authority	Grandiose/Exhibitionism	Entitlement/Exploitativeness
Fanship	Pearson's correlation	0.323**	0.323**	0.275*
	Significant difference	0.008	0.008	0.024

ThemainstatisticusedforanalyzingdataisPearson'scorrelation. After coding, the data have been subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. The study reveals no significant correlationbetweenfanshipandBig Five personality traits amongDr.RobinRadhakrishnan's

fans, despite his fame on reality shows. The Pearson correlation analysis reveals a strong association between fandom and all attachment types introduced by Collin in his revised attachment scale, with a strong relationship between fandom and a close attachment pattern ($r=.422$, $s.d.=.0$). The result shows a significant relationship between narcissistic personality traits, (particularly leadership: $r=.3$, Grandiose: $r=.3$ and Entitlement: $r=.27$). It also suggests that passionate fans are more likely to develop authority and influence within their fan community.

Conclusion

Despite his reality show prominence, the study showed no significant relationship between fandom and Big Five personality traits among Dr. Robin Radhakrishnan's fans. However, fandom is closely connected with attachment types, particularly narcissistic traits like leadership and entitlement, implying that devoted fans develop authority and influence.

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- [FBSKP1]Rational for selection of these variables could have been stated in ROL

Connected but Isolated: Generational Perceptions on Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction

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Abstract

We are living in a world where mediated communication dominates face-to-face communication. Even though the number and extent of communication is increasing, the depth and intimacy of social interactions are decreasing. Did actually social interaction decrease? Does it pose a threat to social life? This paper analyses the generational and rural-urban differences in the perception of changes in social interaction. The study is based on quantitative data collected from the young (aged between 18 and 35) and the old (aged above 60) from Kozhikode District, Kerala. 200 samples were randomly selected for the study, of which 100 were from rural and 100 from urban areas. The responses are elicited by using a structured interview schedule. Chi-Square Test is used to test the association between variables.

Keywords: Decreasing social interaction, interpersonal interaction, mediated communication, generations, social change

Introduction

Kerala has undergone a significant restructuring of its social fabric over recent decades. Changes are seen in social institutions, social interactions, communication patterns, way of life, material possessions, social mobility, etc. Traditional forms of interaction and communication are giving way to mediated communication via digital technologies, potentially impacting social capital and trust networks. Daily routines, customs, and consumption patterns are undergoing transformations influenced by globalization and exposure to diverse lifestyles. The transformation of communication structures and interaction patterns, driven by factors like technology and globalization, is not a singular phenomenon, it has cascading effects on all facets of social life, impacting the very foundations of social institutions.

This paper analyses the perceptions of generations on the changes in social interaction, its reasons, and its effects on social life. The rise

of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has undeniably transformed the landscape of human connections. Social media platforms, instant messaging services, and video conferencing tools have facilitated an unprecedented level of mediated communication. Individuals are now connected to vast networks, fostering a sense of global interconnectedness. Information dissemination is instantaneous, and the ability to maintain relationships across geographical distances has become easier than ever before.

However, this explosion of communication channels has coincided with a concerning decline in face-to-face interaction and the erosion of traditional forms of social capital. Sociologists argue that the quality of social interaction is being compromised by the dominance of mediated communication. Turkle (2001) argues that while technology allows us to connect with a wider network of people, it can also lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation. She highlights the difference between “weak ties” formed online and the “strong ties” that develop through face-to-face interaction. Wellman et al. (2002) argue that the quality of social capital, not just the quantity of connections, is crucial for social well-being. The richness of nonverbal cues, the depth of emotional connection, and the sense of shared space that characterize face-to-face interactions are often missing in online exchanges. Furthermore, the curated nature of online personas and the fleeting interactions on social media can create a sense of social isolation even amidst a vast network of virtual connections.

Proposition

The study proposes that “amidst the increase in mediated communication, there is a perception that social interaction is decreasing. The elderly and the rural people are more concerned about this decreasing social interaction and they think it is a serious threat to society”

Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyze the perceptions of people on decreasing social interaction and its impact on society, and the differences in their perception based on their age, gender, place of residence, religious affiliation, and income status. The population for the study consists of the young and the old of Kozhikode District, Kerala. 200 samples were randomly selected for the study, of which 100 were from rural and 100 from urban areas. Half of the sample belongs to the young (aged between 15 and 35) and half to the old (aged above 60) category. Thus, the sample is constituted as below.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Rural	Urban	Total
Young	50	50	100
Old	50	50	100
Total	100	100	200

The samples were selected randomly by using the voters’ list of the selected village wards and corporation wards. An interview schedule was used to elicit primary data. Secondary sources like books, research papers, and the internet were also used.

Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction

Social interaction is the social exchange between two or more individuals. It is the basis for social structure and thus the key object of social inquiry. Social interaction is the process of reciprocal influence exercised by individuals over one another during social encounters. Gillin and Gillin (1948) define social interaction as the ‘social relations of all sorts in functions-dynamic social relations of all kinds-whether such relations exist between individual and individual, between group and group and group and individual, as the case may be”. Usually, social interaction refers to face-to-face encounters in which people are physically present with one another for a specified duration. The advent of the digital age along with globalization has brought unprecedented technological advancement, which transformed the form and nature of social interaction. Globalisation, technological development, and related changes have revolutionised communication and social interaction.

The internet and digital technology have transformed the nature and form of social interactions. Technology has reshaped the ways in which we interact in an unprecedented manner. The internet and digital technologies have transformed the way we live and work, during the past few decades. Contemporary innovations have reduced distance across the globe and the need for physical proximity for communicative interactions. The digital age, with its ever-increasing pace, has fundamentally reshaped how we interact. The rise of information and communication technologies like the internet, social media platforms, and mobile devices has ushered in an era of instantaneous global connections. These technologies have fostered unprecedented

connectivity, allowing individuals to form relationships and communicate seamlessly across vast distances. Communication has become mediated by machines and gadgets. The digital revolution has ignited an explosion of social interaction. Gone are the days of limited communication channels; the internet, social media, and mobile devices have woven a web of instant global connections. Individuals can now forge friendships, collaborate on projects, and share ideas with anyone across the globe, fostering a sense of unprecedented interconnectedness. This constant connectivity fosters vibrant online communities, where shared interests transcend physical boundaries. “The richness of the Internet can expand the range of interpersonal communication, increase people’s communication opportunities in different regions and cultural backgrounds, and promote elastic contact between people, which has a positive effect on people’s daily interpersonal interactions” (Lewis & West, 2009; Xiao & Bai, 2012).

On the other side, the high dependence upon mediated communication has reduced physical interaction between people. Studies show that technology has increased the number and ways of social interaction but reduced its quality and intimacy. Some theorists have suggested that Internet use increases social interaction and support (Silverman, 1999) while others have argued that it leads to decreased interaction and support (Kiesler & Kraut, 1999). There is a growing tendency that people are interacting more with machines than with men. This decreased physical interaction has serious impacts on social life. “Technology has become an integral part of the way that people communicate with one another and has increasingly taken the place of face-to-face communication” (Drago, 2015).

An interpersonal network established through the Internet is often unreliable and easily hinders real communication. Researchers believe that Internet use has a time and media substitution for interpersonal communication. That is, the more time people spend on the Internet, the less time they spend communicating in person (Putnam, 2000). Kraut et al. (1998) found that the Internet has a weak but significant negative impact on people’s social participation and mental health. In mediated communication, strong social ties have been replaced by weak and transient social ties. Though people have wider social connections, mediated communication reduces the quality of and time spent on communication with family members and other people.

This study enquired whether people perceive any decrease in interpersonal interaction and whether there are any generational differ-

ences in their perception. Table 2 shows that more than three-fourths (75.5%) of the respondents believe that interpersonal interaction is decreasing. There are only 17% who believe that interaction is increasing. The remaining perceive that there is no change in social interactions. There is a considerable variation between the generations in their opinion about the changes in interpersonal interaction. Table 2 shows details in this respect.

Table 2: Generation and Perception on Changes in Interpersonal Interaction

Generation	Interaction is increasing	Interaction is decreasing	No change	Total
Young	30 (30%)	63 (63%)	7 (7%)	100 (100%)
Old	4 (4%)	88 (88%)	8 (8%)	100 (100%)
Total	34 (17%)	151 (75.5%)	15 (7.5%)	200

Chi square= 24.09, df=2, Table value=9.210, $P \leq 0.01$.

The association is significant.

It is evident from Table 2 that the elderly perceive more that interpersonal interaction is decreasing than the youngsters do. While 88% of the elderly believe that interaction is decreasing, the corresponding figure for the youngsters is 63%. It is notable that while 30% of the youngsters believe that interaction is increasing, only 4% of the elderly have that perception. It is evident that both young and old feel that there is a decrease in interpersonal interaction. However, a considerable portion (30%) of youngsters perceive that interaction is increasing in contemporary society. Even though face-to-face interactions are decreasing, mediated communication and interaction are increasing as a result of the growth of modern technologies. Technology has revolutionized the form and volume of interpersonal interaction today. "For at least a segment of our population, a number of face-to-face transactions are now mediated by computers and other interactive technologies" (Tubbs, 2010). The digital revolution has created a fascinating divide in how different generations perceive social interaction. For the elderly who are less accustomed to the intricacies of modern technology, communication might feel like a fading art. They feel that mediated communication is missing the soul. The challenges of navigating online tools and a yearning for the richness of face-to-face interactions can contribute to a sense of isolation. Conversely, the tech-savvy

younger generations, fluent in the digital language, see technology as a bridge, allowing them to connect seamlessly with loved ones and forge new bonds in vibrant online communities. Studies have proven that technology has led to a decrease in face-to-face communication. This can be seen in all social situations, from family to workplace. Communication in interpersonal relationships has been influenced by technology with its advantages and disadvantages (DeVito, 2005). “There are times when the one-on-one communication between human beings falls through the cracks and technology can take control over a family” (Sorensen, 2010). “It is a typical scene in modern families these days that the father may be watching the news on the television, the mother is busy fiddling with her smartphone, the sons are fighting aliens on the game console and the daughter is playing with the applications on her tablet. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other*, Turkle (2012) examined the effects of technology on familial relationships. After interviewing more than 300 young people and 150 adults, Turkle found that children were often times the ones complaining about their parents’ obsession with technology. Turkle discovered that many children believed their parents were paying less attention to them than to their smartphones, often neglecting to interact with them face-to-face until they had finished responding to emails.

On the other hand, there are arguments that technology is increasing human interactions. DiMaggio et al. (2001) argue that “the internet enhances social ties” by putting “users in more frequent contact with families and friends”. It allows individuals “to strengthen their connection with the extended family beyond their own nuclear family” (Yoon, 2006). The internet is therefore a new form of online interaction that enhances “offline relationships” (Wellman et al.2001). Contrary to many researchers’ beliefs that technology impacts face-to-face communication negatively, Nancy Baym, principal researcher at Microsoft Research, doesn’t share these concerns. She says research suggests that digital communications enhance relationships and that “the evidence consistently shows that the more you communicate with people using devices, the more likely you are to communicate with those people face to face.” She says every new technology raises the fear that we will lose or lessen our human connections, but that we eventually figure out how to adapt (Adler, 2013).

To conclude, the digital age presents a contrasting experience for different generations. The elderly who are accustomed to a world dom-

inated by face-to-face interaction, feel a decrease in social interaction today. The digital divide can be identified as a major reason for this. It creates a sense of isolation among the elderly as navigating online tools proves challenging and the richness of in-person communication is lost. The youngsters, on the other hand, who have been born into the digital era feel that the situation is not so worse. Even though they have the perception that interpersonal interaction is decreasing to some extent, they are optimists. The digital devices are making them able to communicate and interact with a larger world. The vast capabilities of Information and Communication Technology allow them to connect with a wider world and forge new bonds in online communities.

The responses were further analysed on the basis of gender. It is revealed that gender is not significantly affecting the perceptions of the generations on changes in interpersonal interaction. That is, both males and females among the young and old uphold the same view regarding the changes in interpersonal interaction.

Analysis based on place of residence shows that rural people perceive a sharper decline in social interaction compared to their urban counterparts. 91% of the rural respondents perceive that interaction is decreasing, whereas the corresponding strength for the urban respondents is 60%. While there are no significant differences in the perception of the elderly in both rural and urban areas, it is highly remarkable that 50% of the youngsters in urban areas perceive that interpersonal interaction is increasing in contemporary society, whereas only 5% of the rural young have that perception. The corresponding strength for urban and rural elderly is 6% and 2% respectively (Tables 3 a & b).

Table 3: Place of Residence and Generations' Perception on Changes in Interpersonal Interaction

a) Young and Old Among Rural Community

Generation	Interaction is increasing	Interaction is decreasing	No change	Total
Young	5 (10%)	43 (86%)	2 (4%)	50 (100%)
Old	1 (2%)	48 (96%)	1 (2%)	50 (100%)
Total	6 (6%)	91 (91%)	3 (3%)	100 (100%)

Chi square= 3.27, df=2, Table value=9.210, $P \leq 0.01$. The association is not significant.

b) Young and Old Among Urban Community

Generation	Interaction is increasing	Interaction is decreasing	No change	Total
Young	5 (10%)	43 (86%)	2 (4%)	50 (100%)
Old	1 (2%)	48 (96%)	1 (2%)	50 (100%)
Total	6 (6%)	91 (91%)	3 (3%)	100 (100%)

Chi square= 24.29, df=2, Table value=9.210, $P \leq 0.01$. The association is significant.

Several factors might be contributing to the perception of urban youth that interaction is increasing. Social relationships vary according to age, gender, and place, where place element is a key factor to determine the nature of social activity for all ages (Holland C, et al, 2007). Anonymity and individuation are generally considered as the characteristics of urban society. Early-twentieth-century writings suggested that the social life of individuals in larger cities is more fragmented and impersonal than in smaller ones, potentially leading to negative effects such as social disintegration, crime and the development of a number of adverse psychological conditions (Wirth, 1938, Simmel, 1950). But research since the 1970s has dispelled many of these assumptions by mapping social relations across different places (Fischer, 1982, Wellman, 1999). With the development of modern technology, especially the internet and social networking sites, the urban youth have expanded their horizons of interactions. The social media platforms provide unlimited opportunities of making relationships. Further, as cities are expanding over space and the population is increasing, the city dwellers get more opportunities for interactions than the villagers. Cities are places for social interaction (Batty, 2012, Bettencourt, 2013)

Analysis based on religion also revealed a similar pattern. Across all religious affiliations, a significant majority (76%) of elderly respondents reported a perceived decrease in social interaction. In contrast, only around half (50-60%) of younger individuals within the same religious groups shared this perception. Remarkably, a considerable portion of the youngsters among Christians (29%) and Muslims (37%) perceive that interpersonal interaction is increasing in contemporary society. Among the elderly too Muslims (18%) and Christians (15%) perceive more that interaction is increasing. Religious affiliation of people influences their socio-economic behaviour. Max Weber's classical work 'The Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism' establishes

a firm relationship between religious affiliation and economic life. It was also demonstrated that religion and intensity of religiosity affect social interactions and attitudes: several studies related to donations (e.g., Flanagan, 1991; Barry, 1996; Brooks, 2003) show that intensity of religious participation is positively associated with amounts donated in charity giving. The comparatively strong community bond among Muslims and Christians may be the factor that contributed to their perception that social interaction is not that much decreasing.

Analysis on the basis of the income of the respondents also shows a similar pattern, i.e., regardless of their economic status, the elderly perceive more that interpersonal interaction is decreasing than the youngsters do. However, it shows that the high-income group perceives the most that interpersonal interaction is increasing, compared to the middle- and low-income groups. This difference in the perceptions based on income can be attributed to their differential access to social networks and modern digital gadgets. The affluent group gets more opportunities to interact with a wider circle. They get higher status and acceptance in society. High-income groups, with greater access to modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and digital devices, enjoy a distinct advantage. These tools facilitate the expansion of their social circles and create more opportunities for interaction. Conversely, lower-income groups, often facing limited social mobility and restricted access to technology, may feel a decline in social interaction. Furthermore, a lack of digital literacy can further restrict their ability to build and maintain social networks online.

Reason for Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction

Various reasons can be identified for the decreasing social interaction. The study enquired about the major reasons behind the decreasing interpersonal interaction. Figure 1 shows the responses.

Figure 1: Reason for Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction as Stated by the Respondents

Figure 1 shows that the respondents perceive technology as the major reason for decreasing social interaction. Selfishness, Busy life, Nucleation and Affluence are the other major reasons identified by the study. The findings suggest that changes in communication technology might be perceived as the most significant factor behind the perceived decline in interpersonal interaction. No significant association is revealed between generations and their perception of the reason for decreasing interpersonal interaction, i.e., regardless of generational

difference, people perceive that modern technology is reducing social interactions. This is against the general perception that modern technology and digital gadgets help improve social contacts and interaction. The prevailing narrative often positions technology as a facilitator of social connection, fostering communication and new relationships. However, a countervailing perception persists, suggesting that technology may actually lead to a decline in interpersonal interaction. This apparent contradiction can be illuminated by considering the concept of “real social interaction.” Individuals who perceive technology as diminishing interaction may hold a more restrictive definition of what constitutes authentic social engagement. For them, the nuanced communication cues and nonverbal elements inherent in face-to-face interaction may be absent in technology-mediated communication, leading to a perception of a diminished social interaction. Technology is affecting the nature and volume of social interactions in various ways. First, the more the time people engage with digital gadgets, the lesser their social interaction. the more time people spend using the internet during leisure time, the more time has to be detracted from social activities like communicating with friends, neighbours and family members (Nie et al., 2002). Wellman et al. (2006) note that internet usage may sometimes interfere with communication in the home, creating a “post-familial family” where family members spend time interacting with computers rather than with one another. Secondly, the internet and modern digital gadgets allow users to conduct many daily transactions such as shopping or banking online from home. This reduces the chances of face-to-face interactions. In today’s digital world, men are interacting more with machines than with men. Thirdly, technology has changed the nature and intensity of communication. Even though it opens up wide horizons of acquaintances and social networking, the intensity of the communication is relatively low. This argument relies on the concept of “community without propinquity”(Weber, 1963) and on the earlier theories of the Chicago School of Sociology. In a famous paper, Wirth (1938) claimed that a heterogeneous urban environment would be characteristic of the absence of “intimate personal acquaintanceship” and would result in the “segmentation of human relations” into those that were “largely anonymous, superficial, and transitory”. This argument can be easily applied to the internet, which seems to have the potential to fragment local communities into new virtual realities of shared interest that may negate the necessity (or even the desirability) of face-to-face encounters (Antoci, 2010).

Selfishness is the second major reason identified by people for decreasing interpersonal interaction. Capitalism and rational thinking make people more self-centered and calculative. Free-market economists regard people as ‘tunnel-visioned self-seeking robots’, ‘totally selfish’, and ‘selfish, amoral agents’. ‘Free-market ideology,’ is built on the belief that people won’t do anything “good” unless they are paid for it or punished for not doing it’ (Chang,2010). Most of the interactions in contemporary society are characterized by a heightened emphasis on instrumental rationality. This perspective suggests that individuals prioritize interactions based on calculated benefits and potential costs, minimizing engagement deemed superfluous or unproductive. Consequently, social encounters may be curated to maximize efficiency and minimize unwanted interactions

Busy life and nucleation are the other two prominent reasons for decreasing interpersonal interaction identified by the study. People live a hectic life and thus hardly get time to interact with and care others. The increased speed of life and a sense of time scarcity, can limit opportunities for social engagement. Rapid urbanisation, technological development, economic affluence, etc. are contributing to the increased speed of life in Kerala. Kerala is experiencing a fall in the size of households as a result of the demographic transition. Decreasing size of household leads to increasing nucleation of family. The average household size in Kerala is 4.3 (Census, 2011). Decreasing size of family decreases the opportunities for interaction among members. Urbanization, the growing participation of women in the workforce, and the intensification of daily life definitely decrease the chances for interaction.

Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction is a Challenge to Individual and Society

The study also enquired whether the respondents feel that decreasing social interaction is a challenge to individual and society, it is seen that 73% of the respondents feel that it is a challenge to individual and society, while the remaining (27%) feel that it is not a challenge. Table 4 shows the details in this respect.

When asked about the result of the decreasing interpersonal interaction, people identified ‘social disintegration’ (64.50%) and psychological problems (35.50%) as the major effects. However, no significant difference is evident between generation and their perception about the impact of decreasing interpersonal interaction upon society.

Table 4: Generation and Perception on Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction as a Challenge to Individual and Society

Generation	Is a challenge to individual and society	Is not a challenge	Total
Young	53 (53%)	47 (47%)	100 (100%)
Old	93 (93%)	7 (7%)	100 (100%)
Total	146 (73%)	54 (27%)	200 (100%)

Chi square= 40.59, df=1, Table value=6.635, $P \leq 0.01$.

The association is significant.

Table 4 also makes it clear that there is a marked difference between generations in their perception about decreasing social interaction as a challenge to social life. The elderly perceive decreasing interpersonal interaction more as a challenge to individual and society, than the youngsters do. 93% of the elderly believe that it is a challenge to individual and society. On the other hand, only 53% of the youngsters believe that way. This clearly shows that the youngsters are not that much concerned about the impact of decreasing interpersonal interaction. These differing perceptions of generations may stem from contrasting views on social capital and its role in a well-lived life. The youngsters, who are more depending on technology-mediated interaction may subscribe to a functionalist perspective, believing that technology can adequately fulfill social needs. This aligns with the concept of weak ties, where digital connections provide instrumental benefits without the demands of close relationships. Conversely, the elderly may hold a more interactionist perspective, valuing the strong ties formed through face-to-face interaction and the positive impact of social networks on individual and societal well-being.

Anxiety about Decreasing Interpersonal Interaction

It was also enquired whether the respondents are anxious about this decreasing interpersonal interaction. It is evident from the analysis that over three-fourths (76.26%) of the respondents expressed anxiety about this trend. The analysis also made it clear that the elderly are more anxious about the decreasing interpersonal interaction than the youngsters. 91% of the elderly are anxious about it, while the corresponding strength of the youngsters is 55%. This difference may be possibly because the elderly socialized in a more community-oriented era, may exhibit higher gregariousness and prioritize strong ties formed through face-to-face interaction. They are more concerned about the

importance of interpersonal interaction for the well-being of society. They believe that interpersonal interaction is the cornerstone of social life. They think that face-to-face relations cannot be replaced by mediated interactions and communication. On the other side, the youngsters are less concerned about the importance of face-to-face relations. They may be believing that technology can adequately fulfill social needs by providing access to a wider social sphere and social life is easily possible in a mechanical way in modern society.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the perceptions of generations on decreasing social interaction. The paper was based on a study conducted among the young and the old of Kozhikode, Kerala, selected from both urban and rural areas. The study was based on the proposition that the perception of people on decreasing social interaction differs according to age and place of residence. The rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has undoubtedly revolutionized communication, fostering global interconnectedness and instant information sharing. However, this explosion of online connections coincides with a decline in face-to-face interaction. The analysis reveals that when taken together, majority of the respondents believe that social interaction is decreasing. However, it is notable that there is marked difference between the young and the old in their perceptions. The elderly people very much believe that interaction is decreasing and that this poses serious challenges to individual and society. The young are not that much pessimistic about the decrease in social interaction. It is also revealed that the rural people believe that social interaction is decreasing very much and it has serious implications for society. However, the urban people, especially urban youth do not perceive such a serious decrease in social interaction. Analysis based on other variables, viz. gender, religion and income group also shows a similar pattern, i.e, irrespective of these variables, majority of the people perceive that there is a decrease in social interaction. Technology, selfishness, busy life and nucleation are the important reasons identified by the respondents for the decrease in social interaction. Majority of the elderly feel that this decrease is a serious threat to individual and society and they are very much anxious about the decreasing social interaction.

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