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EDITORIAL

This special issue of *Discourse* is the collection of research papers presented in the UGC sponsored National seminar on *Media and Culture: Creations and Transcreations* conducted by the Department of English in collaboration with Indiavision.

Cocooned safely in 24 x 7 news channels, internet and social media, life is caught in a bewitching maelstrom. The absence of connectivity creates a frightening vacuum. Frantic with 'reality' shows e-shopping, selfies and 'likes', we are at a loss to think about the world in real terms. Imposing a monolithic and homogenized code over the distinct and the divergent, the virtual has become more real than the real. Thus media has itself grown into a juggernaut culture that batters the old paradigms. In its trail it leaves behind shifting centres and redefined margins, evading definitions and theories. As one of the most powerful industries, it has acquired gargantuan proportions through its liaisons with politics, economy and religion. The media conglomerates have conquered our public and private spaces through the mediated representations. Any serious discourse on representations will reveal to us the power of media texts in creating culture and its meaning.

Globalization and the proliferation of new media platforms have added complexity to the issues and effects related to representation. This, in a global media environment is implicated in complex and contested power relations over what stories are told, how, and by whom. It is interesting to explore the consequences of such telling with reference to culture. Within

the hegemonic power structures of the globalised corporate world, the media has turned into a powerful socio-political force capable of constructing, erasing and fabricating 'cultures'. And it has acquired newer ideological stances and representational tactics with regard to the construction of mediated and virtual worlds and intimacies around us.

All the papers included in this special issue discuss various problems and concerns related to Media and Culture. We earnestly hope that this attempt will be appreciated by the readers and will lead to further academic ventures in similar areas.

Dr. Milon Franz

Editor

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Reading Rhizomic Paradigm in Contemporary Visual Culture

William Zacharias, Department of English, St. Thomas College, Pala

Human beings endeavor to make sense of the world that they see using certain theoretical assumptions that serve as the interface between the object seen and the subject that tries to make sense of it. For several centuries, the schematics of interpretation have been largely fashioned by western epistemological and hermeneutic paradigms. After the heydays of the Enlightenment and the Rationalist philosophic modes of thinking, the poststructuralist and postmodernist hermeneutic turns impinge on us the notion that knowledge, on a deeper analysis, is characterized neither by univocality nor universality but by fragmentariness and heterogeneity. In the visual cultural studies scenario, the area under scrutiny in this paper, it holds true.

The ways human beings think, act and interact constitute the culture of a set of people in a society. It is the sum total of the exchange between the different members in a society that appears significant or sensible to them. The highly variegated terrain on which human beings behave and act, depending upon the context, background, perception and a host of other cultural factors, necessitates an essential precondition for differentiated and heterogeneous cultural practices, thereby effecting the deferral of static, universal significations. Carnie agrees with Stuart Hall:

“Cultural studies have multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and comments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. I want to insist on that! It always was a set of unstable formations”. (<http://grad.usask.ca/gateway/archive21>).

Culture is not anything that is preconditioned, but culture sketches experience. It is the norm with cultural theorists that the barometer for gauging cultural shifts should be human experience rather than ungrounded theoretical formulations. The significance in examining the visual cultural studies scenario lies in the fact of a centrality given to 'seeing' in western culture. Mirzoeff says,

“Seeing is a great deal more than believes these days. You can buy an image of your house taken from an orbiting satellite or have your internal organs magnetically images. If that special moment didn't come out quite right in your photography, you can digitally manipulate it on your computer.”(<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Mirzoeff>)

Visual signs tend to be more static than the looking eye which waxes more mobility in semiotic investigations. Ways of seeing differ and hence the interpretation of signs using the semiotic perspective and the standpoint taken by the perceiving subject play their invaluable part in visual cultural studies .A purveyor of visual cultural images in the postmodernist scenario has the backup of the notions of difference and hybridity. Visual culture, hallmarked by megalithic, polyphonic proliferation of Dionysiac images marching differentially and simulacrally holds the beholder as well as the interpreter in spellbinding awe. To cultural theorists, this implicates paradigm shifts, ruptures of margins, decentering and apocalyptic postmodernist celebrations assuming protean and gargantuan proportions. Hence it would seem that with visual culture, there promulgates the imperative need, to deploy alternative tools of analysis that have the backup of biology, ethics, epistemology, and pragmatics.

This paper attempts to take a detour on visual ethnographic lines with the intent to raise an interventionist note in the use of the stereotyped

analytical, linear theoretical tools for interpreting visual cultural artifacts of the closing decade of the 20thc and the early decade of the 21stc. The writer alternatively proposes a use of synthetic theoretical tools, the rationale of which is based on syntactic and pragmatic modes of interpretation and hence, riveting a quarantine eclectic incredulity towards semantic affirmations. According to Gordon Fyfe and John Law, 'depiction, picturing and seeing are ubiquitous features of the process by which most human beings come to know the world as it really *is* for them' (http://library.wvu.edu/ereserves/brown_eng371_researching.pdf). This could be because, we, as children, commence to sense the world, by seeing. John Berger suggests that this is because 'seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.' (http://library.wvu.edu/ereserves/brown_eng371_researching.pdf). The evolution to this new synthetic scenario becomes logical and inevitable due to three reasons: firstly, the arrest of the transcendental signified, secondly, the demise of the Enlightenment programme and thirdly, a revamped look at language.

First, the apparently innocent reductionism employed in strategically submitting the subspecies of the gods to a higher transcendental authority has been the philosophical motive of the 'mimetic' theoretical formulation. Exclusivity, essentialism and homogeneity were the basic conceptual notions that buttressed it since the Platonic and Aristotelian critical traditions shaped critical consciousness in interpreting the phenomena of this world in an analytic, vertical tree-like manner. The overarching rule of the transcendental signified, signifying the ideal and the absolute hilariously dismissed potential pluralist, differential interpretations. Knowledge resided in the transcendental realm and the gods governed and guarded an 'inferior' search by man and his mental

promulgations, this man who incessantly perspired to reach after the transcendental, which, ironically was always hidden from him. Yet man was supposed to strive to attain it by copying it. Reality has always been something mysterious and elusive and therefore no reality at all. And gods were never seen as constructs. Paradoxically, reality lies in the deliberate limiting and reserving of the real and the perpetual downgrading of the 'sublunary' man. In such a case, reality should get grounded as a construct and therefore imminent and mutable. And this was set to occur later on.

Secondly, modernity, after a circuitous turn in philosophical abstractions, ceased to furnish the world anything other than riven identities and moribund ideology. The crisis and conflict accompanying the two world wars and the slump yielded soul scorching angst, mental fragmentation, surrealistic formulations and tumbling belief system that devastatingly ran and re-ran over the face of modernity crushing capitalist, industrialist and rationalist ideology. Nietzsche was to sigh over its unburied corpse, signaling the yet to be born- the individuated being.

On the third level, the postmodern subject seems to have risen up, phoenix like, from a recuperative reconfiguration of language. Saussurean semiotics cut open new epistemological vistas. All forms of human phenomena began to be relooked and interpreted through the lens of the structuralist interpreter. However, a re-running through Saussurean semiotics by Barthes and Derrida flips the veneer of the language phenomenon unveiling it as a flexible medium for decentring, transferability and translatability of experiences. Reality as a whole begins to be perceived as a construct-linguistically and socially. There emerges subsequently, a procession of apocalyptic and simulacral images ever marching forward, what Jean Baudillard terms the simulacrum. Baudillard

argues that in postmodernism it is no longer possible to make a distinction between the real and the unreal; images had become detached from any certain relation to a real world with the result that we now live in a scopic regime dominated by simulation and simulacra.

It is with this vision and knowledge that we look up to a brave new world replete with visual signs. Martin Jay has used the term ocularcentrism to describe the apparent centrality of the visual to both modern and postmodern Western life. Nicholas Mirzoeff has proclaimed that the Postmodern is a visual culture.' Visual culturalists, however, prefer to historicize the importance of the visual, tracing what they see as the increasing saturation of Western societies by visual images. Many claim that the process has reached unprecedented levels, so that Westerners now interact with the world mainly through seeing. The glut of images unleashed by flexible linguistic discursive turns gives a new impetus to cultural discourses which is the objective of analysis in this paper. This novel, but rewarding hermeneutical travel, could fruitfully be applied to the visual cultural scenario.

However, in postmodernity, we tend to see blurring boundaries between seeing and true knowing. Mirzoeff suggests that postmodernity is ocularcentric not simply because visual images are more and more common, nor because knowledge about the world is increasingly articulated visually, but because we interact more and more with totally constructed visual experiences. Thus the modern connection between seeing and knowledge is stretched to breaking point in postmodernity. This crisis in epistemological terrain warrants the assimilation of newer theoretical tools for the rendition of structures of understanding. In the modern fluid, hybridized, travelling societies, this implicates ethical,

sociological and epistemological accommodation. The hitherto marginalized can come to the fore and instead of holding subversive orientations, live an organic, ethical, accommodative life.

The newly proposed rhizomic, synthetic interpretational model can thus be used as a legitimate mode in the contemporary multicultural, trans-cultural scenario. Hence, it is the writer's point to contrapositively place against the analytic tool, the Deleuzian and Guattarian concept of 'rhizomic' structures with its basis on the synthetic paradigm. In the Western world, tree-like thinking has been our tradition. Rhizomes, however, uproot the philosophy of trees. Deleuze and Guattari dilates on the metaphorical differences between trees and rhizomes. Accordingly, trees organize knowledge along systematic and hierarchical principles, stemming from and flowing to one root system. But rhizomes grow as it can be seen in this figure:



Figure 1

https://www.google.co.in/search?q=rhizome&client=ubuntu&hs=0kv&channel=fs&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=dcnAVMGaKIHCmwWasYGIDA&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1333&bih=673#imgdii=_&img

In a moment of self-reflexivity, the western hermeneutic tradition should now realize that it had too much been reliant on the vertical mode of thinking. Rhizomic structures, by providing unities made along lines,

layers, and plateaus deconstruct the logic of the binary and tall growth. Further, Spinoza's idea of univocity (one voice) can be supplemented to the notion of the rhizomic implicating a fusion of the subject and object together into a synthetic ontological system displacing the transcendent idealist ontological systems of Plato and Aristotle. Ontologically, substance grants existence and rhizomic structures speak about multiple existence. The Deleuzian logic then grafts the Spinozoan system seeing the substance as a continuum of change infinitely giving birth to complexities and multiplicities of thinking. Following the Deleuzian system would empower the visual cultural studies researcher to conceptualize more fluid transitions. For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomic systems grow far less predictably than trees,. As Sarah Säckel, Walter Göbel, Noha Hamdy state, it seeks to "abolish the "arborescent model-(the "tree diagrams of authority") for the "rhizomic" model- an underground horizontal form of reproduction and proliferation".

Rhizomatic growth implicates acentred, connective, heterogenous, non-hierarchised systems in existence as can be seen from the following figure.

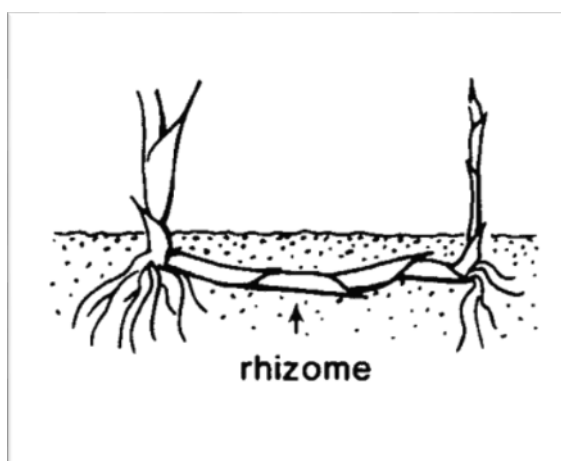


Figure 2

https://www.google.co.in/search?q=rhizome&client=ubuntu&hs=0kv&channel=fs&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=dcnAVMGaKIHcmwWasYGIDA&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1333&bih=673#imgdii=_&imgsrc=juR3I3EuhErIM%253A%3BQ-...

The advantages of implementing the new system help the readers to break free of ‘tree thinking’ or staying safely close to a single knowledge root. Its fruits can be made available in different fields.

“The new media have largely shifted reception attitudes from passive consumption of media to participatory screen activities. As our newest technologies favour iconicity for events not necessarily visual (e.g. Windows desktop, medical and biological representation) they encourage connective (rhizomic) receptional processes.”(<https://books.google.co.in/books>.2009).

Since visual cultural studies reside in the social sciences scenario, researchers of this discipline should be taught to believe that human actions vary from context to context. They can be taught to break free of ‘tree thinking’ or staying safely close to a single knowledge root. Humans, even though they act similarly in different cultures, and circumstances, they also act differently, depending upon background, context, time and a so on and so forth.—and to map possibilities that might exist. For instance, social and visual cultural readers should be encouraged to think how contexts or circumstances might have changed or perhaps could change in future, how human actions or perceptions undergo life shifts and how perceptions that are thought to be immutable or universal undergo change. Since people constantly move from one state into another, the results are rather unpredictable. Visual cultural researchers can seek information wherever it comes from and work against standardized thinking. Thinking outside the given systems can help them to obtain new insights. Even serendipity can bring forth wonderful opportunities for new insights. Hence, in their research pursuits they should be encouraged to rivet locations of

cartography, connectivity, multiplicity, and plurality. Another rhizomatic source is the internet, since search engines allow the lookers to access information widely. On an ethical basis, in societies, the social beings need to be taught to also actively seek unusual insights: conversing, creating, and moving like rhizomes along planes of immanence.

Thus the employment of rhizomes as a metaphor in visual cultural studies amplifies the scope of multiple readings. Unbroken boundaries crack down at the thrust of forceful, liberal rhizomatic interpretations. Rhizomes situate relationships with far less rigidity and hence promote proliferation of novel notions and untraveled and unmapped terrains.

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Figure 1:

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Figure 2:

https://www.google.co.in/search?q=rhizome&client=ubuntu&hs=0kv&channel=fs&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=dcnAVMGaKIHCmwWasYGIDA&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1333&bih=673#imgdii=_&imgcr=jCuR3I3EuhErIM%253A%3BQ-kkQm3j0PzbtM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.rustyparts.com%252Fwp%252Fwp-content%252Fuploads%252Frhizome%252520clear.gif%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.rustyparts.com%252Fwp%252F2006%252F08%252F01%252Fthe-multitude-and-the-rhizome-a-sermon-on-john-61-21-jesus-feeds-the-5000%252F%3B400%3B324

Ads in Films: A Manipulation of Visual Panorama and the Promotion of Consumer Culture

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Life in the twenty first century cannot be separated from media and consumerism. People depend upon film and media for entertainment. The invention of TV, cinema and information technology conspicuously nourished a media culture. But along with that we see a fast developing consumer society. India, with its large number of people, has always lured a large group of traders. The ancient Indus Valley civilization was a centre of trade and commerce. It was India's wide market place that attracted the colonialists also. With globalization and liberalization the world witnessed a bang of consumers. The same happened in India also. Producing maximum number of consumers is an agenda of the capitalists so that, they can derive maximum profit. The capitalists adopt different strategies for this. Advertisement is an important part of this. The role of mass media is very crucial here.

The twenty first century is characterised by a sound media culture. This cannot be separated from the consumer culture. As Douglas Kellner in his *Media Culture* observes, "Media and consumer culture work hand in hand to generate thought and behaviour that conform to existing values, institutions, beliefs and practices" (Kellner 3). Now, what is meant by consumer culture and how is it linked to media especially to films?

Every individual assumes the role of a consumer at one point or another, because s/he possesses a desire for the acquisition of different commercial products. Consumer culture is a "form of commercial culture and its products are commodities that attempt to attract private profit

produced by giant corporations interested in the accumulation of capital” (Kellner 1). This “accumulation of capital” increases along with an increase in the number of consumers. Hence, different strategies to lure the consumers to the product are employed by the capitalists for this. Consumption is not simply related to purchasing something. It is actually a state of mind which prompts an individual with various desires and needs. This in turn leads to certain demands, the fulfilment of which creates a sense of gratification. According to Pramod K. Nayar consumption is a process but also a product, a consequence of:

- discourses (about life style, media, advertisement, the pleasure of shopping etc.)
- practice (the actual act of shopping, visiting malls etc.)
- imagination (the fantasy, desire, and imagination of particular objects) (*An Introduction to Cultural Studies* 120).

Production and consumption are invariably related to each other. The culture of consumption makes an attempt to build up a life style that emanates from an “identity which is based entirely on what you buy or wear, irrespective of other markers of identity” (120). This is the consumer identity. Thus an identity is moulded for individual that may suit present consumerist scenario. We know that a postmodern subject does not have a fixed identity. If we quote Stuart Hall, “Identity becomes a “moveable feast”, formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in cultural systems which surround us...The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent “self”” (Hall et al. 598).

An individual assumes a consumer identity even before the moment of purchase. She is guided by a desire that arises out of a demand. Hence the first step in the promotion of a product is the creation of a desire in the mind of an individual. This in turn makes him or her to demand a product that may gratify the need which essentially enhances his or her identity in the society. Advertisements play an important role here. Roland Barthes in his essay the “Rhetoric of the Images” says, “in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed a priori by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible” (Barthes 152).

Advertising can be done in different ways- as a still image with caption, as a motion picture for one or two minutes, or as a part of a film or television programmes. Product placement is particular form of advertising in which commercial brand products are included within films. It can be defined as a “practice of including a brand name product, package, signage or other media vehicles for increasing the memorability of the brand and for instant recognition at the point of purchase” (Chavda 1). It is considered to be very effective in the promotion of the particular brand. As we all know India has a rich and alluring film industry. Bollywood and its splendour have always attracted people all over India. It transcends the barriers of language. With its glamour and splendour people are easily attracted towards Hindi films.

Watching film is a process of consumption. People are before an array of visual images which are combined together with various audio and visual effects. They are consuming various signs projected before them. Though people watch films for entertainment, they actually imbibe certain

cultural notions, beliefs and values through them, because art is a product various sociological and cultural elements. A commodification of the elements takes place in different forms of art including films. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, “Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors’ incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed” (1). They form a part of culture industry, a term popularized by Adorno and Horkheimer. The individuals remain as passive consumers of the fun and entertainment provided for them. Even the sentiments are commodified in those films. The spectators are made “unthinking masses of people who accept commodified sentiments and entertainments as ‘natural’” (*Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* 143).

Images of commercial products within a film clearly illustrate how the film acts as a commercial agent of capitalism. The Bollywood is actually a dream world for all in India. Everybody is familiar with Amithabh Bachan, Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Aamir Khan et al. Their reach is not confined within the Hindi speaking areas of the country. They are able to transcend cultural and linguistic pluralities that essentially characterize India. Hence, a manipulation of the Bollywood films by inserting different brand name products would definitely have great influence on the mass society. This is effectively done in many popular films.

The positioning of commercial products is very cleverly done in the narrative of film. This helps to evoke the mind of a consumer hidden within the spectator, because every spectator is a consumer at one time or the

other. But, this happens without the knowledge of the viewer. As for example, the main characters in the film *Taare Zameen Par* are painters. Aamir Khan plays the role of a drawing teacher. Darsheel Safry, who comes as the beloved student of the teacher, is also a skilled painter. However, what interests us is the colours they use for drawing. Those colours are manufactured by a single company called Acron. The shots in which the activity of painting forms an important part project the Acron colours also. But they very skilfully interwoven with the main theme of the film. Now, a spectator, who may be a painter too, would definitely catch the image of the Acron colours and retain it in memory. Next time when s/he goes for a purchase that particular brand will become one of his or her choices. Other products like Red Label, Bournvita, Horlicks etc. are also included in this film. Likewise, Shahrukh Khan's enumeration of the qualities of Nokia Lumia mobile would make it favourite brand of the spectators. Thus many Bollywood films are used by the corporates for the promotion of their products. However, there is another important implication for this activity. The means used by the product manufacturers for the promotion of their product unquestionably build up a consumer culture.

Film is a combination of various still images which are moved rapidly before our eyes, thus creating an impression of reality. It is mixture of different visual and linguistic signs. These signifiers have got many signifieds. They construct and form a set of meanings. In his essay 'Encoding, decoding' Stuart Hall observes, "The level of connotation of the visual signs, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where *already coded* intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on

additional, more active ideological dimensions” (97). Hall makes a distinction between the connotative and denotative aspects of visual signs. The denotative meaning is natural, universal and literal while the connotative one is associative, not fixed and hence ideological. He also says, “Every visual sign in advertising connotes a quality, situation value or inference, which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational positioning” (97). The same happens in product placement also.

The image of the product acts as a sign here. It is juxtaposed along with another sign of the actor. Both of them constitute the meaning of the other. An analysis of the product placement of Boost in *Koi Mil Gaya* clearly illustrates this. The product is supposed to provide good nutrition. A consumption of the product by the film star Hrithik Roshan enhances its status. The combination of the star and the product is intentional. The story of the film deals with development of the protagonist into a superhuman character. Now, the image of the star and the product form a conclusion in the spectator’s mind. It creates an impression that the acquisition of that particular product may enhance his or her life giving a new identity. Here film as a discourse defines the behaviour and identity of a person. It makes a desire in his mind for the product.

The acquisition of the particular brand is supposed to enhance the identity in the society by creating a consumer experience. The important thing here is the contextualisation of the product. It is presented as a part of the scene. No emphasis is given to it. At the same time there is vivid projection of it with its brand name.

As for example, a shot from the film *Bodyguard* is taken. Here, the heroine holding a Sony VAIO laptop may not be connected to the main

story. But it tells a lot indirectly. It conveys the social status of the character in the film. She belongs to the higher class of the society. She is rich and educated and has technical skill. It also implies the difference between the two characters. Now, what about the product? The brand name of the laptop is well projected on the screen. It acts as a symbol here. This connotation is formed in the mind of the spectator, though s/he is unaware about it. His or her eyes easily catch the image. At that point of time his or her role switches over to the role of a consumer, because s/he is a consumer already with needs and desires. This may create a demand in them. It is not confined to a particular class or gender. The product may not be affordable for every individual. Nevertheless, it creates an impression in the audience. This is the initial stage of consumption.

Though this method is indirect, it can be more fruitful in creating a large number of consumers. The target group may vary. Children are attracted with nutritious drinks and foods, candies, toys video games etc. Women are more attracted towards branded shampoos, cosmetics etc., while the brands of mobile phones, cars, suits, shoes etc. readily call the attention of men. Some products have general implication.

The interaction between the film and the audience is significant here. While watching a film the discourse forms a space of interaction with them. The encoded visual signs reach them and they are decoded by the viewers. In the process of decoding everything that is present on the screen contribute to the construction of meaning. People employ their own viewpoints and make their own notions. The cultural codes presented along with the narration take them to a different world. People live in “imagined worlds.” At that time the individual’s imagination shifts among multiple realities. The characters on the screen sometimes allude to their world as

the real one. Thus they are creating a hyperreal world before the audience. In this reality they create themselves an assumed identity with the possession of the branded items projected on the screen. It is more underpinned by the celebrity culture around which the discourse is constructed. This prompts the viewer to further modify their preferences. Further steps of consumption like purchasing and emerges out of the fantasy, desire and imagination which are formed as a result of the discourse in this manner.

All this is actually a result of boom of image culture in the contemporary world. The reality is constructed through various “images, maps and signs that have become an end in themselves.”(Nayar, *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* 49). According to Baudillard, the world is saturated with images. This creates *a hyperreality*. The simulations and excessive signs create an assumed reality. Thus we are consuming the representations in the place of original. This detotalizes the meaning. We assume the images to be real. In his influential work *Simulacra et Simulation* Baudrillard observes that the signs no longer correspond to, or mask, their ‘real-life’ referent but replace it in a world of autonomous ‘floating signifiers’; there has been ‘an implosion of image and reality’. In Neville Wakefield’s opinion this leads into “the simulated non-space of hyperreality. The real is now defined in terms of the media in which it moves” (Selden et al. 201). This gives not a real experience, but only a derived experience.

In the case of product placement the same derived consumer experience is enjoyed by the people. The images become central to the discourse at that point. What Marita Starken and Lisa Cartwright opine about the function of images in ads is true in this regard. According to

them, “Images also have a primary role in the functioning of commerce through advertisements. This means that images are a central aspect of *commodity* culture and consumer societies dependent upon the constant production and consumption of goods in order to function” (189). The role of the spectators is to interpret those images according to their desires and cultural and social backgrounds from which they come.

There are two main important postulations of consumer culture theories. Firstly, “consumption resolves a tension between pursuit of pleasure and morality” (Belt, Ger and Askegaard qtd. in Joy and Li 146). Secondly, “market place cultures are co-created through discursive negotiations and practices” (Joy and Sherry qtd. in Joy and Li 146). Product placement is actually a very cunning method adopted by the capitalists. It creates a particular state of mind within the spectators as result of which they desire for the brand projected on the screen. People, in their pursuit of pleasure and higher lifestyle, think that they can attain life as shown on the screen through the acquisition of the projected brand item. They think that it will definitely enhance their identity in the society. Thus their lifestyle and behaviour are moulded through such kind of discourse. As Marxist theory proposes, art is political. It is a means of asserting power over the less privileged. Aesthetic experience cannot be separated from its ideological dimensions. Concepts of life and its beauty are determined by somebody else by exploiting our aesthetic sense. This *somebody else* is the capitalists. The capitalist ideology manipulates language and narration of films, through which they distort reality that may serve their purpose to create a consumer culture. Thus films are not innocent form of narrative. They are good examples for what Althusser has called ‘ideological apparatus.’ It is a process of ‘interpellation’ in which the individuals

consent to the dominant ideology without being aware of it. People believe that they are free and live as per their likes. But at the same time, they are controlled by the dominant forces. Thus, to conclude, in a capitalist society the corporates govern the likes and dislikes of the individuals through various methods and product placement is only one among them.

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'Cultureless' Media: a Call from Plurality to Singularity

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The term 'Cultureless' is ambiguously multifaceted. Culture seems cultureless and 'culturelessness' positively affirms culture. In this presentation culture is seen as an amalgam of good and bad traits without any kind of sorting or parting which asserts "that culture is to be found everywhere and not just in the high arts or in western Civilization" (Smith and Riley 2) The term 'cultureless' stands for the power to stand apart unabsorbed by a culture -of a certain space and time. A god's eye-view, detached, impersonal and neutral of things that happen in a society is what is expected of media.

First of all, the term 'cultureless' should be defined. Jesus- all prophets like him- was 'cultureless' as he was not taken up or overwhelmed by the culture of his time. He found Samaritan as a good neighbor took water from a Samaritan woman and gave everlasting fountain of life and found no right for the people to punish a prostitute. It was this absence of culture in him that made him to create a new culture. Gandhi withstood the currents of falling a victim to a culture that existed in India between 1888 to 1948. Therefore, the term 'cultureless' stands for the difference that one can result in a society.

Secondly, the phrase 'plurality to singularity' is to be analyzed. The great orators like those mentioned earlier were mediators who spoke to people. The medium then was language. If their language was inadequate, then, the message too would have been corrupted. Marshall McLuhan's dictum: "the medium is the message" (Kumar 489), thus converse how

medium influences the way the message is perceived. From this singularity of function medium got conglomerated to plurality by the advent of modern technological revolutions diminishing its values by becoming part of the culture. It is in connection to this thought that one should see Henry Bergson's comment that language is a human technology that impaired and diminished the values of the collective unconscious. Media stands as a greater language multiplied in all postmodern varieties which have forgotten the singularity of the purpose of being a medium. Instead, it has turned out to be a great contributor, manipulator and mediator in the multi-pluralistic-instituted name, media. Therefore, a call for media to be 'cultureless,' to shed all mosses of tie-ups to be a perfect medium to converse with truth is a need of the times. The mediated communication process devised by Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver speaks of non-deliberate disturbances that may interrupt and affect message: "... the process of sending and receiving a message is not as simple as it may seem. Channel noise (technical or physical interference) or semantic noise (the interference created by language or interpretation) can disrupt or distort the message." (Folkers and Lacy 5) The process share common properties with Wendy Griswold's 'cultural diamond' as there is a creator, receiver, cultural object and the social world as medium in one of the six relations.

Today media covers up facts rather than exposing facts. Propitious to oligopolistic or monopolistic controls it manufactures facts. TRAI's new regulation and recommendations on 'Issues relating to media ownership' reveals how 60 percent of the country's local cable systems are owned by politicians who block other channels at will. It is allowing media to merge to a culture in which it should remain all- vices proof:

By 2012, however, it was clear that something was wrong. At over 135 news channels, about a third owned by politicians and real estate guys...more than 60 percent of the country's local cable systems are owned by politicians who block other channels at will. After the 2009 general election it was discovered that some of the largest newspaper took cash to print or not to print news about a candidate (Kohli and Khendekar.businessstandard.com).

The major portions of media are owned by a few people who own major share in politics and wealth. Newlaundry.com published an infographic of people who owned Indian media. Most of them are owned by family members of Jindal, Kalanithi Maran, Bhatias etc...

Some practical effects of media being 'cultureless' are that it can save lots of time of the readers. In India –as it may be the case anywhere in the world –the readers or viewers of are to read or view many papers and channels to get the truth about an incident as representations go around intimacies. If one is sure of a channel as a perfect medium he can confidently trust and be contented with the content. The efforts to shed the plurality of concerns are to be made from two sides: one from the side of the media owners and the other from those who use it. David Considine gives some suggestion to those who are in the receiving end: "Deconstructing these media representations requires relinquishing the powerful and pervasive notion in our culture that seeing is believing, that what you see is what you get. The real issue, however, is whether we "get" (i.e., understand) what we see" (Considine 82). The five steps proposed by David Considine to promote critical viewership are: Interpreting the internal content of the programme[selecting the genre] , Interpreting the

internal construction of the frame[knowing the task that is done behind], recognizing external forces and factors shaping the programme[knowing how ownership can influence the programmes], comparing and contrasting media representations with reality [comparing information with historical documents] and recognizing and responding to the potential impact of television form and content. (Considine 82) Unless, the receivers of media are trained to receive the message the negative attitude of media cannot be changed.

From the part of the media a lot can be done. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his speech “Let us Respond to India’s call”-after showing great concerns over Indian media’s negative attitude- gives an example of an Israeli news paper which instead of the news of the bombardment of the previous day introduces a person who turned a desert into a garden:

I was in Tel Aviv once and I was reading the Israeli newspaper. It was the day after a lot of attacks and bombardments and deaths had taken place. The Hamas had struck. But the front page of the newspaper had the picture of a Jewish gentleman who in five years had transformed his desert land into an orchid and a granary. It was this inspiring picture that everyone woke up to. The gory details of killings, bombardments, deaths, were inside in the newspaper, buried among other news. (Kalam12)

The usual blame that media sensationalize but do not sensitize originates from the craving of media to get wide coverage and exclusiveness. The longing is part of the culture to which the media world has immersed into. The media crew being trained in disaster management

and at least a member of the crew specially ascribed to give first aid would be something against the trend and thereby a 'cultureless' activity considering the fact that along with the police and the fire-force, media crew do have the greater opportunity of reaching the disaster spot at the earliest immediacy.

The popular art forms like films do have a greater role in making people "cultureless". Insidious gender discrimination goes unnoticed in most cases. Nowhere in films or serials do we see woman allowed to use a dagger or a gun to revenge. In all extreme cases she is allowed to use either her chappals or the broom. Those archetypal weapons do find no modern or postmodern varieties. Another 'miss-representation' is the propagation of the slimness as the quality of woman. Everything that is designed for her bears slimness. Sleek and meek, thus rhymes with weak- allusive to the age old patterns of weaker sex. Slim beauty is widely popularized by actresses and models through media that thinspiration gets wide acclamation. In the web, sites are filled up by quotes to promote thinspiration. The danger of teenage and grown up woman becoming a victim to anorexia nervosa is common. Only those who will to be 'cultureless' can stand against the trend. The way media covers issues related to crimes against woman needs to be debated. The images of victims-head hidden between legs with torn dresses and tears running down the cheeks give a false concept when seen in contrast to the culprits who appear head held high.

There remain enormous opportunities for media to be different from the rest. Only those who belong to the cult of 'cultureless' can cultivate and bring drastic changes in the society. The call, finally, is to remain part and apart-at the same time- in the culture in which we live as to feel detached enough to whistle blow the mosses that gather around media and culture.

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Kabooliwala (1993), Penpattanam (2010) and Ee Adutha Kalathu (2012): Divergent Cinematic Discourses on Waste

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Among the several Malayalam films that depict slums and waste, *Kabooliwala* (1993), *Penpattanam* (2010) and *Ee Adutha Kalathu* (2012) in particular stand out since they present waste as a vibrant and affectively charged medium demanding a rethinking on the relations between people and things. All the three films depict marginalized subjects who have learned to fashion a living from refuse. These films express sensitivity to its subject matter in varying degrees, and have complex ways in weaving together reflections on trash and decay with meditations on mortality and finitude. In *Kabooliwala*, Kannas and Kadalass, two memorable characters, make a living from waste. They live a pristine life with the numerous street urchins who are labelled in the film as ‘theruvintemakkal’—people without identity or specific dwelling places. *Penpattanam* has a set of four Kudumbashree workers who collect waste from certain assigned places professionally--yet the profession carries very little public recognition and dignity. In *Ee Adutha Kalathu*, the protagonist is Vishnu a family man who salvages a living by transforming items collected from the huge garbage dump yard and recasting them into eye-catching trifles. These three films have explicitly humanist frameworks which construct an emotionally charged appeal to spectators. Despite contrasts in tone, mode of address, aesthetic technique and contexts of production and reception, each of these films is preoccupied by the question of how people might live differently with waste. *Kabooliwala*, *Penpattanam*, and *Ee Adutha Kalathu* do more than just reflect the range of ecological, economic or ethical questions that

cluster around trash. They are ethical to the extent that they contribute new sensibilities and invite new ways of thinking and feeling about trash and about the human subjects who form relations with it. *Kabooliwala Penpattanam*, and *Ee Adutha Kalathu* seem to emphasize the inherent creativity and agency that is integral to even the most passive and inanimate seeming matter.

Waste occupies a strategic position within the current critical and social debates because it is the kind of matter we frequently take to be at the antipodes of human life: dead, inert, disgusting and without value, meaning or agency of any kind. Such a simplistic understanding of waste gets challenged or complicated when it is cast as the purely symbolic *other* of human agency—a lively matter, which shares in some of the creative activity we tend to assume is a distinctive marker of human life. As Hawkins notes in *The Ethics of Waste*, such binaries are implicit within many dominant accounts of rubbish. In these accounts, there is a tendency to lock trash into a binary of: things vs humans, in which all of the agency, privilege and value rests on the human side of the equation; waste is simply that which must be ‘managed,’ relegated to the outside, or just overlooked. Along these lines, Hawkins notes: ‘waste is a central character in an already well-established disenchantment story’ (Hawkins 2006: 8-9). Jane Bennett notes in *Vibrant Matter* (2010) that, it is precisely this image ‘of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter’ that ‘feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption’. It does so, she notes ‘by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of non-human powers circulating around and within human bodies’ (Bennett 2010: xi). In this framework, Hawkins notes, waste ‘can only be bad’; it ‘makes us feel bad, its presence disgusts and horrifies

us, it wrecks everything' (Hawkins 2006: 9-10). These 'disenchantment stories' make us feel bad about waste and wasting. Hawkins notes that instead of 'inspiring positive action', a 'politics based on the imperative to reform the self in the name of nature can easily slide into moralism or resentment, distracting attention from how we actually live with waste and blinding us to the ubiquity of ethical work' (Hawkins 2006:12-13). In place of this image of a disenchanted world, new materialisms develop their account of ethics from a basis of acknowledging the agency and vibrancy of matter. As Bennett notes, for vital materialists:

[T]he starting point of ethics is [...] the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality. We are vital materiality and we are surrounded by it, though we do not always see it that way. The ethical task at hand here is to cultivate the ability to discern non-human vitality, to become perceptually open to it. (2010: 3)

As Bennett suggests here, this ethical model is not dependent on the cultivation of a conscious moral attitude that seeks to 'do one's bit for the planet', but proceeds from a more basic level of embodied receptivity to the liveliness of matter. Such an ethics calls for a perceptual praxis: the cultivation of a disposition of 'anticipatory readiness' and a 'perceptual style open to' what Bennett calls the affective force of 'thing-power': 'the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our experience' (2010: xiv).

The medium of film would appear to lend itself particularly well to this ethical task of cultivating our perceptual ability to 'discern non-human vitality' (Bennett 2010: 3). Indeed, many canonical film theories have

defined cinema precisely in relation to its ability to foster a renewed attentiveness to materiality, to bring spectators into intimate contact with what Siegfried Kracauer calls ‘the refuse’ of existence (1960: 54). This new materialist model of ethics may be used to explore how these three Malayalam films about waste respond to this challenge. Following Bennett and Hawkins, we consider how these films engage with the ‘disenchantment stories’ that cluster around waste, and consider the aesthetic strategies each adopts to explore relationships between people and things.

The three Malayalam films in varying degrees may be termed ‘redemption narratives’—stories that mine the connection between salvaging and salvation, foregrounding waste’s ability to redeem human lives in a parallel process through which waste is recognized as a vital resource. While the focus in these narratives on the protean liveliness of waste has the potential to suspend or challenge ontological distinctions between humans and things, these cinematic discourses generate a reassuring image of waste that is hospitable to human needs and amenable to our emotional investments.

Kabooliwala, *Penpattanam*, and *Ee Adutha Kalathu* engage with the ‘disenchantment stories’ that cluster around waste. These films emphasize the life-affirming feelings that can be generated from encounters with trash if we learn to see it differently.

Kabooliwala was seen at the time of its release as a moving film, described by critics and viewers in distinctly emotional terms. The movie is an optimistic, moderately moving crowd-pleaser that manages to uplift the spirit while set against the backdrop of garbage. In the movie feel-good emotions are often marshalled when waste is framed cinematically in more

affirmative terms, as a source of enchantment. The story is not so much about waste but about those who make a living out of it-- Kanas and Kadalas. As their name indicates they are no less than waste. They, like waste, do not belong anywhere. Like waste that can be found anywhere, they live anywhere and everywhere. They don't have a home they can call their own, they belong to nowhere. In a world whose values are reduced to the philosophy of 'use and throw,' these two vulnerable and gullible characters become expendable. The film is about their attempt to belong to the 'world of dignity and normalcy'—but their attempts get repeatedly thwarted. Kannas and Kadalass become just like waste that constantly threatens to cross boundaries and is always swept aside. In that sense the film deals with the story of the marginalised who can never completely redeem themselves from their poor past and assimilate themselves to the mainstream society. Despite this both the characters retain a resilient, generous humanity that is clearly brought to the surface by their own tough, open spirit and positive attitude. A vital part of the film's allure is the way that it seeks to convert the negative affective resonances of waste found in environmental discourses--the sort that make us feel bad--into a more uplifting, feel-good cinematic experience. Both Kannas and Kadalass embody an ethical sensibility founded on a willingness to notice and to care for what is overlooked: in Bennett's terms, to become 'perceptually open' to waste's vitality and possibilities. This is evident when the two rag-picking tramps offer care and protection to the neglected and the marginalized--the widowed middle-aged lady and her two unmarried daughters and later an orphaned street musician in search of a bugle. As the street urchins who play the role of chorus in the film say: 'they never learn' and continue to be ready for sacrifices for the thankless members of the

privileged society who accidentally slip into the world of the vagabonds. The film also seeks to implicate spectators into this ethical project, asking us to invest our attention and emotion in subjects that we might otherwise choose to ignore. A key moment in which the film solicits the spectator's emotional involvement occurs towards the end when the bugle—the priceless object of love and attachment—gets thrown out and joins the world of worthless trash. The film works to cultivate a 'humanist awareness' of, and interpellation into, 'a community of rag-picking humanitarians.' The film foregrounds the redemptive meanings of trash, seeking to convert it into a moving emotional encounter. Though the film does very little to redraw relations between human and non-human life, or to implicate us ethically in what is shown, it foregrounds the cathartic, redemptive capacities of the visual media to transform feel-bad poverty and human suffering into an uplifting, feel-good message, while absolving us of responsibility for what we see.

While 'disenchantment stories' picture waste as symptoms of socio-economic or ecological discontent, redemption narratives present it in terms of a cathartic working through, offering redemptive solutions to these same problems.

Penpattanam, like *Kabooliwala*, emphasizes the life-affirming feelings that get generated from encounters with trash and in this film also a feel-good factor gets extracted from a revitalized attentiveness to rubbish. It pictures a community of people who forge novel alliances with waste, and who thus re-define trash as a resource. More than *Kabooliwala*, it is *Penpattanam* that argues for the recognition of waste's transformative and uplifting potential. The film is the story of four women who are active members of kudumbasree. The film undoubtedly shows the strength of poor

women who make a living out of clearing garbage in the city and is a visual tribute to them. The film is also a strong answer to those who consider women as 'worthless'. They are in a sense vanguard of society as they ensure the health of society by clearing the dirt of the city. Unlike the characters in *Kabooliwala*, these characters have homes and families though they are partially fractured ones. Although the film looks at difficult social issues, it is never depressing. The waste-collectors in the film retain a resilient, generous humanity that is clearly brought to the surface by their tough, open spirit. *Penpattanam*, creates an affirmative experience with extraordinary subtlety and intelligence, calling for a renewed attentiveness to waste that also challenges common sense ideas of what it means to be human.

Waste is the dark character in urban narratives. Like in *Kabooliwala*, and *Penpattanam*, in *Ee Adutha Kalathu* also waste appears as part of city landscape. All the three films open with a sequence of rag pickers, garbage collectors or garbage trucks clearing the city of its waste and dirt. *Ee Adutha Kalathu* begins with scene of a busy city, which is over 1500 years old, and it has a huge garbage dump yard which is not so old, yet this waste yard is already bursting at its seams and threatens to choke the life out of the city. The waste is supposed to be recycled but the authorities are not bothered. The film captures something of the cinematic richness and intensity of the setting--'thoppil shala,'--as hulking trucks file in to deliver fresh material to a vast, seemingly endless sea of rubbish. The scale of these scenes is especially impressive, framing waste as a cinematic spectacle that is both awe-inspiring and anxiety inducing in its vastness. Such moments, when waste is framed on such a monumental scale, confront spectators with snippets of the kind of intimate, sensory 'thing-

power' that a cinematic ethics of waste is charged with disclosing. There is something about how small and vulnerable a rag-picker like Vishnu looks against the shifting mountains of rubbish that creates a striking sense of waste's uncanny agency and vitality, calling into question just how much control or mastery human subjects really do wield in the face such colossal chaos. But while these moments have the potential to confront us both viscerally and intellectually with the vibrant creativity of matter, and to question the place of humans at the putative centre of the universe, the film largely fails to deliver on this critique. As the film progresses, it is clear that the main interest in filming waste remains squarely on the 'human interest' angle, and on the sentimental reactions that their stories might generate. The film drums up emotional response as a source of moral empathy, which forgoes the ambiguity and labour of ethical reflection in order to 'dictate' or 'guarantee' a less-challenging univocal response. Throughout the film, we are repeatedly encouraged to sympathize with the plight of the Vishnu and his dreams of leading a better life.

As the likes of Vishnu gropes the bin for survival, a group of half-hearted environmental activists are raising voice to close down the dump yard though ironically they also litter the space around them. As the camera slowly at close angle scans the waste yard that stretches several miles, it draws our attention to the repressed and that which it hides. The scene is disturbing, horrifying and easily becomes the urban gothic in cinematic visualization. The city administration looks at this ocean of waste as a nuisance, but it becomes a treasure trove for Vishnu who makes a living out of refuse. He creatively appropriates waste. Where the city life ends, his begins. It is he instead of the authorities, who recycles the waste and sends

it back to the city. For Vishnu this is site from which he gathers knowledge about the world.

Ee Adutha Kalathu opens up the question of the person-thing relation in such a way that we are able to see the complexities of a different and radical ethics of waste at work. What makes this ethics different and radical is the way that the film asks us to look past disenchantment stories, to notice waste in ways that disrupt the boundaries between subject and object, human and non-human, useful and useless, dead and alive. Paradoxically, the film accomplishes this questioning of boundaries between human and non-human through an explicitly humanist framework, emphasizing how the distinctly human values of compassion and generosity are vital for an ethics of waste.

Vishnu forages the garbage dump of ‘thoppil shala’ and gleanes several ‘useful things’: a discarded picture tube, broken statues, bottles, containers and tins of various sizes, etc. The film uses the variety of these gleaned objects as a means of telescoping the extraordinary range of meanings, values and uses that humans establish with things that, for one reason or another, are thrown away. The meaning of these discarded objects is situated alternately as livelihood, as commodity, as a source of life-sustenance, as something to be gleaned, or as unsalvageable waste. These competing frames of reference testify to the diversity of meanings, values, uses and relations that humans establish with the material world. They also indicate the inherent instability of the concept of waste, since what is taken for granted by one person as being unfit for human consumption is seen as a perfectly valuable source of sustenance for another. It is precisely this semantic instability that *Ee Adutha Kalathu* seeks to highlight as the film unfolds. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to discern

in any objective sense what waste *is*, since it can always be recuperated for use. And indeed, an important aspect of the ‘radical ethics’ of waste relates to the trouble taken for our common sense ways of apprehending and evaluating what trash *is* at a very basic level.

The redemption narrative produces a reassuring image of waste, making us feel good, but also absolving us of any responsibility. Although this film emphasizes the ethical questions that subtend our relations with waste, it reproduces effects that Hawkins ascribes to feel-bad disenchantment stories: it ‘slide [s] into moralism, distracting attention from how we actually live with waste and blinding us to the ubiquity of ethical work’ (Hawkins 2006:13).

Interestingly, *Ee Adutha Kalathu* treats the concept of waste at several levels—at social, human, psychological. The external waste (garbage dump of thoppil shala) is symptomatic of the internal waste of the human mind which constantly poses a threat to relations and self. The movie brings to fore, varieties of waste in different hues and colour, in different forms and shapes. For instance in its title sequence the background score is filled by noises from the city (cacophony) which is a form of waste, absolutely meaningless and disturbing. It carries the sounds of visual advertisements, announcements, crude dialogues and songs from films, which when removed from their context becomes useless and nonsensical trash.

The film focuses on the lives of different characters living in a city who have something to hide from their near and dear ones, be it characters like Ajay Kurien, his wife, Tommy Cherian (the commissioner), his journalist girlfriend, or Vishnu. All have a dark past/ secret, which they repress and

which constantly threatens to surface like the garbage dump in the city, which constantly threatens to wreak havoc on the normalcy of city life.

Even minor characters form part of the visual thesis on ‘waste.’ The yellow journalist, who runs a sleazy trash magazine, is trying to create sensation out of the sleazy secrets of public figures. In other words he makes a living out of waste and is referred to as “Theettam” Ramachandran (symbolic of this, he has a yellow car!). He like waste is a constant threat to people with shady deals. He refers to himself as fire that can burn to ashes the image of ‘dignified people’ in society.

The serial killer is another figure who belongs to this character type. He loots houses where there are only old people abandoned or left behind by their children. They represent an ever-increasing segment of sidelined people—the old and the invalid, the products of the new social polarization into nuclear families— who are the human residual waste in society. In a way the serial killer does serve the demand of society to eliminate human waste.

Ee Adutha Kalathu focuses on the lives of different characters living in a city, who have something to hide from their near and dear ones, be it the characters of Ajay Kurien, his wife, Tommy Cherian, his journalist girlfriend, or Vishnu. All have a dark past/ secret, which they repress and which constantly threatens to surface like the garbage dump in the city, which constantly threaten wreak havoc on the normalcy of city life.

The film generates a highly complex mood or tone; while the emphasis on decay (and perhaps death) creates a sense of melancholy, such disenchanting feelings are held in check by the film’s emphasis on the vibrant, energetic material processes that animate both human and non-human matter. It is this gesture of creating new relations between people

and waste, while suspending their hierarchical meanings, which is the source of the film's ethical value. The feel-good aspect of the film arguably sustains that project, by moving spectators gently towards an affirmative recognition of our deep imbrications with the materiality of waste and with things we choose not to see. While it constructs a moving, uplifting message about humans and waste, this film rejects the kinds of hierarchies that underpin most humanisms. Instead, it negotiates a revised understanding of the human that is enhanced and expanded through an ethical aesthetic that recognizes both disenchantment and 'thing-power' as a property of both human and non-human life.

In the three films under discussion, waste is nothing more or less than a by-product of human attention and affection: it is what we designate as unworthy of our concern or feeling. And this understanding of waste as a corollary of human attention and affection is central to the ethical and aesthetic understanding of the films under discussion. The central metaphor in these three movies connects activities of rag-pickers, and gleaners who seek out residual value in what has been thrown away, with the process of gathering up and saving images of the marginal and overlooked.

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Mediacracy' and Transcreation: Problematizing the Fabricated Paradigm of Honour in *Drishyam*

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In *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (1984) K. Turner states "popular culture and the mass media have a symbiotic relationship: each depends on the other in an intimate collaboration" (4). Facts and stories get modified, altered and subverted through popular transmission to such an extent today that the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between media and culture gets monitored and scrutinised frequently. Values, norms and taboos become increasingly designed and popularised by the media. The Mohanlal-starrer Jeethu Joseph thriller *Drishyam* (2014) is a case in point. This paper attempts, by unravelling the multiple facets of the complex relationship between media and culture as instanced in *Drishyam*, to put in perspective the role media plays in moulding, altering and controlling public opinion. It also problematizes the fabricated paradigm of honour projected by the movie. This paper makes use of the term 'mediacracy' to signify the power that media wields - a situation in which media dominates or controls the populace (A system wherein people stop thinking and start listening exclusively to the media regarding what the important issues are and what they should do about them. The term is a play on democracy/bureaucracy and news media; possible reference to being mediocre).

The narrative of the movie revolves around the efforts of the protagonist Georgekutty (played by Mohanlal) to cover up a murder that happens in his home. His beloved wife and children are so dear to him that he would do anything to save them. The murder itself was inadvertent; it

was more an effort by a girl (Georgekutty's elder daughter) to save her honour. However, the family can expect no mercy, for the murdered is the son of a top police officer. What ensues is an exciting combat between truth and falsity. The protagonist gets the audience to cheer and celebrate his moves. The audience prod on and applaud each lie that the protagonist utters; fair becomes foul, foul becomes fair; the mesmerized spectator leaves the theatre pleased that poetic justice prevailed.

The movie got rave reviews; it was hailed as an emphatic statement of exceptional storytelling skills. The director Jeethu Joseph won plaudits from all quarters for the brilliant script, megastar Mohanlal was praised by all and sundry for the acting master-class he gave and the movie became one of the all-time hits of the Malayalam film industry. Then, as enchantment gave way to ratiocination, problems started. The custodians of law reacted aggressively. Additional Director General of Police T P Sen Kumar criticised the movie openly and expressed his fears that the film could give out a wrong message to the audience. He strongly felt that the movie could give criminals ideas on how to hide a crime. Moreover, to quote him, "when you are being blackmailed by someone, you should approach the police and not take the law into your own hands". According to Trivandrum City Police Commissioner P Vijayan, there can be many among the audience who do not have the discretion to understand the cinematic element of the film and who could potentially use the tactics used by the protagonist of the movie for criminal purposes. Inspector General K Padma Kumar also expressed his reservations about the movie. He felt that the message of the film was disturbing in that nothing could justify a crime. He asks, "if I am hungry and have mouths to feed, do I have the right to rob

someone?" And he adds, "the said film seemed like an educational film on how to cover up a crime".

The media took centre-stage; several actual murders which were meticulously planned, accomplished and hid from the police were attributed by the media as an effect of 'Drishyam' phenomenon. To make matters worse, the two accused in the Nilambur murder case confessed that their modus operandi to dispose of the victim's body was inspired by Drishyam. Like in the film, they tried to destroy all evidences to make it seem as if the crime never happened. The killers put the woman's body in a bag and dumped it in a pond. They tied a stone to the sack to make sure that the bag did not surface. Apart from this, the murderers seem to have received one more tip from the film. In Drishyam, the protagonist deposits the victim's mobile phone sim card in a truck which goes out of the state, in a deliberate effort to mislead the police. Similarly, in the real-life incident, the murderers leave the woman's sim card on the railway track at a place located some forty kilometres away from the crime scene, again to hoodwink the police officials.

Unprecedented scrutiny by 'mediacracy' followed. It was celebration time for the media as chat shows, interviews and discussions analysed threadbare the pros and cons of the issue. What was at stake was the role of art in delighting and entertaining the masses. Filmmakers and the Censor Board came to the movie's defence, asserting that a film should be seen as a film, and that viewers are not idiots to copy those in real life. The director and the actor expressed their dissent over the arrogance of mediacracy that blamed the movie for the ills of society. Jeethu Joseph claimed that his is a work of fiction and shows how some people react in

certain circumstances. He accused the police of using his film's name to cover up their fault.

In a write-up in Malayala Manorama newspaper, Mohanlal maintained that movies which are just art forms cannot be copied to real life, and hence cannot be the inspiration for crimes. Lal even pointed out the renowned Kathakali story, Baalivadham as an example. Just as the aattakadha, immensely popular with the Malayali audience, cannot be blamed for the sibling rivalries in Kerala, movies like Drishyam cannot be censured for inspiring people to do crimes. He shared his disappointment with the media's attitude that held the movie culpable for criminal acts in the state. He insisted that people should understand that cinema is born out of somebody's imagination and it is not reality. He also clarified that Drishyam conveys some good messages apart from the basic plot and the movie does not support any type of criminal activities. Like the movie, its post-mortem by the media and the public too turned out to be a thriller!

Now, looking back at the whole episode, one cannot miss the fact that the quintessential Drishyam discourse is a sordid manifestation of the complex media- culture interaction. The movie itself got garbed as a site that negotiates and transcreates social values and norms. As we trace the genesis of Drishyam, it becomes more and more obvious that the movie itself was an offshoot of the media- culture interaction. Jeethu Joseph, who penned the script and directed the movie, grew up reading the likes of Agatha Christie. The script, as Jeethu acknowledged, was inspired by detailed descriptions on how the criminal was tracked and nabbed – the official modus operandi used in the investigation – narrated publicly, yes, by police officers, via the media.

Again, Georgekutty, the protagonist of the movie, is a cinema-crazy farmer, who runs a local cable network business while cherishing the dream of owning a theatre one day. He is parsimonious and does not like to squander money on anything beyond the basic necessities. His only concern except for his family is watching movies. He spends most of his time in front of the television in his small office. He is so obsessed with movies that he makes every major decision in life by subconsciously taking an example from some film he has seen. And when the situation gets tough, making use of ideas from the movies he has watched Georgekutty masterminds the script within the master-script – another offshoot of the same media-culture interaction – and deploys it to outsmart the enforcers of law. He does not traverse any extraordinarily heroic path in his endeavour to protect his family, but he cleverly carries out all that is justifiable for a person with only basic education, a passion for cinema and an ardent love for his wife and children.

The function of art – didactic or aesthetic – is yet again problematised. For Georgekutty, the movies performed both functions to perfection. They delighted and entertained him initially, and when the situation demanded they instructed him to take cues from the movies themselves on how to save a family from ignominy and disgrace. Armed with these movie-taught lessons, he confronted and outfoxed the entire police outfit. However, those who criticized the movie for sending out a wrong message saw only the didactic side of art. They forgot that it was first and foremost a movie, a product of the entertainment industry that its primary and most important objective was to entertain people, to help them forget the worries of life.

Drishyam audaciously put forward a fresh sense of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ based on the sincere convictions of a scrupulous man. Of course, these rights and wrongs were obviously not in line with the existing criminal laws of the land. So the success of the movie hinged on the possibility that our nonchalant culture would flout codes and conventions to salvage the honour of a ‘criminal’ family, provided it is convinced. To the success of Drishyam, the audience stood firmly with the convictions of Georgekutty till the very end.

The movie broke most box-office collection records and the media celebrated the success passionately. But the circle hadn’t come full round. As the movie began to be hounded by controversies, the media shifted its stance and educated the masses about the ill-effects perpetrated by the movie. This tale, unlike the movie which inspired it, had a tragic end, for the very culture that initially embraced the movie as its own and rejoiced at its success later slammed and ostracized it, at the behest of ‘mediacracy’, for inspiring and perpetrating crimes.

Now, leaving this discussion incomplete for the time being, this paper invites your attention to a certain hitherto unexplored aspect of the movie that could potentially unravel the role media plays in fabricating the contours of an archetypal ‘Indian’ culture. The plot of the movie revolves around the video that Varun, the teenaged prodigal son of a top police officer, captures of Georgekutty’s daughter bathing during a nature camp. He intimidates the girl, threatening to upload the video onto the internet if she doesn’t surrender to his wishes. The girl unburdens her heart to her mother who intervenes, beseeching the youngster not to upload the video as the entire family will then have to commit suicide since their honour will be compromised. Behind the thin veneer of a mother’s pleas to salvage the

honour of her daughter and family, a discerning critic can see camouflaged the faint outlines of the dictates of a fabricated culture.

To start with, the circumstance in which this unpleasant incident takes place emphasizes the widely prevalent notion that sending girls outside the safety of their homes is dangerous. Drishyam boldly unravels the hypocrisy of a culture that inextricably links a woman's identity with her "virtue". The mother's supplication simply plays up to the conviction that if a girl 'loses' her 'honour', then the only feasible way out is death. Not just for her but for her entire family. This thought surfaces time and again in movies, although in real life, survivors of sexual abuse and their families are beginning to fight their battles without being cowed down by the fear of loss of 'reputation'.

Had it been a different cultural milieu, the mother would then probably have faced Varun boldly and asked him to destroy the video. She would still have protested on behalf of her daughter and fought for her. But she wouldn't have used the language, tone and reasons that she did; she wouldn't have framed the issue in the problematic paradigm of honour. She would then present her case as one that involves violation of her privacy and bodily integrity. The story wouldn't have suffered one bit; it would still have been as convincing as it is now. However, ifs and buts are of no use. This is a culture framed and fabricated by a media that wants to limit it to a superficial 'indian'ness while bombarding it with cultural specimens of the West. One can expect nothing better from a market-driven media that bases itself on the dictates of Western culture.

Another related issue begs our consideration here. During his outburst against the movie, Additional Director General of Police T P Sen Kumar had said, "We can't ask such films to be banned, but at least there

should be a right message at the end. A girl who hides such a murder will turn into a psychiatric patient later on in real life." What does he mean here? Would the movie have been acceptable to the lawgivers had it ended with shots of an asylum with Georgekutty's daughters as inmates? Wouldn't the criminals still have had the opportunity to master the strategies in covering up a crime? No reasonable person would agree that "a right message in the end" would convince criminals to stay away from crimes. So, this is just another event that underscores the hypocrisy of our culture, a culture that finds fault with movies like *Drishyam* for sending 'a wrong message to the audience', one that approves as didactic, adult-movies that close with the tragic end of a fallen woman, thus imparting a "lesson". A culture created and sustained by the media can perhaps behave no better!

Coming back to our original discussion, one feels that making criminal-thinking public through a popular medium like the movie need not always be wrong. Rather than helping criminals hide crimes and deceive the police, such public scrutiny of criminal behaviour only help the enforcers of law in anticipating and preventing crimes. The possibilities that a criminal mind could explore can never be completely exhausted; they are simply infinite. If a Jeethu Joseph hadn't done that, some criminal would have. And that could only have made matters worse. So, instead of blaming the movie for perpetrating crimes, the enforcers of law should have taken the cue from the movie and anticipated and prevented such criminal behaviour. Further, more than any movie, it is the actual descriptions, mostly on television, by police, detailing their modus operandi in tracking and nabbing some criminal, that help criminals more in covering up their paths and crimes. This can really be counterproductive

since the criminal, who is being enlightened about the official ways of investigation, will come up with a better, if not more sinister, plan to beat the police. Above all, it is a matter of choice. To round off, this scrutiny strongly feels that making criminal behaviour public should be deemed beneficial in that it would forestall possibilities of criminal behaviour stemming from such ingenious but deviant thinking.

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Imaged Selves: Demystifying Pop Culture Icons

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‘Popular Culture’, the very term brings in a gamut of meanings, feelings and associations. Just as fish inside water, we are living and breathing in popular culture every moment of our lives. All-encompassing and all-pervading as popular culture is, it eludes an easy definition. Popular culture is that which defines the trend and taste of the times. As explicit from the very word ‘popular’, popular culture enjoys a wide mass appeal and it catches on across peoples and cultures like wild fire. Popular culture could be used as an umbrella term for a whole range of perspectives, attitudes, tastes, values preferences and choices shared by a wide range of people. It also comprises media and cultural artifacts like film, fashion, food preferences, ads, tv shows, cyber culture and the like which all have a key role in defining the fad of the times. In a general sense it’s peoples culture that rules the society at a given time. To cite Ray Browne’s words from his essay ‘Folklore to Populore’: “Popular culture consists of the aspects of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, customs, and tastes that define the people of any society”. Popular culture is, in the historic use of term, the culture of the people. Popular culture or ‘Pop culture’, which originated in the late 19th century, is considered to have been christened from Pop music, which was then the reigning rage. Initially, it was regarded as the leftover of culture, as distinct and debased from high culture, with its elitist appeal. However the assigned distinction between cultures has faded away. More interestingly, in times of consumerism, what is popular is what is prime. Popular culture often acts as a binding force in bringing people from heterogeneous cultures with mixed tastes and values together. Culture

Theory often takes a sardonic view of popular culture, while engaged in unraveling the politics and problematic that lies behind the creation of homogenized taste. A key observation that has been made in this respect is that popular culture, regarded as the manna of the masses, does not exist as such but is often created, modified and marketed dexterously. As art hides the artifice; popular culture, which is often mediated and channeled by consumer capitalism, guises itself as the popular choice, or as the taste of the people. Admitting that culture is never stagnant and that popular culture provides scope for both domination and resistance; it remains an undeniable fact that mass media and capitalist marketing has a defining say in matters of popular choice and culture. A more puzzling problem that intrigues theorists of popular culture is that culture which is catered through mass media often mediates reality with its simulations or images, which in turn replace reality, akin to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra.

In keeping with the problematics and ideological stances behind representation in popular culture, my paper attempts to contest and demystify some representative icons of popular culture, who are widely accepted as cult figures and hence believed to exist in their own right. The key argument that the paper posits in this respect is that the icon does not exist as such; but is often systematically and discursively constituted through a variety of mediations and is then proliferated as a symbol devoid of his contextual and ideological moorings. A deconstructive reading of the icons is carried out to unravel the larger latent networks of power and industry that are behind the generation of taste and mass appeal.

Pop culture icon could be defined as a celebrity, character, or object whose exposure in pop culture constitutes a defining characteristic of a given society or era. He often becomes a cult figure who enjoys wide mass

appeal and his phenomenal popularity withstands posterity. He is a hero of the people, an apostle of a way of life and a larger than life symbol who is often looked upon as a model to emulate. A quasi divine mantle is cast upon his being and his persona and preferences are manifested to larger than life proportions. The popularity and prestige of the pop icon remaining uncontested, the proliferation of his images and ideas through the mass media and corporate enterprise remains dubitable. Pop icon is often a celebrity who is an exhibitionist before camera gaze, who loves to display himself and to document his life. Oft a time, he loves lime light and in the course gets entrapped in it, to such an extent that his life, oddities and idiosyncrasies become a spectacle and part of the image which broadens out overshadowing the man himself. The real life and accomplishments of the pop icon are often mythified and mystified through a clever representational strategy; which mediates the icon through a procedure of selective perception, idolization, deletion and simulation. Ultimately, in the case of pop icon the media generated myth through its wide proliferation replaces and outlives the man and his message. The high visibility and proliferation of the pop icon, in turn becomes a discourse. An icon as a person ceases to exist, in turn he is manifested, manufactured and marketed by many inter-related industries, namely, representation industry, endorsement industry, coaching industry, legal industry, appearance industry and cultural production, which all nurture the Culture Industry. (as underlined in *High Visibility: The Making and Marketing of Professionals to Celebrities*). This paradoxical situation is brought to light through a deconstructive perception of some representative icons of our times.

Che: The Legendary Brand.

Ernesto Che Guevara, popularly known as Che; the pioneer of Cuban revolution and guerrilla leader in South America is not just lauded as a martyred hero, but as an archetype of rebellion and revolution worldwide. After his execution by the Bolivian army, he was regarded as a martyred hero by generations of leftists worldwide, and his image became an icon of leftist radicalism and anti-imperialism. More interestingly, his stylized visage popularized through Alberto Korda's photograph of him, titled *Guerrillero Heroico* has become a ubiquitous countercultural symbol of rebellion and global insignia in popular culture. Guevara remains both a revered and reviled historical figure, polarized in the collective imagination in a multitude of biographies, memoirs, essays, documentaries, songs, and films. As a result of his perceived martyrdom, poetic invocations for class struggle, and desire to create the consciousness of a "new man" driven by moral rather than material incentives, he has evolved into a quintessential icon of youth, counterculture and radicalism.

Ironically, Che the harbinger of revolution has been transformed into apostle of consumer capitalism in postmodern times. *Guerrillero Heroico*, regarded as the most famous and popular photograph has depersonalized the life and ideology of Che and has aligned him with the masses. In urbanscapes and counter culture he has become a synonym of alternate lifestyle, youthful rebellion and anti-establishment preferences which are fad among the youth. He has become, as author Michael Casey notes in *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*, "the quintessential postmodern icon signifying anything to anyone and everything to everyone". This allows Che to operate as both a fashionable de-politicized logo who has become a fashionable stereotype of youthful rebellion and hence a misunderstood and misrepresented martyr; a larger than life brand

who adorns billboards, t-shirts, collectables curios and other innumerable youth targeted commodities churned out by consumer capitalism.

Marlyn Monroe: Anatomy of a Sex Symbol

Marlyn Monroe, the ultimate sex symbol and silver screen goddess, has continued to charm millions with her glamour and allure ever since her first screen appearance. Norma Jeane Mortenson, an enticing beauty with a life story of abandonment and depravity renamed and remoulded her personality by banking in on her sex appeal, which won her stupendous fame and adoration. This quintessential Hollywood star with her appeal and aura had a unique combination of creamy beauty, sexual allure, and playfulness which lead to her ascension as a pop culture queen. However the glitz and glamour of her media image canopied the gruesome experiences of sexual abuse, troubled relationships and a vexed mind which lead to her untimely death. Monroe's tale has become a saga as well as a foreboding for many an actress and starlet. Monroe's glamour which served as her ticket to fame often stereotyped herself to the persona of the dumb and sexy blonde.

Monroe a unique combination of sensuality and style was mediated as the glorified pin up girl of Hollywood. One of the most famous images of Marilyn Monroe, the 'subway' scene in *The Seven Year Itch*, which captures her with skirt billowing around her waist, has been rendered as iconic in popular imagination, through its wide propagation. The image has often replaced the actress by being tellingly representative of Monroe's status as a sex symbol. The celebrated iconic image of Monroe also serves as a n emblem marking the role of woman in conventional cinema an object of male gaze and pleasure, which Mulvey terms as scopophilia.

Bob Marley: Of Music and Marijuana.

Marley, for millions is muse of the underdogs. A Jamaican reggae singer, songwriter and musician; from the slums of his native land he soared high to become an international superstar, an ambassador of black cultures and a musician loved worldwide. The release of his album, Exodus in 1977 shot him to international repute and produced him as the world's bestselling artists of all time. Marley's fame springs both from his music as well as the ideology which he came to represent, which was an embodiment of Jamaica's distinctive cultural heritage and spiritual traditions. Marley's Rastafarianism was central to his lifestyle and his music, which often sang the praises of Jah. Key to Rastafarianism is the conception of Africa as the motherland, and the idolatry of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie is matched by a political conception of pan-African solidarity and his concern for oppressed populations throughout the world. Famous as his career is infamous his romantic idealism and decadent life and his excessive use of marijuana as an aid to his spiritual practice.

Marley's name has become synonymous both for music and marijuana in popular culture. Marley ranks among both the most popular and the most misunderstood figures in modern culture. Marley is also reduced to a symbol; the sun of music who rose from the ghettos of black, dreamt of Che, whose God was Ras Tafari and whose sacrament was marijuana and who envisaged a world of universal love. Media often generates the image of Marley as a cultural rebel with a decadent lifestyle and a passion for marijuana. A global symbol often misrepresented and merchandised worldwide, Marley has come to endorse alternate lifestyle and counterculture. Abjectly Marley the misrepresented icon has even been

appropriated as a code by drug pushers and mafia, by cashing in on his passion for marijuana.

MJ: The King of Pop

Michael Jackson popular as the king of pop, is regarded as a legend and icon of our times who conquered the world through the beats of his music. Both in music and popular culture his persona and legacy remains unmatched. Born in an African American working class family facing deprivation and abuse as a boy, the world of music to which he ventured young proved to be his solace and succor. MJ's music loved across countries and cultures validates the universality of music and its likeability across the globe. To cite a few instances of his appeal, Michael Jackson has sold almost 1 billion records worldwide and became one of the few artist to be twice introduced into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. His album "Thriller" is the biggest selling album of all time and Jackson is recognized as the most successful entertainer of all time. He received 17 Grammy Awards, including the "Grammy Legend Award" and the "Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award" and 26 American Awards, including the "Artist of the Century Award."

MJ the name in itself is a brand; his persona, music, life style and stylized self-have become lei motifs in the iconography of popular culture. MJ, during and after his lifetime has been a sensation to mass media and celeb buzz. Jackson, whose quintessentially American tale of celebrity and excess took him from musical boy wonder to global pop superstar to sad figure haunted by lawsuits, paparazzi and frequent plastic surgeries which contributed to his early death. MJ who christened himself as the king of pop stylized himself as a chiseled American from that of a black performer, endorsed himself as a unique global brand. MJ's music itself is a brand

which has more to do with mass entertainment with a global appeal rather than any aesthetic role. His music often labeled as 'body music' is that which caters to and creates popular tastes, which sells and is themed, stylized and promoted to be tremendously popular. MJ thus more than a musician has become a brand, an ingenious marketer of music. No wonder Jackson and his music remain top grosser and trendsetters in a consumerist scenario.

Diego Maradona: The God of Football.

If football were a religion; Maradona would be Messiah. Deigo Maradonna born in Buenos Aires, Argentina grew up to be one of the greatest football maestros in history as well as classic icon in sports and popular culture. Maradona led club teams to championships in Argentina, Italy and Spain, and famously captioned the Argentinean team to victory in the 1986 World Cup. Regarded as one of the most skilful players whose creativity on the soccer field, the classic number 10 he sports and his controversial goal 'hand of god' have become emblems in popular culture. Remarkably, Maradona is considered one of the sport's most controversial and newsworthy figures for his drug abuse, flings with media and debauch lifestyle. In later years of his life controversies have generated more media hype for Maradona than his sporting accomplishments.

A true celebrity, Maradona was hailed by game enthusiasts as the best player of all times. He has also set a world record in transfer fee has played for and served as coach for prestigious clubs, has a stunning international career record and acted as archetype for future soccer celebrities. The celebrity appeal that Maradona enjoys partly from the prominence football enjoys as the world game promoted by millionaire corporates, media and mass appeal. The politics of Football is a highly

debated concept in Culture Studies. Football, for millions, is a religion; for civil societies the game of body culture becomes a safe substitute for military action and a generally means to sublimate the adrenaline surge in a safe way. In 1980s when football was metaphorical war; Maradona was crowned the Argentinian war hero; however in the successive decades of corporate capitalism which made football the 'big game of big money' has transformed Maradona the player to Maradona the brand; mythical brand ambassador of football, the man as symbol of the game, nation and sports culture. Maradona the coach of celebrity leagues and promoter of brand endorsements and a role model for future celebrities like Beckham, Ronaldo or Messi all signal to the globalization of the game.

Bill Gates: Midas of Modern Times.

Bill Gates, a passionate techie and a shrewd businessman, Bill Gates changed the world while leading Microsoft to dizzying success. Bill Gates is the founder and former CEO of Microsoft, a geek icon, tech visionary and business trailblazer. Fuelled by his long-held dream that millions might realize their potential through great software, Gates made Microsoft Windows a household name and amassed millions repeating the vision behind the American Dream that industriousness leads to industry, success and billions; which in turn defines the standards of success.

A master programmer, tech wizard and a brilliant businessman, Gates success is a story of industry and innovation. In popular culture Gates who consistently topped the Forbes list of millionaires and listed by Times among the Most Influential people, has become the Midas in times of Global capital; where money and mass appeal matters most. For techies, industrialists, businesspeople and men across the globe; he is a model to be envied and emulated. Gates' tremendous success and appeal comes from

his innovation; his instinctual and intelligent comprehension of the global market. Gates' knows that ideas sell as initial success of his success proved to him. Microsoft the giant corporation grows through radical updating of technology and services, gulping down competitors, safeguarding software through intellectual property rights and by being endorsing corporate social responsibility. Gates' public charisma further glows through his contributing millions to social causes, and he is also famed globally as a philanthropist. Gates along with other billionaire entrepreneurs has proved to be material for 'success literature' which has become the hot stuff of our times. To cite the words of a Microsoft employee Mike Maples, "Bill is just smarter than everyone else. There are probably more smart people per square foot right here [at Microsoft] than anywhere else in the world, but Bill is just smarter." True, in the world of business, Gates, the smart businessman rules.

Steven Spielberg: Merchant of Dreams.

Steven Spielberg, one of the most successful directors of Hollywood is regarded as one of the finest directors in film industry. A man with magic touch, Spielberg in his career spanning four decades has experimented with a variety of themes and genres; most of his movies are megahits and top grosses considered as archetypal Hollywood blockbusters. Fame and fortune has blessed him equally as he has received many a honor including a hatrick of academy awards and life time achievement award. He is also the co-owner of Dream works a film company and one of wealthiest film makers ever. Spielberg's stupendous success is mainly his cognition of the film industry and his panache in making movies appealing to mainstream audience, rather than its aesthetic concern.

Spielberg's early films are modeled on sci-fi, which centered on themes like ordinary individuals in extraordinary circumstances, extraterrestrial intelligence and such phantasmagoria, films in this genre include *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Hook*, and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* and *Jurassic park*. The film often offers an escapist fare to the audience, an entertainment package with ample scope for flights of fantasy. The naivety and innocence of childhood, problems in father son relationships and divided families all appear as recurrent themes in his films. However the underlying issues behind strained family relationship and social concerns are never discussed, but are glossed over and are dovetailed in improbable twist leading to the typical movie style happy ending. In most of his films Spielberg harps on sentimentalism, dramatization, fantasy and romanticization to churn out the movie in accordance with Hollywood conventions and spectatorial preferences. Spielberg continues to cater to adult and child fantasy through his subsequent films like *Indiana Jones* series, *Adventures of Tintin* and *Transformers* which abound in stereotypes and spectacle. He has also done movies addressing social themes like *Schindler's List*, on Holocaust *Munich* which depicts the Israel issue and a biopic *Lincoln*; in spite of their success these movies won more criticism and were often regarded as romancitized versions of historical realities. Spielberg continues to mesmerize audience and amass millions through his fantasies and flicks. Spielberg, more than any other film maker reigns large as the merchant of popular tastes and fantasies and thus a true icon of popular culture.

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Interpolating the Divine Sagas: Religious Renaissance in Mediascape

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The diversities in television programmes increase day by day. The new born channels are in constant search for novel and unique ideas. The search for newness in popular media has culminated even in the restoration of age old believes and fashions. As part of the renovation of the media space, tendencies to restore even the traditional structures like religion can be seen instead of a Post structural approach that was popular for years. This is best reflected in the mashrooming of devotional serials and movies. Divine sagas and puranic stories have been an inspiration for all irrespective of age and social status. But in the modern times instead of reproducing the traditional puranic texts, the attempt is to interpolate the original text so as to match the contemporary social and personal dilemmas.

In most of the devotional Malayalam serials the story line has no fidelity to the original puranic text. We find a contemporary situation in which a devotee is in trouble and the God appears as his friend who is dressed not in the traditional attire of the God, but as a modern human being. The God also solves all the problems and saves his devotee. In many Malayalam movies like Pranchiyettan and the Saint, Amen, Nandhanam etc., such a trend is seen. Such an outbreak of religious themes in the media space has culminated in a religious renaissance reinforcing faith in religion and God. This paper attempts to read the movie Amen as restoring the position of God and the divine forces as the saviour of the virtuous.

Man's inherent wish to be in safe hands is expressed effectively in popular mediums of representations. The devotional serials and films bear

testimony for this. The divine sagas are always fascinating for everyone irrespective of age. The mysticism it creates and the wonder and awe it initiates in the readers make such stories attractive irrespective of the question of reality involved in it. This is the reason why such stories are repeatedly reworked and reproduced on silver screen and television screen. They are widely accepted by the spectators though there are many other programmes that satiate the new generation ideal of liberation and renaissance. The popular acceptance of such stories is facilitated through the inculcation of such new generation ideals into the age old stories. Here the notion of interpolation becomes important. "In textual criticism the word interpolation denotes material inserted into the text in the process of tribal transmission, thereby altering the original reading" (Soulén et. al 98). The process of interpolation is seen in the present day reproduction of divine texts incorporating current social issues

Interpolation is a postmodern tendency. Postmodernism celebrates the fake and ambiguous and there is so much scope for juxtaposition of heterogeneous ideas together. "Since 'everything is now fake,' the postmodern text celebrates itself as a fictional artefact. It does not attempt to hide its constructed nature but luxuriates in its arbitrariness. The postmodern text flaunts its own contrived arbitrariness by exaggerating its eccentric combinations of juxtaposition, interpolation, superimposition, and misattribution" (Dickens 236). This postmodern tendency is seen in the present day media texts that are based on religious stories. The texts are 'fake' representations of the religious texts and the media space celebrates them as fictional artefacts. The spectators too enjoy the luxury of arbitrary stories constructed in the media space.

The media tendency is to pack the old wine in new bottles. In this attempt they try to project the major social issues through entangling the old stories and modern social problems. The movie *Amen* is crafted in Christian background. The movie which is subtitled *A Divine Comedy*, highlights the social problems that are prevalent in Church. This is a social and religious satire mixing many factors like quarrel between different sections in society, the corruption in the Church, the lascivious nature of the priests and finally God as the ultimate saviour of man. The film which was released in 2013 surprisingly brings back God into the mainstream. This is because of man's lost faith in the so called mini narratives that assured peace. So there is a second renaissance of restoration of god's position as man's savior and friend. The thundering God of past is dead and gone; but a God who is more friendly and human is reborn. This is explicitly seen in the movie *Amen*.

The movie has a prayerful opening with an angelic title song that has a divergent music composition that avoids the luxury of musical instruments. The song resembles the heavenly music sung by the angels who want to inform good news. The title song visualizes angels playing the trumpet invoking the memory of the heavenly message of infant Jesus' birth. The song presupposes the theme of the movie. The movie is about a saviour who comes to save the people and culture of Kumaramkiri. The saviour is their patron saint St. George. The initial part of the movie introduces the power of the divine man, St. George through recalling a historical incident. The incident is that Tippu sultan attacks the church and St. George saves the church by his divine appearance. This past incident proclaims people's hope that Kumaramkiri will be saved from its present state of religious and cultural decay by St. George. This hope is eloquent in

the filmic narrative through the alternation of scenes that depicts the decayed state of the village and the hope for a saviour. The incident of Pappi placing a packet of stool in front of a house in the name of another person so as to put the two families into trouble, followed by the title song that expresses the hope for a saviour is an evidence for this. Just before the title song, in the expository scene we see how the society is curbed by anti-socials like Pappi who steers up quarrel between families.

There are several incidents in the movie that are testimonials for the corruption in the church and the differences between the rich and the poor. The church assistant Kochousep is a corrupt man who steals money from the church offerings and wine for holy mass. He also hurts the hero Solomon's home for not giving the interest. He shows great respect to the rich and the powerful where as he shows no compassion for the poor. He is also an opportunist. Ousep stands along with Fr. Ottaplackan in plotting the strategies to destroy the church from which he has some monetary benefit. Fr. Ottaplackan is a corrupt clergy. He decides to rebuild the church not for the benefit of the people, but for his own benefit. Fr. Irunnidomkuzhi is a minor character. But he also projects the silly and insincere nature of priesthood. He is gluttonous which is unbecoming of a priest. Even the name denotes his passive nature.

The movie also depicts the demarcation between the rich and poor. The hero Solomon belongs to a poor decayed family. But Sosanna, the heroine whom Solomon loves belongs to a rich family. Her family members are against the relation. While the band of Kumaramkiri represents poverty, the band of Davis stands for richness and prosperity. The rottenness of the band represents the decaying culture of Kumaramkiri.

This is the situation in Kumaramkiri that should undergo a radical change. St. George himself takes the human form as Fr. Vincent Vattoly to demolish the corruption in the village and to uplift the downtrodden. We see him supporting Solomon's love for Soshanna. Fr. Vattoly carries Solomon upon his shoulders to Shoshanna's home to play the trumpet after the engagement of Soshanna to another man. Fr. Vattoly also helps them to elope masking them in the dress of drama artists. In the original story of St. George there is an incident. "St. George redeemed the king's daughter from out of the fiery jaws of a dreadful dragon" (5). This myth is interpolated in the movie by presenting Fr. Vattoly as the saviour of Sosanna. His costume in the scene where he is trying to help the lovers is that of a soldier. Towards the end of the movie Geevargese band wins the competition with the effort of Solomon who was shy and embarrassed to play his trumpet before the arrival of Fr. Vattoly. It is he who inspires the disabled Solomon to rise up as a strong man. Fr. Ottaplackan's plotting to destroy the old church also fails in the end. As seen in the beginning of the movie St. George makes his divine appearance before those who came to demolish the church and thus the church is saved. The film ends with the happy note of Solomon's marriage with Soshanna, Ousep's spiritual realization not to encroach the land of Solomon and more over Fr. Ottaplacken's decision to retain the old church. The thrust of the movie lies in the final revelation of Fr. Vattoly's identity as St. George himself.

The movie is not a filmic adaptation of the history of St. George. On the other hand it adapts the concept of St. George as the saviour of the oppressed and downtrodden into a new social context. The aim of the movie is not to reproduce the knightly bravery of St. George. In fact there are still disputes regarding the identity of St. George. There are no

historical evidences regarding the existence of such a persona and the church has omitted his name from the official list of saints. But he is still the patron saint of England. He is the divine figure honoured in Kerala especially by the poor people. He is supposed to be the saint who protects us from evil. But there is no attempt to tell these stories in the movie. Here the attempt is to interpolate the existing stories regarding St. George through a very different medium, without disregarding his qualities as a saviour and protector of the virtue, in a different cultural context and time. In the movie St. George is not portrayed as a serious or knightly figure as the history presents him. But he is presented as a popular ‘saint’ in the form of a tom boyish priest who mingles easily with the people. His friendly approach to Michel, his disrespect for the strict religious order – which is seen in his dressing style – convey the idea of divine figures as close to human beings. This movie thus becomes a trendsetter by restoring the lost faith in divine interventions that helps man in his miserable situations through adding up popular stories into the existing history of St. George’s life history.

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Preferring the Unreal to the Real: Youths as the creators of a novel culture

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As we all know the destiny of India is fashioned by youths. Undisputedly we know that youths are the creators of present day culture and our culture is dynamic and it is reconstituting itself daily. E. B. Taylor, an English anthropologist was the first to coin the term 'culture' in the eighteenth century. The study of society becomes incomplete without proper understanding of culture of that society because culture and society go together. He defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morale, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits as acquired by man as a member of society." Culture is a product of society, and it is transmissive, cumulative, continuous and highly dynamic.

Today children and youngsters live in complex media-saturated environments impacted by television, digital video recorders, computers, the Internet, iPods, printed media, etc. The media are inseparably part of their daily lives; this is the only world they know. Technological development is inherent in shaping youth culture today. Media forms an important basis to participate in culture and society in the contemporary world. However internet is an innovative force that has profound influence on children and youth and it provides possibilities of generating new patterns of expression, communication, and motivation. From a very young age, children have access to media, especially internet. The older they become, the greater the access and the wider the variety of media to which they are exposed. The accessibility of the Internet opens a new world of information to users, but, at the same time, assumes that users have the

ability and sense of responsibility not to watch and engage with negative or destructive information.

Since the internet and other media have been adopted and integrated into the daily lives of an increasing number of young adolescents all over the world, scholars and commentators are debating the impact of these new media on the activities, social relationships, and worldviews of the younger generations. Controversies about whether technology shapes values, attitudes, and patterns of social behavior are not new. The rapid expansion of internet stimulated discussions of its cultural and social effects. In this paper, my attempt is to analyse how internet influences our youths and how it gradually paves way for a new digital culture with unique characteristics of its own.

Immersion in this technology-rich culture influences the skills and interests of teens in important ways. According to this view, they think and process information differently from their predecessors, are active in experimentation, are dependent on information technologies for searching for information and communicating with others, and are eager to acquire skills needed to develop creative multimedia presentations and to become multimedia producers and not merely consumers. Social interaction with peers provides a forum for learning and refining socio-emotional skills needed for enduring relationships. Through interactions with peers, adolescents learn how to cooperate, to take different perspectives, and to satisfy growing needs for intimacy.

There is a large group of young adolescents who grew up during the expansion of the internet and from early childhood have been immersed in a media-rich environment, using computers, playing online games, constantly communicating and connecting with their friends by electronic

devices. These youths create and use digital spaces for social interaction, identity expression, and media production and consumption.

Digital spaces such as social networking sites, weblogs (blogs), and clip and photo sharing are owned by commercial companies that target youth. At the same time, when using these spaces, youth are becoming empowered in different social aspects. First, they are able to overcome the limitations of geography by reaching out to others according to specific interests and not only by virtue of residential similarity. Second, they take an important role in society as co-producers of internet content and reach out with their innovative presentations to large and global audiences. Being online not only detaches individuals from the constraints imposed by location, but also frees them from the constraints associated with their offline personalities and social roles.

The internet is often used to express unexplored aspects of the self and to create a virtual persona. Cyberspace becomes a place to “act out” unresolved conflicts, to play and replay difficulties, to work on significant personal issues. Sherry Turkle summarizes this position: “We can use the virtual to reflect constructively on the real. Cyberspace. Similarly, in this perspective, internet communication creates new forms of social relationships, in which participants are no longer bound by the need to meet others face to face but can expand their social arena by meeting others, located anywhere in the online universe, mind to mind. It is a zone of freedom, fluidity, and experimentation away from the mundane realities of the material world. Adolescents use the internet for the creation of unique social spaces in which they can use instant messaging and social networking sites to sustain their friendships.

Adolescents use the internet to accomplish important developmental tasks such as identity formation, social interaction, and the development of autonomy. When looking at the internet culture, one important development is a shift in the association between youth and media. Youth today are active participants in the creation of media content. Youth are not only the passive consumers of information and content online, but also the active creators and contributors. Social media platforms facilitate various informal and formal, small as well as large-scale online communities, bloggers post news and analysis, independent musicians distribute their music and amateur photographers post their photos or distribute their videos (YouTube). Thus, youth today are actively involved in web production and tend to appropriate portions of it and to convert them into youth zones. Teens also produce unique, content for the web, such as blogs, that allow for a more interactive dialog. Blogs represent a kind of diary that is shared with a larger audience that refers to the details of their everyday life (daily concerns, thoughts, and emotions), consumer talk, and television and movie critiques. As such, blogs are a popular way to build identity and socialize in an information-based society.

Adolescence is an important developmental stage. In the last ten years, the communication environment of youth has changed as more and more teens have access to computer-mediated communication and cell phones. The most frequent youth use of the internet remains for social purposes, receive emails, send and receive instant messages, and have a profile in a social networking site. Only a small percent create or work in an online journal (blog).

Social networking sites have additional features; they allow users to present information about themselves (such as age, gender, location,

education, and interests); encourage users to link to known and likeminded others whose profiles exist in the site or to invite known and likeminded individuals to join the site; and enable users to establish and maintain contact with other users, to post content, create personal blogs, and participate in online groups. Besides the communication element, social network sites are sites for identity formation and experimentation. Most sites encourage users to construct accurate representations of themselves, but it is difficult to know to what extent individuals do so. Social networking sites facilitate youth to update others about their activities and whereabouts, part of the culture of perpetual contact. Youth report that the number of individuals in their contact list is important because it is often used as an indication of social standing, the extent of being socially involved with others.

Simply put, the argument is that the internet has created a new generation of young people who possess sophisticated knowledge and skills with information technologies, express values that support learning by experience and the creation of a culture in a digital space, and have particular learning and social preferences. The characteristics of so called digital culture from a positive perspective can be enumerated as independence, investigation, immediacy, Innovation, Openness, and Free expression.

The risky side of the digital influence cannot be totally ignored or one must say that it is something that demands more consideration for building up a promising digital culture for posterity. As indicated in the abstract more dangers lie embedded in the unwise use of internet by minors or under aged children.

Apparently, people who need to boost their ego are drawn to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter - according to a new study from the University of Michigan. The study examined people for evidence of narcissistic personality traits and checked the results against their behaviour on social media. It found that people who exhibit narcissistic tendencies spend more time on Twitter and Facebook posting their own messages and reading the posts and comments of others. Young people will over evaluate the importance of their own opinions. Through Twitter, they're trying to broaden their social circles and broadcast their views about a wide range of topics and issues. There is a wide difference in the use of media by youth and adults. Teenagers will be concerned about their own images, opinions and how they are seen and how others respond to their images. While middle-aged adults usually have already formed their social selves, and they use social media to gain approval from those who are already in their social circles. Does narcissism lead to more social media use, or does using social media make you narcissistic is a relevant question in this context.

Studies proved that there are some psychological reason behind this addiction to internet, which, if beyond control, leads to a highly dangerous situation. An interesting article from the blog 'Psychology Today', explain it. Apparently, the addiction is due to dopamine - a chemical created in our brain. Dopamine plays a major role in helping us think, move, sleep, pay attention and stay motivated. Traditionally, scientists believed dopamine controls the "pleasure" part of our brain so we seek out things that bring us joy such as food or sex. But new research is putting a bit of a twist on that thinking. Dopamine makes you addicted to seeking information in an endless loop. For example, if dopamine makes us curious, it's only natural

we want to open an email or a text right away. But it doesn't stop there. Once we open it, we can respond right away. And then, the other person responds. So, scientists say we keep getting rewarded for searching, which makes us want to search more. And eventually, it becomes harder and harder to stop looking at e-mail, stop texting, or stop tweeting.

Not only that, but researchers say dopamine has the power to keep telling us "more more more." So, we keep looking for more details, even when we have the answer and it will finally lead to addiction.

Teenagers who use Facebook more often show more narcissistic tendencies while young adults who have a strong Facebook presence show more signs of other psychological disorders, including antisocial behaviors, mania and aggressive tendencies. Daily overuse of media and technology has a negative effect on the health of all children, preteens and teenagers by making them more prone to anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders, as well as by making them more susceptible to future health problems. Facebook can be distracting and can negatively impact learning. Studies found that middle school, high school and college students who checked Facebook at least once during a 15-minute study period achieved lower grades.

A news report that appeared on Tuesday, August 9, 2011, in the official website of news.oneindia.in/india reads like this.

Kolkata, Nov 30: Highlighting the importance of being a "non-judgemental listener" to people with suicidal tendencies, a consultant psychiatrist said here that social media is emerging as a contributing factor to youngsters taking their own lives. Lakshmi Vijayakumar, founder of Sneha, a suicide prevention centre in Chennai and a member of WHO's International Network on Suicide Prevention and Research, said on Friday

that lack of "real-life friends" and being snubbed online leads to suicides among youngsters. Speaking on the sidelines of the 16th National Befrienders India Conference organised by the Lifeline Foundation here, Vijayakumar said: "Youngsters are cultivating virtual friends and not real life friends. When they want to talk to someone, they don't have real friends for support. Secondly, many can't handle rejection on the cyber platform well. Cyber bullying has gone up...yes, social media is emerging as a reason." Lifeline Foundation, a suicide prevention helpline, has brought together 50 volunteers and helpers from 13 Befrienders India centres besides ten people from Sri Lanka at the three-day conference that began Friday. Vijayakumar said there is a strong similarity between the neighbouring countries in terms of reasons and methods of committing suicide. However, suicide rates are going up in India whereas the island nation is seeing a decrease. "This is probably due to the loss of traditional support systems like family. In both countries, the reasons are mainly family problems and the methods are use of pesticides...."

The news report stresses on the increase in the suicidal rate among teenagers due to the injudicious use of social networking sites. The Internet provides easy access to pornography which can have far-reaching effects, especially for children and teenagers. Most people view pornography as harmful to children and therefore most countries forbid the selling of pornographic material to children. Although there are different laws to prevent children from being exposed to pornography, we also have laws that guarantee freedom of expression, which makes the availability of sexually explicit material a controversial issue. Sexually explicit material is also advertised on internet and can be sent to cell phones for as little as R5.00. Unfortunately, if, adequate parental guidance and influence are not

there, youngsters especially teenagers have easy access to sexually explicit material without any adult guidance.

It is not a surprise that teenagers indulge in sexual activities as it seems that 'everything goes'. One of the direct impacts of this culture is that with the access to media, a lack of healthy sex education, porn on the internet and cell phones, teenagers have become sexually desensitised. The sexual activity amongst young people is both high and risky in nature.

According to Mueller (2006):

The media and the youth are dependent on each other. The media need the youth market for economic survival and the youth need the media for guidance and nurture in a society where other societal institutions such as the family and the school do not shape the youth culture as powerfully as they once did. (27)

Quentin J Schultze in his work *Youth, Popular Culture and Electronic Media* describe the relationship between the youth and the media as a symbiotic relationship. This relationship is kept intact, because the media see themselves as 'quasi parents' who help youth to find their way in a changing society. There is a resistance in the Indian adult society to talk about sex and sexual matters. Young people, on the other hand, are curious about sexual matters as they are in a developmental stage where sexual development is reaching a peak. The media zooms in on these needs of the youth and provides different forms of entertainment that will assumingly address these needs. Most teenagers obtain their sexual information from peers and the media, Media does not only provide information on sex, but also has a powerful influence on the sexual attitudes and behaviour of adolescents because of the amount of time they are exposed to the media where sexual content is regularly available. The changing sexual attitudes

and behaviour evident in the media encourage permissiveness in premarital and extramarital life. It therefore becomes clear that youngsters need guidance on how to understand what is happening to them emotionally, physically and spiritually with regard to their sexual development, as well as guidance on how to respond appropriately to these changes in their bodies which affect their whole life. Currently, it seems that the media takes note of the needs of the teenagers and speaks on these issues, including sex and sexuality, even misusing these sacred human needs for its own economic benefit, whilst other social institutions, such as families and churches, are reluctant to talk about it or, in most cases, keeps quiet on the matter.

From the above discussion, it seems evident that the media has a pervasive presence in young people's lives and that violent and sexually explicit content is easily available across the various forms of the media.

However the hike in the rate of cybercrimes like pornography, cyber stalking, cyber cheating and hacking prove that this infectious moral crisis became more or less a part and parcel of our culture. Crimes like pornography and cyber cheating points finger towards the psychologically diseased or unhealthy mind setup of our youths. All this crimes cannot be regarded as the sole belonging of virtual world. But youths find this cyber space as a fertile land for germinating the seeds of sexual malice. But cyber rules are becoming more and stricter and cyber cell succeeds to some extent in bringing such violations under law. Cyber cheating by giving pseudo names and photographs also is an evidence of deceitful and insincere attitude of youth. The stories of teenage girls and women who resolved to end up their life realizing the real identity of online friends who misused the relationship are common. By that time they might have shared all their

valuable information and photographs with the online friend. As revealed by the evidences it exposes the beguiling, mystifying and bluffing nature of youth and their culture.

To conclude, as we discussed, the digital culture is endowed with its own unique features. Gradually we must be able to screen out its most potential aspects by collaborating the virtues of our traditional culture and also by enforcing the cyber laws and by creating awareness against cybercrimes. The insensitive nature of virtual world must be replaced with the sensitivity of real concrete world. Let our relationship foster in the digital world, and let it workout in the real world. Let no network failure happen in our real life situation as in the case of virtual world of internet.

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Negating the odds – Resonance of the ‘self’ in Media

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New generation media users migrate across different media platforms in search of newer kinds of entertainment and information. They display a convergent culture and their reactions have become a pluralistic one. For example when a piece of news becomes a topic of discussion in the social media it might become a more popular news than when it appeared in the newspaper. In the same way instances where an uploaded Youtube video gains popularity and then receives the attention of the news outlets is another instance of this migration of both content and audience. We should agree that the ‘Kolaveri Di’ song via the social media made actor Danush more famous than all his advertisements in the print media put together. This shift in paradigm is because of the shift in the mindset of the media user from modern to postmodernist thoughts. Compared to the media users of the previous generation this development is undeniably a novel one for the user. As audience become more and more adept at navigating media this trend will undoubtedly increase.

According to Bauman, Foucault and other postmodern theorist the postmodern individual is a freedom seeking individual who places power over compassion. He is a hedonistic that is immediate gratification is his sole aim. He has no privileged voice to communicate and is content to live in a state of pluralism. He is also a narcissistic. He is self-conscious and aware of the power he has over others and likes to maintain that power. This narcissistic individual likes to observe others without being involved. Foucault brings in the concept of Panopticon to describe the society in a constant state of surveillance. He claims that ‘visibility is a trap’. The main

effect of the Panopticon is to “induce in the minds a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 201). We can see this phenomenon today with the introduction of security cameras in every facet of our lives. We are watched in shopping centres, at theatres, at traffic signals – all are modern gadget for communication can easily be tracked to its owner.

The sovereign always feels in control and the ‘subject’ always feels watched even after the physical act has ceased. The media user knows he is being watched but since he is the reader and the creator he feels like a sovereign. There is a self-reflexive structure to sharing content on Facebook or Twitter. Just as actors on stage know they are being watched by the audience and tailor their behaviour to find the best effect; effective uses of social media implies selecting and framing content with a view to please or impress a certain crowd. The surveillance that directly affects us makes it essential to it well and is affected by the reactions and responses of the people with whom we share. This satisfies a deep psychological need for recognition. There are no guards and no prisoners in Facebook’s virtual Panopticon. We are both guards and prisoners, watching and implicitly judging one another as we share content. In sharing online, we are playing to a crowd. The crowd honours the identity that we create by sharing this content. Sharing online is not solely a matter of self-affirmation and self-creation. For many people, sharing impulses stem from a desire to empower and inform their groups their thoughts. The point is that whatever action we take, we make personal statements in so: ‘I affirm this; I share it; I like it’. We speak out our personal choices and expect the crowd to affirm those preferences in return.

Let's take a second to recall the nature of identities traditionally. They were fixed, solid and stable. It was predefined by society, myths, religion and traditions of the family one was born into. This rigorously circumscribed ones thoughts and behaviour. Media played a very small part and restricted itself to its primary role of transferring information. Modern identity on the other hand became more mobile, multiple, personal and self-reflexive but still comparatively stable and fixed. They were subject to change and innovation under the influence of media. But the modern individuals soon fell into the traps created by these identities. They soon became tired of who he/she had become. So postmodern identities developed to counteract this monotony.

New tactics are now being used by different media platforms to accommodate this postmodern 'self'. For this different modes of publication have been validated. Now migration across different media platforms has become effortless. The graphic novels and graffiti are now considered worth debating and commenting upon. Visual graphics is used extensively to create visual reality. E- books, e-purchase, e-shares, e-accounts, e-will etc all help the postmodern user to work and recreate himself from his own desk. Weather updates and availability of virtual doctors, teachers bankers etc are examples of how modes have changed and new ways in which information is transferred and sort.

The semiotics of today's media appeals to the five senses at the same time. Use of overlapping language which is at the same time meaningful and meaningless gives abundance of freedom and space to the user and viewer. The author and the reader is deconstructed many times creating new expressions and ideas. The postmodern self does not adhere to rules and boundaries. Religion and traditional have become distorted by

confusing notions of time and place. Truth and knowledge need not be the ultimate goal today. This has led to the decline of metanarratives. Mixing, recycling, remixing, of old and new images are done to satisfy the hedonistic individual. There is a precedence of images in all forms of expression. Everyday reality has merged into images created by media. Authenticity of these images is rarely verified. The world has split into multitudes of mini-dramas which have no clear cut cohesiveness or direction. Time can be easily reversed and sequence of episodes rearranged in any order of succession. Baudrillard in his essay *Stimulations* comments that everyday reality and media have become blurred. Individuals obtain what they experience as real knowledge about the real world from the media, but this is actually reproduced knowledge about an entirely simulated or reproduced world. Baudrillard called this 'hyper real world'. Today commercial consumption is not an economic or material activity alone. It has become a symbolic, meaningful and status differentiating activity. For example Kinder joy is a toffee which brings along with it enjoyment, ideas of cooperation, fun etc. But in reality it is a wafer covered with coco and sweetens.

Concrete information that used to reach us through concrete media platforms have been replaced by the virtual space e.g. Weather updates along alarms on mobiles, bank accounts, news updates. In this virtual space ideas appear and disappear in matter of seconds. Rapid flow of capital, money, information and culture disrupt linear unities of time and space. Locations used in pop music, film songs, science-fiction films are examples. As the pace, extension and complexity of the modern societies accelerate identities become more and more fragile. Sometimes it appears to be a myth or an illusion ready to recreate itself any moment. This is true

because all TV show advertisements and even news updates use language and information in such a way that it caters to the needs of the postmodern individual. They are vague and susceptible to different interpretations. At this juncture the example of toffee advertisement where an Emperor and his councillors encourage eating the toffee to avoid boredom seems suitable. Thus in postmodern media culture the subject has disintegrated into a flux of aphoristic intensifiers fragmented and disconnected and the decentred postmodern 'self' no longer experiences anxiety, coherency of thought or depth of expression that was characteristic of modern identity. Today we consume images and signs for their own sake rather than based on their usefulness. Consequently qualities like artistic merit, integrity, realism, intellectual depth tend to be undermined. Moreover virtual realities created by computer graphics allow people to experience various levels of reality second hand. These surface simulations can therefore potentially replace the real life counterparts. Apt examples can be horror movies, 3D films, virtual sex etc.

However a positive aspect of this change is that individuals can change their lives at anytime and identities can be reconstructed in accordance with personal choices. "Never stop sculpturing your own statue" said Philosopher Plotinus. In the contemporary society identity is strongly mediated by images provided by the mass culture. For instance advertising fashion or television constantly reconstructs the identity producing a more fluid and changing one. The scenes, the stories and the cultural text provided by the media are meant to offer the individual a variety of attitudes that can shape their personality. These images produce social role models appropriate and inappropriate patterns of behaviour, style, and fashion and a subtle impulse of imitating and identifying with

certain identities. Media do not offer ready-made identities images to identify with. The postmodern world pays a great deal of attention to superficial images and impressions. We watch more films today because of the increase in the number of gadgets we own that enable us to see them, while advertisement make use of popular culture references to make the consumer decide which gadget to choose. Example the recent jewellery advertisement with a popular actress, who has returned to the field after a decade, mixes culture, reality and economy to a perfect whole.

Postmodern dialogue often concentrates on the author and the reader. The privileged voice of the author is taken away and the reader gets the opportunity to interpret texts. Every reader interprets the text differently. The postmodern reader and writer argue that no two texts or two readings of the same text are ever identical. The author creates text and reader who is the critical observer reads and acts upon the text created. When the author is being deconstructed this individual gets the freedom to deconstruct both the previous users. Individuals are being deconstructed and freed simultaneously. These individuals though they have no authority over any other individual they are still functioning as beings that make the society. When a picture or a text is uploaded in the internet or a social media site it is open to interpretations. These interpretations are new texts. In the Face Book when a comment appears it might be commented upon many numbers of times by many friends. The last comment need not be about the original text posted. The author and the user is deconstructed many times creating new ideas and expressions. Relationships are forged with great rapidity via electronic connections. The possibility to sustain them without direct contact has greatly been enhanced. Because there is no physical contact and limited visual image between conversational partners

it is even more natural to adorn desired identities. As the conversations progress these fantasies become even more and more real. The 'self' in the real world and the virtual world become so radically dissimilar than they become two personalities. But in reality it is the exposure of the inner self. But the postmodern individuals like to lead an anonymous existence. This makes him create Fake id and accounts. He will be accountable for his actions but will not assign a truth value to the consequences or to the act that was committed e.g. passing of porn clips, hacking. He is always looking for immediate gratification. He is concerned about his life more than that of others. This brings us to the central question to what extent should media evolve to suit today's and tomorrow's news media citizen and professional journalism. This new mixed media requires a responsible professional attitude whether they blog, tweed, telecast or write information. Media ethics needs to be reinvented and rethought for today and for tomorrow to come.

Our media ecology is in a chaotic state of change. The shift in paradigm has forced a change in media ecology. Shrinking news rooms, minimum personal contact, scope of virtual media, and migration through media platforms and content have brought in a need for new ethics for new times. The media is evolving to suit the consumerist outlook of the society. Professional journalists and media personals share media space with freelancers, bloggers, citizen journalists, tweeters and social media users. Concrete media platforms have been changed to virtual spaces. More than the lack of ethic it is new ethic for new times that has to be evolved.

The most important attraction of the new media is the freedom to reconstruct identities. Media now projects the voices of the Privileged and Unprivileged. The user is an active participant and has the power to

deconstruct texts and ideas. The real self and the virtual self-need not be identical. Many of the previous generation adapt the virtual 'self' because they feel it is the easiest way to escape modernism. Reality shows, chat shows, Facebooks, reviews corners, Whatsup, second life etc are all platforms that bring the audience and media person's closers than ever before. They experience confusion of space and time but they revel in the freedom enjoyed by their inner psyche. The 'self' is not fixed. It is made and remade in a variety of ways in variety of contexts. Institutions of postmodern society shape us more than we allow ourselves to be shaped.

Post modernism presents many new and overlapping constructs of identity. But the media has to a great extent helped individual identities to negate the odd and resonate with vigour and enthusiasm. The 'self' image has undergone a multitudinous change but this has not hindered the self to claim its own niche in this utterly confusing and unstable configurations of identity created. "I think so I am" by Descartes can be modified as "I think, I express, so I am". The 'self' in media is real but his identity is highly mobile because of his postmodern features.

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On the Move: Spatiality of Kitchen and Travel Cookery Shows by Women on Television

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During my school days, even in College, the general composition classes had a couple of redundant topics that the students had to keep writing on. One of the oft' repeated topics were "Television – Uses and Abuses". As an eighties child, I was very excited about television – the "idiot box", as it was addressed fondly by the parents and teachers. Today there are advertisements popping up on television where kids vouch for the knowledge quotient gained by watching television. Even though there are reservations, still, about the "uses and abuses of television", it has grown into becoming a domestic essential; television has become as domestic as a couch or a cooker and there are not many families that don't own one. The influence that the "idiot box" of the yesteryears has today on human lives is immense. This infiltration of television into daily lives becomes all the more important because of the domestic space into which it fits in and is normalised.

Television, unlike its beginning days, has grown into specialization with many special-interest television networks focusing exclusively on certain genre or topic – news, sports, soap operas, cinema, lifestyle, food, and etcetera. These different specialty networks are aimed at the varied spectrum of television audience. One such specialty network that is seen to be growing by leaps and bounds is the food television. This owes much to the sudden surge of culinary/food tourism. The most sought after programmes in the food network are the travel cookery shows.

The cookery shows on television brought the spotlight on the activity of cooking and thereby, resulted in the bringing out of the space of kitchen from the vestiges into the spotlight. With the change in the geography of kitchen, gendered cooking and the geo-politics (in relation to food/cooking/kitchen) could be read clearly on the power axis. The travel cookery shows further stretch the space of kitchen, making it non-linear and fluid; and into the mainstream. The paper tries to analyse the mobility associated with the space of kitchen and gender dynamics and how it is affected through the domestic space of the television. By relating the mobility of travelling with the moving of the kitchen into mainstream spaces like the drawing room, lawn and the road, the paper tries to look into the geo-politics in the domestic circle with respect to the dynamics of kitchen. Furthermore, the paper tries to read the process of domestication (change, if any) when the concepts of travel, cooking, kitchen, television and women, come on the same terrain.

The first exclusive Asian food channel, Food Food was started in India by the “Khana-Khazana” fame Sanjeev Kapoor. The first food channel was launched in 1993 in America but celebrity cook/chef programmes had already become popular; Julia Child’s “French Chef” starting in 1961. Julia Child was one of the earliest celebrity chefs to appear on television. She had influenced a whole generation by talking directly to the audience, in their own domestic space. Child’s cookery show, unlike the ones today, was unedited. So, the audience could see her even spill on the cookery set, which is very common in kitchens, during routine cooking. This gave an aura of domestic familiarity and sense of reality when compared to the larger-than-life kitchens and cookery shows that are showcased in the cookery shows on television. The association of glamour

to food and cooking, today, could be seen by the increasingly number of films showcasing the food culture. Food, today, is popular culture.

Today the cookery shows on television approach food through pop culture, adventure, competition and travel. Chefs have become celebrity figures and centres of media attention. “Today’s chefs cook on sets decorated with state-of-the-art stainless steel equipment...” (Alexander 4). Julia Child’s show was a traditional one, speaking directly to the audience. In all traditional cooking shows, the cameras are fixed in one general direction towards the host, so as not to disturb the construct of the fourth wall of the kitchen. In these shows, kitchen walls felt private and closed; reminding the traditional cooking spaces. Though these shows brought cooking and cooking women into public, the general space of kitchen as a closeted one was not disrupted and went in sync with the accepted gender norms.

As television industry flourished into specialty channels, and food channels becoming all the more popular, the space of kitchen and the position of cooking had undergone morphing. The fourth wall of the kitchen, behind the camera, got broken in a multiple ways. Kitchens became more democratic spaces and not in the corners. The pulling of the space of kitchen into the mainstream owes a lot to architectural shift caused by modernism and furthered by postmodernism and avant-garde. Studio apartments and open kitchen are architectural pattern in vogue. The highlight is bringing kitchen out from closeted spaces into the open and thereby attempting towards democratisation. Today kitchen is an amorphous space – reminding one of the tribal cooking spaces. In a typical middle class family, a decade back, the male community were despised

upon when seen in kitchen; else a justification had to be produced, but not today.

For the past few decades, women are increasingly partaking in paid labour like men. Moreover, the time spent by men in domestic circles is seen increasing while that spent by women is taking the rear side, as compared to earlier times. In spite of this, a good majority of artistic representations, including the cookery shows on television show gendered ways in domestic domain. “Hosts of these instructional programs use stories, costuming, and production conventions to communicate cultural norms about the meaning of work done by men and women in the kitchen” (Swenson). Much study has been done upon the domestication propaganda of television advertisements and soap operas, not on cookery shows, supposedly an exclusive women’s show.

The cookery shows on television work on the basic structure of food culture, where food is both fashion and culture or ethnicity. The travel cookery shows re-establish cooking as fashion to be a male domain and food as culture or domesticity as belonging to the female terrain. Traditionally cooking has been associated with women, while the upper echelons of restaurants have almost always been adorned by male chefs. Accounts of the sexual division of labour are immense, with the common perception of a happy woman being one who finds fulfilment in the kitchen. In earlier times, boys who cooked were looked down upon and girls who did not were considered inept for marriage or life, in general. With time, this structuring has undergone change but not without the purview of gendered cooking and/or food choices.

Travel is usually considered a male activity; the only exception being women from travelling tribes. This could be very clearly seen from

the number of male travel writers in comparison to an almost non-existing female category. Travel as a motif recurs in artistic expressions by men while those by women are noted by an almost striking absence of the same. When travel as a motif/means was adopted by the television, the same was repeated. Beautiful women appear on travel cookery shows as hosts and not as chefs. Women in these shows are usually centres of objectification – almost the same logic of featuring women in the advertisements of speed machines or male deodorants.

Travel cookery shows usually show a male cook/chef in a highly professional environment. Women in these travel cookery shows (in certain cases, these women might be cooks of the traditional closed kitchen cookery shows) introduce the region and place it on the culinary tourist map and then go further ahead into introducing the audience to the male cook. Travel cookery shows have revolutionised the space of kitchen by taking it into the open spaces of the roadsides, lawns drawing rooms, and even parks. These open kitchen spaces are marked by the presence of a male cook/chef while women are placed in these shows to give a voyeuristic satisfaction.

Television showcases cookery shows where men who came into cooking had to maintain their masculine identity, choice of food, type and nature of cooking (grilling) and above all placing men's choice over women's. The cookery shows by women, in general, include quick solutions in domestic kitchen while those by men highlight cooking as a professional activity basically done for pleasure, public recognition and leisure. Usually men are seen in these cookery shows, mainly travel cookery shows in traditional chef uniform, while women would either be in a casual dress (at times with an apron) or in glamorous dress as if straight

from a marriage or party. In spite of this, the cookery shows by women shows them as approachable to friends and family, as they would talk about the nightly family dinner as ritual and breakfast as a task.

The cookery shows on television are not conceived by the programme creators to segregate the space of kitchen by gender, but goes by popular cultural norms of gender and food. Even among the cookery shows, the greatest viewership goes to travel cookery shows, flourishing in the shades of culinary tourism. These programmes combine the romance of travel with that of the sensuousness of food. Aditya Bal of Chakh Le India fame opines, “Getting a glimpse of the people and the culture of a place heightens the experience of a dish being cooked before you” (Raha). Culinary tourism is on the rise due to the hike in income level and the amount of disposable income of the middle class.

Food and eating are firmly established components within the burgeoning mix of new ethical, culturally concerned tourism experiences Cuisine is significantly central to the tourism experience, so much so as to consider food and drink as stand-alone motivations for visitation. There is evidence that demonstrates regional and national culinary tourism products to be widely and successfully promoted in macro destination marketing strategies. People spend more time watching others prepare fantasy food on television than they spend in experiencing cooking in their own kitchen. (Wight 153)

Food programmes on television are basically believed to provide “foodtainment” Joanne Finkelstein. Gendered cooking becomes naturalised through such entertainment programmes. The domestic space of television interpolates gender dynamics in relation to that of kitchen by brooding on the fine line between spectacle and action through the travel

cookery shows. These shows claim to be helping women. Female viewers, look to the food networks for entertainment that speaks to her lifestyle, the things that she's interested in.

Television is primarily a home-based technology and due to its small size compared to the silver screen of cinema, helps in developing a working proximity with the audience. Cookery shows in television makes it feel like pornography where the physical senses are appeased by an idealisation of cooking (Chan 47). The unique space and quality of television aids it in eliciting emotional and physical pleasures by watching someone cook and talk about it. The "dream-like cooking" (Barthes 79) privileges lifestyle over the recipe. Television food programmes breathes beauty into food, supposed to be enjoyed by the eyes. Since television can only provide satisfaction to a few senses, the cookery shows work towards arousing those senses. The chopping and frying sounds along with the commentary by the host/cook lead to the image being a substitute to the physical senses.

In travel cookery shows telecasted through television, women are mostly presented as hosts while the cooks are, for the most part, men who are experts in the art of cooking. Mythologically this is substantiated by the character of King Nalan, who could not be defeated in cooking while no great cook in mythology ever, is a woman. Learning to cook is a gendered part of a child's activity. Women are taught, usually indirectly, to learn to cook. Bikramjit Ray notices, "The men, on the other hand, were never under pressure to go into the kitchen. So they love to watch these shows, both for viewing pleasure and for practical cooking advice with which they can experiment" (Raha).

The major highlight of the travel cookery shows on television is the shifting of the vestigial space of the kitchen into the mainstream – on to the lawns of resorts and even on the roads. The shift in the space of kitchen as seen through another domestic space of the television occurs through the entertainment value and substitute gratification provided. The travel cookery shows by women, on the one hand works on sexing up the female host and the food, both alike. The chefs/cooks of travel cookery shows are almost always male. This gendering of food is achieved successfully by the television through the creation of spectacle. “Cooking programs are not merely simple, pure performances of real-life cooking, but rather are far removed from the intimate kitchen space. Television has allowed food to be constructed as a public image, ready for mass consumption” (Ray 59).

The illusionary shift of the space of kitchen into the mainstream, as shown through the travel cookery shows on television, in fact, works towards the construction of a renewed gendered cooking. The participation of women in the higher positions in paid labour is miniscule when compared to men in cooking industry, while the actual participation of women in the same industry is higher than men. Foucault’s concepts of geo-politics were located upon the power axis formed by the geographic positioning of subjects. Foucault believed that the mainstream positions in the geographic structures were centres of power, while the vestiges were those ruled upon. This clearly alludes to the position that the space of kitchen used to have since ages, was due to the reason of being positioned in the hidden spaces of any house.

The travel cookery shows on television brings the vestigial space of kitchen into the fore but the process of domestication still does not seem to be changing. The traditional cookery shows where women are shown

cooking are set in larger-than life settings, without any relation to the actual kitchen space. The architectural initiative of bringing kitchen to the mainstream and making it more democratic could also not save kitchen from a stigmatic identity. Today, in a middle class house, a kitchen is, of course, not the one as it was some ten or twenty years back. The renewed space of kitchen is becoming more neat and tidy with all the utensils and cooking ingredients always kept under cover in neatly designed kitchen cabinets. This need to keep kitchen under cover explains the undemocratic positioning that the space of kitchen still is associated with. All the glamourising and spatial restructuring deal only with the symptoms and subscribe to the conventional associations of gendered cooking.

The travel cookery shows give an allusion of a change in power politics and thereby, domestication of women, along with that of kitchen. The objectification of the female host and the inequality in arenas of professional cooking is evidence enough of the static power structure, in spite of the shift in the spatiality of kitchen. Even after being associated with travelling, cooking still is perceived as a gendered activity, more on television than in real life. The political structure is unaffected by a moving of the space of kitchen into the mainstream. Underlying these spatial shifts are cultural norms of gender and cooking.

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Visual Semiotics and To-be-looked-at-ness: A Close Reading of the Systems of Signification at Work in Advertisements

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“Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign.”

Charles Sanders Peirce

Human beings branded as ‘Homo significans’ or ‘meaning-makers’ commonly exhibit a desire to make meanings. Meanings are made from the active processes of creation and interpretation of ‘signs.’ According to Peirce, we ‘think only in signs.’ A sign consists of anything which generates meaning. A sign not only means in and for itself but also through its place in other signifying systems. A sign signifies something other than itself. It can be in the form of words, images, colours, objects etc. These things are not self-contained entities. They lack intrinsic meaning. But they are invested with meaning once they are treated as signs. This interpretation of things as signs is made possible through our association with familiar systems of convention. It is this meaningful interpretation of signs that make the field of knowledge, Semiotics an interesting and concerned area.

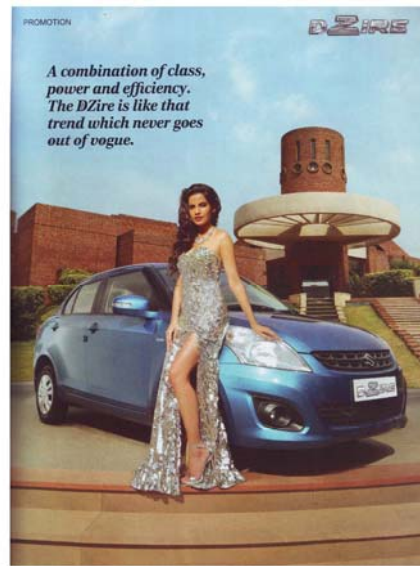
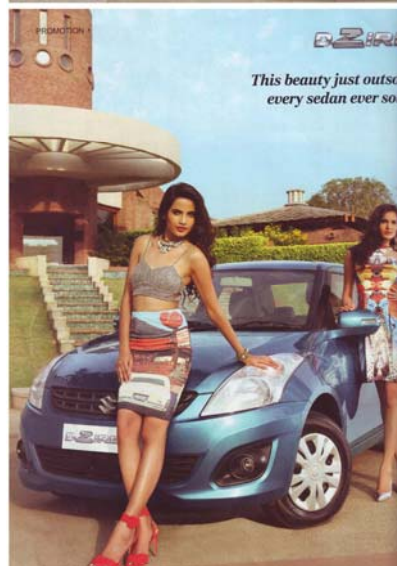
Semiotics is concerned with signs. As an academic discipline, semiotics is concerned with the life of signs, from their production as an effect of the signifying systems to the particular implications of the significations they carry within the cultural systems in which they operate. Semiotics is a discipline of assigning additional meaning or subtext to signs beyond the meaning of the sign itself. Semiotics is a science which seeks not the clear, open meaning of a text, or an image but the meaning which lies beneath. It is mostly interested in how the meanings are created rather

than what the meanings are. Semiotics, the sign system of language provides the fundamental basis for the co-existence of signs as an effect of the systems of signification. Using semiotics to decode advertising helps the advertisers to put in subtle cues that attract the target audience towards the brand, product or the service. Awareness about the use of semiotics in advertising helps the audience to decode the hidden meanings behind an ad which would act as hidden persuaders for them to purchase the product and therefore be less amenable to the idea of purchasing the product. Signs thus deserve special attention when it comes to any kind of analysis of cultural texts.

Advertisements, a prominent discourse type in virtually all contemporary societies become meaningful as cultural texts because of the systems of signification which constitute them. They can be seen as important sites for the constitution of cultural meanings. The advertiser is conscious of the target audience's ability to employ cultural codes and how they get reinforced to read and make sense of the images. An individual applies unique experiences, cultural and societal values to the signs implicit in the advertisements to decode the preferred meanings or the suggested information. Advertisements make use of a variety of signifiers, new and bewildering codes, and a set of verbal and visual signs to inform and persuade people to buy a particular product.

For this advertising industry employs signs with words and images as a means of guiding meaningful interpretations in framing meanings. A visual semiotic approach to advertisements inevitably leads to the critical analysis of the undeniable presence of multiple signs embedded in it. A semiotic analysis of ads assumes that the meanings of ads are designed to move out from the page or screen on which they are carried, to shape and

lend significance to our experience of reality. Ads never reflect a pre-ordained reality but work extremely hard to manufacture one. We are encouraged to see ourselves, the products or services which are advertised, and aspects of our social worlds, in terms of the mythic meanings which ads draw on and help to promote.



A look at one of the most populist forms of signification called advertisements shares a conceptual notion of being wholly verbal. A critical look at one of the visually intensive areas called advertisements is devoted not only to the verbal but to the whole regimes of signifying systems that categorize the patterns of meaning clusters. The way of looking is in itself a cultural and social construct. Through looking we negotiate social relationships and meanings. Looking is suggestive of learning to interpret. In effect, the paper attempts to look at the practices of looking and the determining gaze of the culture. This study will also look into the meanings of the images in some of the commercials as produced a group of heterosexual male observers in terms of a semiotic interpretation of the visual aspects of the text.

This paper intends to make use of semiotics to individually analyse and discover the visual semiotics and the production of meanings in the four print adverts of 'Maruti Suzuki Swift Dzire' in the popular magazine 'Femina.' An attention to nuance and a deep sense of commitment to the phraseology of all the adverts poses as a strong example of the way the advertiser makes maximum use of all other means of making meaning intersect the verbal realm. There is more to meaning than meets the eye. It goes beyond the language to engage the target audience to own not only the targeted product but everything associated with it. The advertiser commits 'an organized violence on ordinary speech' to persuade the target audience to 'let their desire show.' 'With over 7 lakh DZire on the road...' he exhorts the audience to set the trend for others to follow. This set trend which will never go out of vogue makes the likely buyer combine in him the qualities of 'class, power, efficiency,' popularity and uniqueness. Through this characteristic feature of being distinctive, he owns not only

the 'object of desire' but also 'the object of everyone's DZire.' The representation of female forms for the brand plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of the surveyed female as 'the object of vision: a sight.' Ads reinforce the idea of how an audience views the people presented and who is doing the looking. They are constructed assuming heterosexual men as default target audiences. The present status of woman is that of a passive object of a male gaze. She becomes what is being bought and sold- 'This beauty just outsold, every sedan ever sold.' The image can mean 'buy the product, get the woman.' She becomes a commodity that helps the product to get sold. It exemplifies the saying 'sex sells.' She becomes the objectification of the image being sold. The other meaning to be inferred is that buying the product helps one to become more like the model advertising it. When the viewer looks at the picture, he is given to the illusion that the model is smiling suggestively at him. The dazzling smile and gaze of the sexy models seem to suggest that 'This could be you.' They also represent sex and youth.

These ads are directed not only toward the well-to-do, but also toward the social climbers, pretty much everyone who wants the 'good life.' These ads generate the feeling that we are 'less than perfect' without it. Something is missing in our life. To feel esteemed in the eyes of others we develop a desire to own this 'object of dzire.' The background with a beautiful estate and lush greenery is suggestive of life, vibrancy, excitement and fresh hopes and expectations. The blue colour of the car and the glaring presence of the wide, vast blue sky are signifiers that contribute to the element of imaginative responses and would-be closer realities. Image, word and colour, are just three of the many semiotic modes through which social meanings of ads are coded. These sets of signs

don't make up a single, comprehensive and coherent meaning, and the meaning of particular signs is always relative to specific kinds of reader, on specific occasions. Herein lays the significance of semiotic analysis within a common framework of critical discourse analysis of advertising.

Ads when understood in the terms of systems of signification become meaningful precisely because of the terms of the system which constitutes them. The production of meanings in ads will not be natural in their obviousness but rather the effect of the signification of a whole series of signs and their relative positions within the rules of combination for the system which is ad. Semiotics, the science of signs can be said to have changed the ways in which we are able to engage with the specificities of meanings comprising forms of signification. It can change what they mean to read, as well as the practice of reading itself. Semiotics thus gives rise to a whole new reading practice – to read ads as a system of signs to open them to a process of decoding to reveal the ideological implications of the syntax and grammar from which they are composed. As an act of cultural critique, this study seems to well worth exploring. Advertisements thus urge us not to go in for stable, definitive and specificities of meanings. The varied connotations inherent in advertisements are evident of the underlying invisible, organizing principle called ideology. The meaning someone invests in a sign is largely socially dictated. A word means something because we collectively allow it to do so. Semiotic analyses form the building blocks for the construction of ideologies. Here the attention is also on signs as carriers of ideological meanings. At the heart of this paper presentation, is the realization that a close reading of the advertisements is mandatory to deconstruct the multiplicity of meanings contained in it. This research is only a step along the way.

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From Genuineness to Charlatanism: Trauma of the Techno-maniac

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The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers - Sydney J. Harris.

“COMPUTER” is a word that has become an integral part of the human psyche since past few decades. The human language seems to have been replenished tremendously by its advent, so much so that man’s identity itself could be challenged if the words related to technology are removed from his tongue. Starting right from the World Wide Web to the modern software applications, today’s digital world unlocks wide horizons before the tech-savvy man which enables him to transcend the limitations determined by the otherwise complex world. Notwithstanding the diverse fresh opportunities that it provides, this paradigm shift towards a technology oriented universe will invariably influence one’s innate power to act intuitively. To set out a level ahead of Plato then, ideas themselves could only be treated as copies in the modern information overloaded society.

The surplus information traffic is making it difficult for the individual to differentiate between authentic and faux. Direct communication is almost impossible; words have to pass through so many channels, get intermingled with visual parallels attributed by the radical developments and by the time it is processed by the automated brain, the thoughts are highly distanced from its origin. Conclusions drawn from these data always turn out to be false or partially true leaving scope for misunderstandings whereby relationships suffer. A thing as purely inhuman as internet has started replacing even dear ones. The argument stated in

retaliation is that it allows more private space. The fact is that it actually intrudes into one's privacy furtively. On the one hand when it equips one with innumerable weapons to resist power; on the other, unfolds vistas of domination too. Incessant barrage of ideas from all sides makes critical thinking practically unfeasible.

The Emergence of Trauma and its Relevance in the Digital Era

Technology while on the one hand renders man with a feeling of superiority, power and dominance, is actually unveiling his limitations more explicitly. Man is brought face to face with his inability to absorb the reality in its totality by the upsurge of contradicting truths. Confronted with the dilemma of becoming more and more reliable on technology for even simple things which one did independently earlier, one develops a feeling of lacunae and incompetence. The possibility of a total technological annihilation has strong psychological implications leading to a sense of stress/trauma.

Trauma, according to psychoanalysis may be defined as, "an event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization" (Laplanche 465). The victim forgets the actual traumatic experience as well as its period of occurrence thereby reducing the degree of possible cure. Susceptible to obliteration, the self-suffers the traumatic incident again and again in real life.

The feeling of being self-sufficient is an essential requisite for man's survival. With the advent of technology, this autonomous position is challenged. Taken to an extreme level, this can invalidate the very core of his existence and entails serious repercussions. This is something that requires immediate attention especially in the case of the present generation

who are more reliant on gadgets and other electronic devices that turn them into tech-savvy individuals. This obsession with everything “hyper” and “super” will drive them to the point of being maniacs, unable to carry on a normal life without any of these and simultaneously developing a sense of void within. This could also lead to severe personality disorders as psychologists point out.

The failure of the mind to process the innumerable messages received and sent, leads to ambiguity with regard to the original ones and those influenced by others. This amalgamation of the unique opinions with the borrowed ones causes discolouration and one is engulfed in a sort of eternal impurification resulting in a failure to comprehend where reality ends and constructed reality begins. From the Postmodern concepts of socially constructed reality and pluralism, the reader-centered approach of the Deconstructionists to the binary opposition of the Structuralists, all the theories run around the uncertainty of universal truth and the inability to distinguish between fact and fiction. Living in such a competitive atmosphere, man’s power to act based on his own faculty of intellect is affected leaving him more or less like a machine. Compared to the past, man is getting increasingly dependent on outside agencies leading to a catastrophic outcome. Mankind seems to be more or less heading towards an invalid state, wherein external support is necessitated more frequently.

The intermediate agency always working between man and the world, though seems to be defending man, is in reality distancing him from the humane qualities that renders him his essential identity required for survival, making him no good than the machine which he is so proud of. In such a scenario, man would be hard put to make a choice between primordial existence and the infinite luxuries afforded by the fast changing

world. If he goes for the latter, he would find himself more terribly immersed in the grapples of his own inventions because in an effort to tame nature, his own nature suffers to the extent of making the thinking, feeling, self reliant and powerful man; extinct.

The colossal information transmission through electronic means and corresponding mechanization culminated in the Digital Era, which in turn took the world to further horizons as far away as possible from human control. The loss of a sense of control is more vigorously evident in the spread of technological threats like virus. In addition to this; the chat rooms, social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Youtube etc., makes one more addictive to the world of internet. Easy and fast access to new developments around the world equips one with a sense of confidence; but if engaged in excess, it can also transform one into a megalomaniac. Thus though the modern world offers much, it is not without price, making this a time in which our lives become more difficult to manage. Thus the digital boom takes a “life” of its own, sooner or later replacing man in the process.

Online Media V/S Print Media

The most technologically efficient machine that man has ever invented is the book Northrop Frye.

The nature of print media is also undergoing vast changes. Authors are now experimenting with a range of techniques to provide novelty in an attempt to rise up to the challenge offered by the online media. But one cannot elude the numerous shortcomings of the printed texts in comparison to the possibilities presented by the various applications. With the launch of electronic devices like Kindle, iPad etc. e-books have also been popularized making them more reader friendly. So books are facing the danger of being

sidelined because the magical world offered by the visual technology has more impact and influence on the mind and intellect than the apparently uneventful one of words.

The information revolution has affected the publishing industry too where marketing is also facilitated through internet. To top it, a now-a-days online hybrid book like the Vook is gaining prominence. It has the additional allowance of enjoying both audio and video features along with that of the written form, the so-called media convergence, which enhances the whole reading experience. Along with the computer, many of the applications can be accessed with the help of mobile too. Issues regarding portability are resolved with the arrival of Tablet, Notebook and Android phones with enlarged screen and memory space. This has attracted substantial number of readers who have completely altered the narrative scene.

Experimentation in the field of narration includes open ended books and possibility of multiple interpretations. The critic Roland Barthes has already pointed towards the decreasing role of authors in deciding the theme and end of any book in his famous work *The Death of the Author*. The writers also stand to gain as they do not have to restrict themselves in any limited framework; instead let their imagination run wild with respect to the subject matter that they propose to deal with. But the information overload has definitely given rise to high competition in all spheres.

Apart from the usual, several emerging genres like fan fiction abbreviated as fanfic/fic are also invading the scene. It refers to the reader/fan's version of a popular work of fiction including the same characters, mostly put up online. Here the dominant motive is not profit but just individual satisfaction and a reworking of a novel that permits the

reader a chance to *re-present* his/her point of view. The interesting fact is that these works never come under copyright laws and are often accompanied with disclaimers to the effect that they are not the original creations of the corresponding authors. Purity is frequently at stake with the mixture of various genres, eg: transmedia storytelling, which embroils the functionality of presenting a story from multiple platforms using contemporary techniques. Thus hypermediation takes place at all possible stages.

Options to receive instant feedback regarding one's thoughts and to communicate online with the readers draw some writers to exclusively online publications. Personal blogs are achieving swift popularity, producing creative writers out of any layman.. Thus online media is surely gaining an upper hand over the print media; but all said as Frye advocates, nothing can entirely take the place of the printed book or be glitch free. Technology typically malfunctions and in such cases books are sought inevitably as recourse by majority of readers still. It is nonetheless true that technological advancement has certainly influenced to a large extent the forms of narratives, modes of expression, authors, readers, and the entire publishing industry. Fortunately books have stood up to the test of time.

The serious fissure has only been due to the myriad ways of modifications and interventions conjured up by establishments with political or selfish agenda. The phenomenon of globalization acts as a catalyst in speeding up a total disruption. As a result one can neither remain stable nor do justice to one's standpoint as evidenced in the media on a daily basis. Literature is sometimes misinterpreted by technology, taking it beyond recognition and also significantly away from the author's primary aim.

Genuine and/or the Charlatan

It is generally the imaginative faculty that suffers tremendously in the context of artificially imbibed creation, making modern high tech man more of a passive receptor than his revolutionary ancestors. Can technology be a substitute for man's thinking power? Advantage is that even an idiot can in one way or the other hope to reach up to the standards of a natural genius by mechanically making use of the enormous leeway suggested by the rapidly evolving system, but the stability of a success so achieved is definitely questionable besides whether such power that comes too easily to man would not make a beast out of man.

Those ignorant of the paraphernalia of the modern apparatuses are forced to learn it; otherwise they are mercilessly left out of several luxuries bestowed upon mankind by recent inventions. Eventually such people develop a sense of being stupid. The present world is evolving into one only fit for "webbies." With virtually everything happening through the network whilst one stays back at home, crime is also on the rise, as high tech and fitting state of affairs to the high standard of the web world. There is no transparency in many cases sabotaging personal rights. Offensive posts and photos on the social networking sites have compelled many to commit suicide. There is a long line of martyrs of online scam before us who must remind us to be mature in our dealings on the net instead of indulging in snoop activities. Webcams are misused to unimaginable degrees casting away personal feelings and emotions. Moreover it gives gratification owing to a sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others. Large numbers of relationships that sprout on the web get terminated at alarming speed due to lack of bonding. All this leads to

depression and untimely deaths, mostly of the young people who were to become the backbone of the nation.

There was a time when people used to write passionate love letters; but in today's fast-moving life, everything has been reduced to SMS and emails customarily comprising copy-pasted contents. This indirectly impinges on the concepts like memory, language etc. Shortened spellings used to save time and options to set reminders among many others denote growing dependence of mankind on machines. Language is intimately bound with one's culture, so when its purity is threatened, it is almost similar to man becoming devoid of his roots. With the initiation of various gadgets that offers so called immense possibilities promising less effort on our part to fulfill the day to day responsibilities, we are turning into mere puppets in the hands of technology. Whether we are able to reap maximum benefits from these tools is yet to be researched upon in detail.

Metamorphosed into clones, man can no more assert his individuality. With everything coming with the elegant tag of "super" and "hyper," even minor diseases cannot be diagnosed without technological intervention. It has become mandatory to be involved in a constant battle of ideas and cross references. There is a tendency to stick on to one's position even at the cost of appearing foolish, unreasonable, and impractical. As the activist Vandana Shiva remarked, competitiveness has now become an acceptable term for selfishness.

Windows to Pastures New

Applications like Photoshop and special visual effects in movie enable viewers a novel experience. The web opens the windows to the world, so that one could see places of interest without much expense, almost an impossibility in the past. But currently even such pictures are not

presented as they really are, but mediated in several layers to increase or heighten likeability. What we lose in this endeavour to appeal to a mass audience is its natural element which makes it pristine. The artificiality rendered by human intervention will shortly make them less of an attraction.

Distance has become a matter of antiquity these days with everything at our beck and call. With information at our fingertips, we feel a sense of liberty. In contrast, this inclination leaves men lazier than before. People become celebrity faster, which is a positive thing, but when this becomes an excuse to have everything through shortcuts, it must definitely be curbed. One should significantly learn to profit from net without succumbing to its negative effects. Hence taking right decisions is now all the more challenging.

Even visually challenged people find the recent progress valuable as it promises them a life free of restrictions which would otherwise be imposed liberally on them. In their case, contrary to others, the digital hype has certainly been a blessing. Citing the indispensability of internet, media researchers highlight the growing relevance and simplification of this once multifarious technology. Latest android phones help police in crime investigations by uncovering hidden truth quite serendipitously.

As with any innovation, disadvantages should not outnumber the advantages. Or else man would be considered a total failure, a victim of his whims and fancies. When so many options and choices lie before us to make things easier, we actually plunge into a sort of lethargy. Without adequate intellectual exercise, we become more or less stupid and sooner or later would find ourselves completely at the mercy of these global agents. One would not be surprised to find science fiction coming true these days,

the man turned cyborg is well on its way to sabotage the carefully etched path of the ancestors.

Individuals are now acting as active agents on the web compared to the past, but this is only on the outer level; even when they feel that they are being free of prejudices, they are really in the grasp of outer forces, bringing into debate the role of hegemonic forces bent upon dominating vulnerable man's psyche, thereby permeating a schizophrenic atmosphere. The relevant questions are who is in the driving seat, technology or man? Has technology already gone out of his hands? Whatever the answers are, technology has, no doubt, made it possible for man to transcend the boundaries and leap unchallenged towards unconquered territories. It would only suffice for him to remember Einstein's words in his expedition:

I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.

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Media Literacy in Question: with specific reference to “Njan Steve Lopez” and “Munnariyippu”

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“Who taught you to be silent?”

Who asked us this question first? We ourselves, didn't we? To be precise-our mind! During the transition of oneself through the knowledge acquisition process, education, socialization and legal thought, every individual asks him/her this question as he/she feels that something is not right as from his/her childhood itself he/she has been taught not to “react”. “U needn't react to anything. You mind your own business. You alone can't change this world.” This is the traditional Malayalee mind set and this mindset is what exactly pegs back an individual from reacting/responding. If at all one responds, the consequences are mostly discouraging as well as negative and the popular tendency is to “silence” the one who responds.

If you were wondering what the above mentioned was all about, it is a prelude to the discussion of my paper which is supposedly a discussion of the same with special reference to two recent Malayalam movies *Njan Steve Lopez* (*Me Steve Lopez* sic.) and *Munnariyippu* (*Warning*) and the controversy created by ace Director Ranjith(to which I shall return soon). To begin with, it is really astonishing to see the striking similarities between these two films:

- (1) Directed by two re-known Cinematographers, (Venu Isc, Rajeev Ravi)
- (2) Their wife as Editor/Writer, (Beena Paul, Geethu Mohandas)
- (3) Malayalam Titles
- (4) Theme of Imprisonment/Criminality

- (5) Individual Freedom v/s socialism V/s Totalitarianism
- (6) Questioning the politics/validity of Judiciary
- (7) Two eminent Malayalam short-story writers penning it (Unni R, Santosh Echikanam)
- (8) Dyad of existentialism and individual freedom
and
- (9) Reviews/Counters/Creations/Debates/Fake's

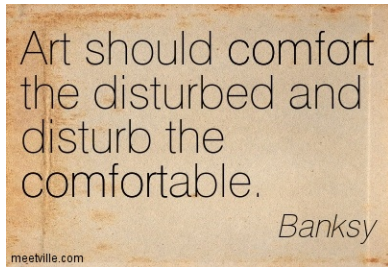
As evident, the last point is our focal point of discussion. Ace Director Ranjith, who also happens to be the producer of *Munnariyippu* equated some of the comments on social media with toilet graffiti during a press conference and this resulted in wide protests and debates (Raj 01). Ranjith's comment vexed the fans, especially youngsters. They retorted back at Ranjith through social media and responded that the fans have the right to express their viewpoints on the films irrespective of whose film it is. However, a minority spoke up in support of Ranjith and they were of the opinion that there is nothing wrong with what Ranjith said.

This hasn't been an odd instance as the debate regarding use of social media for opinion formation has been a long existing one. Director Aashiq Abu had played down criticism in social media regarding his film *Gangster* saying that facebook is a junction/cross-road where all kinds of people meet and quarrel. Though Rajeev Ravi didn't come out in public regarding the same, heated discussions and counters did exist for *Steve Lopez* too.

This leads us to the question of *Spectatorship*. Before we proceed to the ethics of spectatorship (or for that sake the freedom of a spectator to say

whatever) let us first examine the query of “Why so much of debates arise?”

Where do they all come from...



This exactly has been supposedly the core intention of every art, including cinema. In general, media messages are said to reflect the social, political, economic, and technological environment of the system in which they are created. They either reinforce that environment -- by perpetuating stereotypes, or they challenge it. When we partly accept that both the films “Comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable” by challenging the environment with their so-called ‘social-realism’ as the graffiti artist (Banksy is his pseudonym) argued, we must examine the nature of ‘media’ to realize how much this ‘realism’ is, in truth, manifested. Stuart Hall, in his “The rediscovery of ‘*Ideology*’: return of the repressed in Media Studies” observes that:

the reflexive role of the media - simply showing things as they were and it putting into question the transparent conception of language which Underpinned their assumed naturalism. For reality could no longer be viewed as simply a given set of facts: it was the result of a particular way of constructing reality. The media defined, not merely reproduced, 'reality'. Definitions of reality were sustained and produced through all those linguistic practices (in the broad

sense) by means of which selective definitions of 'the real' were represented. (64)

In *Njan Steve Lopez* (I've deliberately put it as 'Me Steve Lopez' instead of a grammatically more accurate 'I am Steve Lopez'), the protagonist is a youngster "whose major concern in life is how to tell his childhood friend Anjali (Ahaana Krishnakumar) that he loves her. He has an iPhone, is on Whatsapp all the time, goes out drinking with his friends and generally lives a carefree life made all the more secure by the fact that Steve's father George is a deputy superintendent of police in Thiruvananthapuram." (Pai 01) Thus, right from the beginning, efforts have been taken to "construct" a so-called "natural", "recognizable" protagonist. The events that follow, which, in terms of several critics, makes it a "coming of age" film, also are stereotypically etched. The goons are black-skinned, with horrifying looks (eg. Vinayakan) and the only notable difference is the "setting". Instead of the clichéd criminal-hub (in movies that is) Cochin, we have our story placed in the Capital city of Thiruvananthapuram (unlike a dozen such previous attempts including *Chotta Mumbai*, *Ivar*, *Black*, *Best Actor*, *Stop Violence* and *Asuravithu*).

In case of *Munnariyippu*, you may have out-thought me by now and ready with your counter "A jail convict/murderer isn't a common man, right?" Spot on! Right! C K Raghavan isn't a commoner, he may just be one among those so-called "imprisoned murderers", yet I claim that even *Munnariyippu* is "constructed"! You ask me how?! Let me explain... See how a medium takes the aid of another popular media to seem "real"! The story of the movie

unfolds through the glance of a journalist- Anjali (Played by a perfectly Bob cut Aparna Gopinath)- Bingo! ‘Cinema’ has its requisite support from the most manipulative (or if it sounds derogatory, the most “constructive”) ‘Media’! (Initially in the form of a published article and then in the quest of a to-be-published book). As space constrains me too, I shall come to the question of how “realistically un-realistic” *Munnariyippu* has been in the fag end section. Anyways, to sum up my argument in this section, we can observe that in both the movies, experience is “mediated” through discourse. Social reality is constructed; ie, reality is *Framed*. Hence the story or the “manifest text” can be read only by deciphering the “sub-text” or “the latent text”. Thus our focus shifts to the next section- in this era of social networking and its extension (as well as the redefinition) of the power of *Participatory Culture*, the call is for *Media Literacy*. .

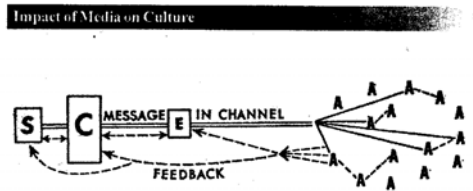
From the clock radio
that wakes us up in the morning
until we fall asleep watching the late night talk show,
we are exposed to hundreds
-- even thousands --
of images and ideas
not only from television
but now also from newspaper headlines, magazine covers,
movies, websites, video games and billboards.
Media no longer just shape our culture. . .
they ARE our culture. (Thoman 09)

As Elizabeth Thoman suggests, we all are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages. The validity of this can be realized only when we understand how much the *New Media Culture* is boosted by the progress of Internet as Slavomir Krekovic points out in his *New Media Culture: Internet as a Tool of Cultural Transformation*:

Basically, the only use of the World Wide Web and other Internet services is in spreading information. But unlike in the case of the old media, every individual or institution is allowed to use it in two ways: as a recipient and as a content-creator. The Internet is the first many-to-many medium: every computer connected to the net can now become a broadcasting station, publishing house or art gallery, depending only on the skills and intentions of the owner. This democratic nature of the net is well suited for providing an alternative information channel, as an opposition to classical mass media. And unlike the old institutionalized media, it offers far more flexibility and it can become a powerful tool of social interaction.(4)

In short, the Internet gave birth to the phenomenon that we may call “new media culture” and hence to use it judiciously one must master the trade of *Media Literacy*. The word “judiciously” has to be noted, as that is the key difference between the knowledge of the medium (ie, the internet) and the “use” of it.

Let us have a look at this diagram:



Mass communication for a given message of one moment in time is illustrated here: Source (S) has his message reported by communicator (C) in channel controlled by editor (E); some audience members (A) receive the message directly, others indirectly, but some are inattentive; feedback interactions may occur along the communication route.

Evidently, different people experience the same media message differently. As Thoman points out, “At the heart of media literacy is the principle of inquiry. To be a functioning adult in a mediated society, one needs to be able to distinguish between different media forms and know how to ask basic questions about everything we watch read or hear.”(10)

Hence, Media education encourages a probing approach to the world of media: Who is this message intended for? Who wants to reach this audience, and why? From whose perspective is this story told? Whose voices are heard, and whose are absent? What strategies does this message use to get my attention and make me feel included?

Now, let us come back to our movies *per se*. The controversy sparked off by Ranjith or for that sake any other film maker might well be explained with the above diagram; it occurs as there are audience who receive the message directly, audience who receive the message indirectly and (some) audience who are inattentive as well. Moreover some feedback interactions occur through the communication route, thereby creating tussles. In the era of media manifested era of *participatory culture* (ie, where the audient becomes a contributor in some way to the work produced), it is rather harsh to criticize the cyberpunk for exercising his/her discretion. (ie, for criticizing/reviewing the movie or for that sake rating

it/initiating a debate on an aspect of the movie, as critical thinking equates to creativity in *Media Literacy* discourse too).

If you're wondering what participatory culture is, then let me add a very short note on it. As pointed out above, in a participatory culture, a recipient becomes involved in the production of content too at times. The first of such instances in Malayalam cinema can be traced to the movement initiated by John Abraham, Culminating in the production of his masterpiece- *Amma Ariyan* with accumulation of public fund. A much newer example is *I'am*, a movie directed by Onir, funded by the social network users across the globe. Though not precisely the same, another instance is the movie titled *I.D.* directed by Kamal K.M. , produced by seven people including Rasool pookutty, Madhu Neelakantan, and none other than Rajeev Ravi himself!!

I know! I know! You are right again; there is no connection as such between what I said just now and the two movies that we are discussing here, with the sole exception that 4 among the producers of *I.D.* are retained among the 7 producers of *Njan Steve Lopez*. Yet, my point here is that participatory culture is not about production alone, but also in the critical discourses of the same. This is precisely where the Netizens score. We could see mainly two kinds of participatory culture in the context of the controversy, viz. *Affiliations* (memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centered around various forms of media, such as Friendster, Facebook, message boards, metagaming, game clans, or MySpace) and *Circulations* (Shaping the flow of media (such as podcasting, blogging etc).

Culture in the broadest sense is a form of highly participatory activity, in which people create their societies and identities. Culture shapes individuals, drawing out and cultivating their potentialities and capacities

for speech, action, and creativity. Media culture is also involved in these processes, yet it is something new in the human adventure. Now, let me indulge (or attempt to) the same for once...

Steve Lopez and *Munnariyippu* hit the box office at a time when Malayalam cinema is said to have entered a new phase. To say that Malayalam cinema stepped out of the super-stars' driven "main stream" path to (the so-called) new-generation experimental zone could be dangerous, as, to quote Hall again,

First, though the differences between the 'mainstream' and the 'critical' approaches might appear, at first sight, to be principally methodological and procedural, this appearance is, in our view, a false one. Profound differences in theoretical perspective and in political calculation differentiate the one from the other. These differences first appear in relation to media analysis. But, behind this immediate object of attention, there lie broader differences in terms of how societies or social formations in general are to be analyzed. Second, the simplest way to characterize the shift from 'mainstream' to 'critical' perspectives is in terms of the movement from, essentially, a behavioral to an ideological perspective.(56)

The concluding sentence holds key to our two movies: a movement to an "ideological perspective". Needless to say, if you are a Malayalee film buff, you'd have found this "ideological perspective" to be *Socialism/Communism*. At periphery it holds true. Both the directors with visible leftist bias have come up with a story that suits their ideology as well as politics. In recent times it is quite evident that the left front has the power to highlight a movie as well as eclipse it. (The latter being evident with the eclipsing of the movie *Left, Right, Left* directed by Arun Kumar

Aravind). If viewed in this parlance one could even be skeptical about the controversies sparked off at the release of *Steve Lopez* and *Munnariyippu* and the subsequent flurry of reviews (mostly positive) of these two movies. Thus, despite being “slow-paced”, “offbeat” movies, they collected gross over gradually.

Yet, I would like to neglect that thought of a deliberate conspiracy for favorable reviews, as I have been arguing about the need of *Media Literacy* and the subsequent enrichment of *Participatory Culture*(or for that sake *Participatory Journalism*?!). Hence, extending the debate of mainstream cinema, let me try to analyze why we have two wolves in the coat of the communist/socialist goat that fail miserably in front of the spectator who turns a critic.

Let me begin with *Munnariyippu*. To start with a few positives, as critics have sung praises, the film has a seemingly well-knit plot with a superstar (Mammootty) returning to his ancient best after a few duds at the box office. As journalist Anjali, Aparna is a perfect cast. The camera (Venu) as well as the unification of his shots by his better-half Beena Paul are a delight to watch. Especially the top angle shot with which the film opens as the credits scroll on the screen, where an army of ants shift a dead gecko from the screen’s left to right, is a masterstroke in itself. The dialogues in the movie captures the viewer’s attention and helps in sustaining the mood of the movie. The dialogues function as the communist mouthpiece, especially in the scene where the protagonist proclaims at a bar: “Whether in Cuba or Family, when revolution happens, blood spills.” Now, if you are wondering what’s wrong then, the answer is as simple and straight forward as it could be- the film undoes itself. That is, for all the idealism that it claims, its subtext breaks un knowingly like a glass bowl.

As mentioned already, the film proclaims the leftist ethos. But surprisingly, right from scene one, it defies its own logic. If communism claims to raise voice for the neglected and downtrodden (to add, sub-altern as well as dalits) as well as denounces religion embracing the motto of class struggle, here we have a film totally undoing it!! The film opens with a telephonic conversation of Anjali to a friend of her who is supposedly a muslim. When asked about how she's doing by Anjaly she replies in awe that Anjali is lucky to be enjoying singledom. Being born a muslim, she's all misery as she has given birth to "two-three" children as well as taking care of her husband by feeding him as well as washing his clothes,(and what not?!) hmph..(Insert goosebumps) as if all muslim women were born to procreate and lie slave to their husband! If you think this is one odd instance, the film maker keeps proving you wrong. The police officer whose autobiography Anjali is supposed to write "happens" to be a Brahmin! (Some 'Moorthy' is his name.. ha! I'am one too!!) If not enough, we are revealed that Anjali herself hails from a well-known Christian Tharavad and she has a suitor in none other than an NRI (Prithviraj). To add to the striking contrast, all inferior characters, like the hotel boy played by Minon, belong to the Lower castes or Dalit. Now, don't you say "let us neglect this and look forward to other aspects, in a movie starring Mammooty look at the screen presence Aparna has got-Women empowerment!" Oh..no, another lie! Take away that one odd dialogue where he speaks about the lifespan of women marked by masculinity, scrutinize what the climax intends! How hypocrite and how male chauvinist! That all the three women in his life were killed by him as they impinged on his freedom! ha! How mean! And yes, compare it with the "Men only" space, the Jail, where he resides for a chunk of his lifetime

and returns to, claiming “peace”! If at all one thing that the film conforms to ideologically is to the ‘drink’ of the working class- there is not one major character in the film (including Anjali) who doesn’t drink! Hail... Munnariyippu can also mean “Caution”!!

This poster will prove the pseudo-politics further (Insert in background Ranjith’s voice: “Facebook Walls= Toilet Graffiti!!”).



The movie *Steve Lopez* is spot on to its ideology as its title credits, taken from Camus’ *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* suggests: “Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being.” The film explores the same- innocence as well as the essence of being. The selfless plight and death of Steve in pursuit of the life of another human being is exactly the reason why I translated its title as *Me Steve Lopez* as Steve breaks out of the title for the much bigger cause of *We* against a selfish *Me*. It indeed is the pertinent question throughout the film as he sings: “Who am I Who are you Who are we.” In “Urakke koovunna Steve Lopezine Koovi Tholpikkaan Shramikkunavar”, Amal Lal remarks: “Steve is in one way or the other Me and You- a life of indecision. A petrified by-product of the materialistic psyche post the Globalised era.”(02)

Yet the transcreations or allusions within the creation can't be turned a blind eye to. Santosh Echikanam's story not only alludes to his own short story "Komaala", but also has striking similarities with recently published novel *Manjaveyil Maranangal* by Benyamin and *Fools Still Alive* by Uruguayan novelist Samaranto Grigorio.

To add to the debate, *Steve Lopez* is not the first revolutionary attempt at the theme of "disappearance" in Malayalam Cinema. Again, one could cite the first such instance in John Abraham himself. His political movies *Amma Ariyan* as well as *Agrahaarathil Kayutha* are typical examples. Another such instance is Shaji.N.Karun's *Piravi*. Lenin Rajendran's *Vachanam* was also a similar attempt. Moreover let us not write off Rajeev's own experiences as a cinematographer in films like *Dev-D*, *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *The Liar's Dias* as well as *I.D.* To add another masterpiece, let me remind you of Costa Gavras American film *Missing*.

Hence, *Steve Lopez* or for that sake *Munnariyippu* isn't a "fresh" brand new film, but a "tried-out several times" vine in a new bottle flavoured by review writers and controversy makers. To add validity to a statement that I withdrew earlier regarding "hired-reviews", let me quote from one such: "Every once in a while comes along a film that demands from us more than few bucks at the pay counter. It demands attention, asks for involvement." (Nideesh 01).

Each and every cinema communicates in multiple ways to multiple audiences. The success of cinema is achieved when it creates a discussion rather than simply being money minded. If at all a "bad cinema" exists, it at least demonstrates how a "bad cinema" shouldn't be to a keen film enthusiast.

Of course, each reading of a text is only one possible reading from one critic's subject position, no matter how multiperspectival, and may or may not be the reading preferred by audiences (which themselves will be significantly different according to their class, race, gender, ethnicity, ideologies, and so on). Because there is a split between textual encoding and audience decoding, there is always the possibility of a multiplicity of readings of any text of media culture. There are limits to the openness or polysemic nature of any text, of course, and textual analysis can explicate the parameters of possible readings and delineate perspectives that aim at illuminating the text and its cultural and ideological effects. Such analysis also provides the materials for criticizing misreadings, or readings that are one-sided and incomplete. Yet to further carry through a cultural studies analysis, one must also examine how diverse audiences actually read media texts, and attempt to determine what effects they have on audience thought and behavior.

(Hall Encoding/Decoding128)

Regarding the need of strengthening Media Literacy, Hall says:

The critical paradigm is by no means fully developed; nor is it in all respects theoretically secure. Extensive empirical work is required to demonstrate the adequacy of its explanatory terms, and to refine, elaborate and develop its infant insights. What cannot be doubted is the profound theoretical revolution which it has already accomplished. It has set the analysis of the media and media studies on the foundations of a quite new problematic. It has encouraged a fresh start in media studies when the traditional

framework of analysis had manifestly broken down and when the hard-nosed empirical positivism of the halcyon days of 'media research' had all but ground to a stuttering halt. This is its value and importance. And at the centre of this paradigm shift was the rediscovery of ideology and the social and political significance of language and the politics of sign and discourse: the rediscovery of ideology, it would be more appropriate to say- the return of the repressed. (88)

And as blatantly evident, “the return of the repressed” here indeed signifies the return of the Blogger/Netizen/Facebookie and the politics being his politics of Media intellectualism achieved through Media Literacy.

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Media in the Age of Globalization: Redefining Culture

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Globalization means integrating our economy with the world economy. Truly, our economy has integrated and absorbed a lot from the modern western culture. It can be said that a cultural dualism – a co-existence of traditional and contemporary culture is prevalent in our society. The full acclamation of the emergence of this dualistic economy goes to the media and broadcasting.

Media refers to the different means of communication like newspapers, television, radio, internet, smartphones, computers, laptops etc. Media has played a significant role in the acceleration of globalization and in the emergence of a cosmopolitan culture (www.amj4ge.blogspot.com). The mass media are seen today as playing a pivotal role in augmentation of globalization, expedition of cultural exchange and numerous flows of information between nations via international news broadcasts, television programmes, movies and music. Media have become increasingly global to conquer audiences worldwide (www.carolinamatos.com). Media has put forward a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of the public globally.

According to Hallahan (2003), mass media and culture are intertwined. Media shapes the culture via various information that it provides. For instance, advertisements use stories to dramatize the cultural benefit of products. Marshall McLuhan, a media guru put forward that different media altered people's world view by bringing out different modes of thought. Another impact of media can be seen on our varying cultural aspects of space, time and relationships. Earlier, for

communication, it required the communicants to be situated in the same location at the same time. Thanks to the various communication technologies for reducing the time and space between folks. It has brought the people and nations across the world under one roof.

Media, thus, plays a very decisive role in our day-to-day life. It is considered as one of the principal agents for societal development, democracy and good governance. To imagine a world without media and communication technology is like living on a tofu. A deeper look into the numerous facets of media will open up its influence on the redefined culture.

From cradle to grave, the 21st century generation is immersed in media. The significance of media is such that it tells us how to be a successful person, personally and professionally, how to dress, how to behave in a social group, how to avoid failures in life and last but not the least, how to be men and women (Kellner, 2004). For instance, one can surf the internet seeking various tips for a happy and friendly working environment, the countless dramas and other fashion programmes aired in television let people know of the latest fashion trends, many fictional movies released, to quote some movies for instance – ‘The Twilight Saga’, ‘The Harry Potter series’, ‘The X-Men’, also alters the views, beliefs and thought of the public.

Media technology has actually helped a lot in changing our life. From waking up in the morning till going to bed at night, we are stoned to at least one of the communication technology such as smartphone, various social networking sites, TV and internet. Each and every person in this world, irrespective of age and gender, is in one way or the other a media-addict. According to John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Reports (2008), young people use media to build friendships, romantic relationships and also to hang out with friends for whom a wide range of social networking and dating sites are available. Use of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and many other sites for updating the status about their relationships, events in social lives etc. helps them in maintaining connectivity with the outside world.

But people are very much obsessed with online games, online shopping, smartphones, tablets etc. This is a sort of addiction which is termed as tech addiction or screen addiction (Karmarkar, 2014). The communication gap has also narrowed down irrespective of time and location. Formerly, people used to write letters and send postcards for communication and at festive occasions and used telegrams for emergencies. Comparatively, now instead of letters, we have emails, chat applications like WhatsApp, We Chat etc. through which not only texts but also images, videos and audios can be sent and also e-postcards. Due to the heavy influence of mass media in today's scenario, the Telegram service in India ended. This shows that internet, which is one of the forms of mass media, has entered deeply into the socio-cultural economy and has greatly enhanced the well-being of the people.

Excessive use of this technology can make people tech-dependent and addictive. Karmarkar (2014) points out that there are many types of screen dependence – Repeated checking of the phones even if no messages are received, changing profiles and status messages on social media often, even many teens take their phones to the bathroom so as to not miss out any text/call. People shop excessively via online even though they do not need, want or use it. This behaviour of compulsive spending or 'Oniomania' is due to the availability of online shopping sites 24x7. Viewing and

downloading online pornography, frequenting online chatting rooms and dating websites are all activities which makes people tech-addict. The idea of a perfect partner has lured many people into affairs over the internet, often ignoring and breaking up with their real-life partner. Everything comes with a price, so does technology and media.

Culture is defined as shared behaviours, ideas and artifacts that create a way of life passed from one generation to another. Every individual has born and brought up his own culture and their lives are influenced everyday by being surrounded in that same culture. There are different cultures in this world and the modernization of mass communication technology has a great impact on the redefinition of culture. According to Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist defines culture as “A historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life”. Simply put, culture is the expressed and shared values, attitudes, beliefs and practices of a social group, organization or an institution (Narasimhamurthy, 2014).

To Crandall (2013), technological changes mark the end of a cultural epoch. When radio was invented, people predicted the end of newspapers. When television was invented, people predicted the end of radio and film. The implementation of new technologies does not mean that the old ones simply vanish into dusty museums. Today’s media consumers still read newspapers, listen to radio, watch television and get engrossed in movies. The difference is that it is now possible to do all these activities through one device — be it a personal computer or a smartphone via Internet. Such actions are enabled by media convergence, the process by

which previously divergent technologies come to share content, tasks and resources in one platform. A smartphone that also takes pictures and videos is an example of the convergence of digital photography, digital video and advanced mobile phone technologies.

Media brings forth global and cultural convergence. For instance, novels that become movies like the Harry Potter series, the adaptation of movies from one nation and remaking it in another nation like the famous horror movies – ‘The Ring’ and ‘The Grudge’ etc. can be cited as global convergence. Again, the edition of the America’s greatest show “Who wants to be a Millionaire?” has been reformed in India as “Kaun Banega Crorepati?” This convergence has largely affected the culture of the Indian society. As a constant presence in modern life, media serve numerous functions and send seemingly unlimited messages and thus, studying the possible effects of media provides a crucial perspective on modern culture.

Media globalization has transformed broadcasting in India. India’s emerging economy, with growing aspirations to adopt western lifestyle and an emerging advertising sector has made the Indian media market very attractive to transnational broadcasters. An established satellite network provides cheaper and quicker nation-wide broadcast coverage in a geographically large nation with diverse cultures which leads to huge demand for wide range of satellite channels catering to different languages.

The first key instrument of state persuasion, All India Radio (AIR), was used as a powerful educational tool in a massive illiterate India at the time of Independence, when the literacy rate was only 18 per cent. Television was introduced in India in 1959 with national broadcasters aiming to educate, inform and create a sense of nationality and help maintain national unity via the national television network – Doordarshan.

The government invested heavily on developing satellite technology for expanding the reach of television to the maximum extent. The result was the launching of Indian National Satellite (INSAT) in 1982. The media sector was also liberalized during 1991 reforms which paved way for the entrance of media MNCs into the Indian media segment. Hong Kong-based STAR TV (Satellite Television Asian Region), now part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, was the first to enter India in 1991 with a beaming five satellite channels – Star Plus, Prime Sports, Channel V, the BBC World and Star Movies. These channels became an instant hit among the Indian elites (www.sadianasr.wordpress.com).

According to Karmarkar (2014), India has the largest mobile phone users, after China. The ratio of personal mobile phones to persons is far more than the number of toilets available. India has 554.8 million mobile users and 143.2 million users with access to internet from their desktops, laptops or mobile connections like 3G, GPRS and EDGE. According to a survey conducted by the Cartoon Network channel in 2009, in India, 95 per cent kids live in homes with mobile phone whereas 73 per cent kids are mobile phone users, of which 70 per cent comes under the age-group 7 to 10 years while 76 per cent under 11 to 14 years. In 2013, the Indian Council of Medical Research conducted a study among population of the age-group 18 – 40 years across the urban communities and found alarming rate of technology dependence. The tech-dependent populace generally shows certain symptoms like eating and sleeping disorders, Nomophobia – no-mobile-phone phobia or a fear of not having a phone, low academic performance among children, low work productivity, mood swings, aggression and criminal behaviour, neglecting responsibilities, social

withdrawal, depression etc. All these behaviour affect the culture and values of the society in an adverse manner.

The Indian culture is one of the oldest and diverse cultures in the world. The preservation of culture matters a lot to Indians because of which the Indian government has formulated a 'cultural policy' for preserving Indian arts and the cultural heritage. But the advent of mass media has made the cultural policy to disappear and has been now replaced by Bollywood movies and TV-serial market. Mass media has affected the lives of people in many ways with regard to dressing and personifications. Girls want to dress and wear jewellerys like Deepika Padukone in 'Ram Leela', they want to look like Kareena Kapoor with a size zero figure. Men want hairstyle like Salman Khan in 'Tere Naam', six-packs like Hrithik Roshan. Television has reached a stage where even religious discourse is telecasted refuting the need for visiting religious places and religious-social gatherings (www.princessratna.blogspot.com).

Earlier, the proposals for marriage came through local marriage-brokers, relatives and friends. But today a whole lot of matrimonial sites have taken up the obligation of match-making and made it easy for parents to find a perfect match for their children. Prior to the internet revolution, for collecting facts and information about a topic, one had to solely depend on available works and books. Writing a research report was either done manually or was type-written. But the internet revolution solved all these toils of man. Now we have e-libraries, numerous facts related to any subject are available on the internet in just one click; the type-writer has been replaced by PCs and laptops.

India is famous for its rich cultural background and globalization has inculcated westernization in India and has conversely made Indian

culture to spread globally. With the emergence of media globalization, the deep-rooted Indian customs and traditions loosened up. The joint family culture, a key attraction of India, is a wonder to the Indians residing in metropolitan cities. Nuclear families are booming up and children treat their grandparents as guests or visitors which are one of the reasons for increasing old age homes as when they grow up, they consider their parents as a burden. Indians are not even keen to promote their mother tongue or our national language. They consider it shameful to speak in their mother tongue and prefer foreign languages like English, French, Spanish etc. the prevalence of which can be seen from the school-level itself.

Increasing divorce cases and extra-marital affairs shows that the institution of marriage has lost its value. The emergence of a new form of relationship, the live-in relationship, is the effect of media on culture. Growing crimes and violence against women is another shocking aspect of the perverted mind which is a result of the imported values. Smoking is injurious to health. But master minds have invented something which they think as non-injurious to health: e-cigarettes. The important aspect is that the media is promoting its use. Its sale is widespread via online shopping at cheap rates.

Furthermore, lack of gender-sensitivity is clearly visible in media. Young women, especially in the film industry, are exhibited with irrelevant sexualisation to attract young audiences. Women's roles are considered ideal only when she is nurturing and acts as a supportive supplement to man. In TV-dramas also, women are portrayed either as dependent, poor and weak subject or as an independent, rich vamp who is always involved in destroying someone's life. Majority of the dramas aired on television

exposes women as specie filled with negativity and hatred. Gender bias is a prevalent dilemma in India and it is showcased perfectly through media.

Children and teenagers blindly imitate the actions of their role models in the glamour industry that they indulge in and commit various crimes without knowing the consequences. Alcohol consumption and smoking, even though warning signs are displayed during such scenes in movies and serials, are considered by teens as a matured act which lead them to severe consequences. They want to show the society that they are mature enough to indulge in such practices. Rash driving is another such outcome of what is shown in the movies. Exposure to violence and negativity can have a deep impact on young minds and even adults. The 2012 Delhi rape case is such an incident which involved a minor who had heinously raped the physiotherapy intern. Though media responds to such brutal incidents, the question is: From where do the culprits get motivation?

Therefore, media should act not as the problem, but as a solution to the problem. In consequence, media greatly affects the attitude and behaviour of an individual and has a greater role in the 21st century in shaping one's lifestyle and living standard.

The social media revolution has conquered India too on a large-scale. India is a rapidly developing IT hub in the Asian continent. The social media users in India are 197 million in 2014 whereas in 2012, it was 122 million users. This shows the rapid penetration of social networking among Indian youths. Social media plays a fundamental role in day-to-day life of all individuals. It allows people to communicate and engage with information quickly accessible on the Internet. People have a virtual platform to express their views and opinions without face-to-face

interaction. These sites link people without any variance and geographical boundaries.

People use social network sites for various reasons among which ease of use, following rapid updating, analysing and sharing the continuously increasing information, reflecting on daily life, establishing and maintaining spontaneous social contacts and relationships, supporting informal learning practices with interaction and communication and facilitating delivery of education are the leading ones. Thus, these reasons explain why social network sites are used extensively. Gender too plays a crucial role in using social networking sites. Both male and females are equally involved in socializing (Narasimhamurthy, 2014).

The social network has created a trend of sharing information where individuals can share facts with groups of people regarding products, services and ideas. Social sites like Facebook and Twitter share the breaking news much faster than the traditional satellite cable channels as these act as a medium of knowledge sharing platform across the world. For marketers, social network is a boon which offers more challenges and opportunities. The complaints and compliments regarding their products made by the customers enable them to respond and interact with the public.

In India, 8 out of 10 people from urban areas surf the internet for more information and specifications about any product especially electronic gadgets, before purchasing it. The social media platform has also served as a factor for social change via participation in digital crusading and also advocating in crisis situations. For instance, national and global population advocated the victim of the 2012 Delhi rape case through various media, the outcome of which was a global call for justice – ‘One Billion Rising’, a

global campaign in which one billion people in 207 countries rose and danced to demand an end to violence against girls and women.

Text-based android mobile applications such as WhatsApp, We Chat, Viber, Instagram etc. are mounting so fast due to its affordability. Subscriber growth rate will continue obsessed by entry of new mobile operators, 3G, 4G and availability of cheaper handsets and also due to flat-rate data plans. 'Citizen Journalism' became ever present during the Mumbai terror attacks and is still in progress (www.globalcc.wordpress.com). Increasing use of smartphones and social networking sites has made citizen journalism to grow widely. Citizens can often report breaking news more quickly with visuals than the traditional media reporters (www.mashable.com).

The Kerala police are embracing the technology to connect with public and curb traffic violations via WhatsApp mobile application through which people can take pictures and videos and send them to the city police along with the date and time of occurrence (www.thehindu.com). For the security of girls and women, many mobile applications have been launched like Vith U app, bSafe app, SafetiPin etc. working with internet connection.

Hence, we can see the widespread annexation of social media in the lives of the public. Even the deed of meeting and greeting friends and relatives has been digitized now. But social media pose dangers too reflecting cultural alterations. Growing incidents of people capturing and downloading pictures of girls and women directly and from the social sites and morphing it is increasing day-by-day. Online dating and virtual affairs popping up are leading girls to many traps. They even end up in the hands of sex-rackets and mafias from where there is no return. Accusations and

abuse through social networking sites causes severe mental depression and can even lead to suicides.

In *The Hindu* (2014), it was reported that harassment of women in the public space of Facebook and other social media form the major chunk of cyber-crimes registered in Kerala. Of the 383 cyber-crimes registered in the state, harassment was the motive of 35 per cent. Now even taking revenge has been digitized. Henceforth, social media brings about positive as well as negative ethnic revisions in the society.

“Advertising is the art of arresting the human intelligence just long enough to get money from it”

– Chuck Blore, a partner in an advertising firm.

Advertising is a form of communication the purpose of which is to inform potential customers about various products and services, how to obtain and use them. The biggest platform for delivering major advertisements is the media. Media helps in gaining and retaining attention of the customers via the enthralling commercials and also serves as the strongest medium for mass marketing (www.indianmba.com).

Media heavily depends upon on advertising revenue. Quality newspapers rely on advertising for about two-third of their revenue, magazine producers rely on advertising for 50 per cent and more, broadcasters rely entirely on advertising, except for revenue earned from programme sales and turn over. Box office relies a great deal on the amount spent on promotion, advertising and publicity which adds additional 20 per cent to the production for a low budget movie and to about 50 per cent for a big movie. Advertising, thus, stands for the commercial competition, company expansion and promotion of product, pleasing consumers and maximizing benefits at any price. It effectively underwrites the tendency of

media owners to support the dominant ideology, the security of the status quo and conservative values.

Thorestein Veblen, an economist, argued that conspicuous consumption or lavish and wasteful spending to gain social prestige had become a predominant value and ritual in modern society. Contemporary advertising continues to shape our cultural beliefs and values by telling us to look fashionable, to be slim and attractive and to do whatever is necessary to be popular. Advertising involves a persistent playing on our emotions that threatens the whole notion of self.

Celebrities, people who enjoy widespread recognition in a culture due to the high visibility they enjoy in the media, play a huge role in the advertising sector. There are celebrity endorsements in which prominent celebrities lend their name and image to commercial products. Celebrities appear in TV commercials and print ads for various products and make personal appearances on behalf of their sponsors. They also promote products by wearing clothing, endorsing food products, electronic gadgets and a lot more in a very striking manner that people fall prey to those ads (Hallahan, 2003). For instance, the Maggi Oats Noodles ad beautifully performed by one of the leading actress from Bollywood, Madhuri Dixit, the Kellogg's Cornflakes ad endorsed by Deepika Padukone, yet another leading celebrity. Every time audiences see the celebrity, they make the commercial connection.

Manipulation of images in commercials by the advertisers often go too far by 'photo shopping' the images to make the subject look attractive. Girls, in particular, are lured by the 'perfect body figure' concept for which they are ready to lead a life of starvation. It can even lead to anxiety and stress if the unrealistic perfection is not achieved or at least, not close to it.

Parents, to an extent, have a good role to teach their children to see the reality from advertising. Unfortunately, it is also a grave matter to think about how even responsible parents will fair against a battalion of advertisers and marketers who are trying to instil the contrary (www.globalissues.org).

Newspaper and magazines routinely carry news announcements and feature stories that tell audiences how to take advantage of products and services. With increased frequency, newspapers and magazines create special advertising supplements or sections devoted to ads for specific types of products. They then fill the surrounding editorial space with advertorials or articles that appear to be genuine editorial matter, but actually are promotional puff pieces supplied by the advertiser or written by the media about the advertiser or its products (Hallahan, 2003).

Advertisements about lingerie and inner-wears are printed in such a manner as to provoke men. Not only in magazines and newspapers, these ads are also published in huge billboards and are kept in public places which actually are an embarrassment for women. Even in leading newspapers also, lingerie ads with semi-nude women are printed. These are at least printed material but the same ads when shown on television while watching a movie or any other programmes with family, the awkwardness thus felt is out of words.

To Hallahan (2003), television now sports several shopping channels, which have merged commercial messages into program-length entertainment shows. The Home Shopping18, for instance, promotes merchandise 24-hours-a-day so that viewers, who are being entertained in the process, will order featured products using 800-telephone numbers. These shopping channels mainly hire young women for promoting their

products. Women are portrayed according to male desires. They are made to dress attractively so as to attract more audience. Moreover, soap operas feature glamorous, light-skinned women depicting women as a princess while advertisements for health and energy drinks features mothers serving young sons and appreciating their son's achievements. Majority of the advertisements of energy drinks and malts represents and relates to boys only. Hence, even the leisure time commercials endorsed gender bias.

The prominence of globalization has led to an ever-increasing role of media, advertising and consumerism. The large multinationals have profited by taking advantage of this globalization and expanding their product market on a larger scale. But it is of prime importance to regulate and check on the apt usage of media in endorsing the filtered and authentic information so that the true purpose of making people aware can be achieved (www.indianmba.com).

Mass media do have importance for the individuals, institutions, society and culture. It plays a very significant role in every person's life. The advent of globalization and making the world a 'global village' is a positive influence of mass media. The 9/11 attack which celebrated its 13th anniversary in this year, the Asian Tsunami in 2004, the Delhi rape case, etc. got global attention due to the power of media. India is a nation with varied culture and the media has a wider role in altering the Indian culture to a great extent. Media has helped a lot in breaking many taboos existing in the country.

But over exposure to various forms of media has got its consequences too. People are TV-stoned when they are watching television programmes; their eyes remain fixed on the screen such that they are not even aware of what is happening around them. Such is the case with

women too. They are so glued to their serials that they do not have time for their family or children. Television is not the only villain. The advertisements endorsed makes children bonded to it. In some families, advertisements are the means through which mothers make their children consume food. Smartphones with huge touch screens which acts as a personal assistant is another gadget of addiction. With internet data plans cheaply made available by hundreds of network operators, people are glued to their huge smartphones that they are neither hungry nor want to know about what is going on around them. They are in their own smart world.

Relationships are valued the most in India which is degrading now due to media globalization. Divorce rates are rising; the major reason being having extra-marital affairs. The upsurge of live-in relationship concept is also the result of global media impact. Yet again, the cultural ethos have so much sullied that the traditional art forms like Kathakali in Kerala, the puppet shows in northern India have been replaced by TV-serials and Bollywood movies. Even the news aired is based on political interests.

All these expresses the changing culture with due reference to the power of media. Hence, media can be said as a double-sided platform like two sides of the same coin. It has got its merit of integrating the economy into a global village while it also has the demerit of changing the cultural values and beliefs of a nation by the adoption of western imported culture and social system.

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Parenting Violence through Cartoons

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The role of parents is amply expressed in the saying "*The hands that rock the cradle rules the world.*" However it is unfortunate that with or without their knowledge they have become instruments in inculcating violence in their children. Working mother's who are busy engaged in household work or involved in some social activities place their children in front of Television or internet believing that cartoons provide wholesome entertainment.

Cartoons the non-realistic world of entertainment to which all ages slip into is proven to be potentially deadly. What is annoying and funny in the animated world sows the seed of violence in the young mind.

Cartoons like *Tom and Jerry*, *Looney Tunes*, *Pokémon* and *Ben10* to name a few are very violent in nature. The negative impact of such cartoon translate into behavioural abnormalities in some children. Some of these are aggression, impatience, disturbed sleep, lack of concentration etc.

In the words of Pramod K Nayar, Jacques Lacan the most influential psychoanalyst argued that before the emergence of the self the child lives in the realm of the imaginary. Here there is no distinction between the I and the other. There is no centre ("me"). The child's notion and sense of the self emerges in its reference to another. Lacan whose notion of the unconscious derives from Freud suggests that the unconscious has a structure, it is a self. The repressed desire is the unconscious. Unconscious desire mistakes one appearance for another similar to it, and therefore substitutes one with the other. The human subject lives under the illusion that desire will be fulfilled.

The developing mind of children form an impression of everything that they are exposed to. At such a stage they are unable to differentiate between fantasy and reality. Their constant exposure to cartoons makes them step into the roles of the cartoon characters they admire and behave like them when situation arises or demands. So if children are exposed to cartoons that exhibit more violence with an intention of doing good, the end result is still negative.

From the dawn of time man by nature is violent. It is seen that we are all capable of some form of violence or another. It may be our superego that hold us back from expressing it.

For the purpose of study, cartoons like Tom and Jerry, Looney Tunes, Pokémon and *Ben10* scrutinized. Tom and Jerry winner of seven Academy Awards for animated film is an American animated series of short films created in 1940 by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. It is centered on a rivalry between its two main characters, *Tom Cat and Jerry Mouse* and many recurring characters based around slapstick comedy.

Looney Tunes is an American animated series of comedy short films produced by Warner Bros. from 1930 to 1969 during the Golden age of American animation. *Looney Tunes* rose to greater fame for such popular cartoon stars as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester, Tweety, Wile E Coyote and the Road Runner.

Pokémon abbreviated from the Japanese title of Pocket Monsters. Pokémon is the story of a young boy named Ash Ketchum. Finally having reached the age of 10, he receives his first *Pokémon* from Professor Oak and sets out on his Pokémon Journey with his friends to enter *Pokemon* contests.

Ben10 is an American media franchise created by man of action (a group consisting of Duncan Rouleau, Joe Carry, Jose Kelly and Steven T Seagle and produced by cartoon network studios. It's about a boy acquires a watch – like alien device called the omnitrix (full name omnimatrix) that allows him to turn into alien creatures. It has won three Emmy Awards.

W James Potter in his “*On media violence*” says that the social scientist count the number of acts that meet their definition to determine whether the show is violent or not. Social scientists then examine context to judge harm to viewers using this method. Social scientists continually find cartoons to be the most violent of all television genres. Cartoons do present very high rates of shooting, stabbing, bombings and the like. Morrison recognizes this when he says that cartoon

Tom and Jerry contains so much violence that if you took away the violence you would be left with nothing. The social scientist who watches a cartoon such as Tom and jerry sees many violent actions that are in a sanitized (low reality, high humour, no harm) contextual pattern and knows that this context increases the likely hood that viewers will become desensitized. The public including the parents believed that *Tom and Jerry* not violent at all. The public wants formulaic action- that is safe, sanitized violence (no graphicness, low harm) that does not threaten them (not shocking, low reality) and in which the good gags are strong and prevail (high revenge, high justification). When members of the public see this formula in action, they see no violence and no need to complain.

In a recent AV club round discussion, the critic Todd Van Der Werff noted,

watching these cartoons now, I am struck by their violence. Don't get me wrong: I think that's a big part of the cartoon's charm...

[A] little cartoon violence never hurt anybody, but it's still a bit shocking to watch these things and see the characters basically annihilating each other in ways that would result in death in reality. Yes that's part of the joke, it's hard to think anything quite this anarchic and violent in kids TV nowadays. I think it works in *Looney Tunes* perhaps because of the anarchy.

Killing monsters: Why children need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-believe Violence by Gerard Jones says that violence in *Pokemon* was loud, flashy, angry, repetitive but it was also bloodless, no one died and it always ended happy. The joint statement on the impact of entertainment violence on children issued in July 2000 stated,

. . . entertainment violence feeds a perception that the world is a violent and mean place...[and] increases fear of becoming a victim of violence with a resultant increase in self-protective behavior and a mistrust of others. Those words are taken almost verbatim from the work of George Gerdner, who focused attention on this "victim effect" or what other psychologists had called the mean world syndrome by comparing people's stated perception of crime rates with amount of Televisions they watched: people who watched more television tended to believe that crime rates were higher than they were in reality. The power to make people think that the world is far meaner than it is.

Parents need to know that the 10 year old superhero battle villains using physical violence. If parents have strong feelings about not letting their kids watch cartoons containing violence, then *Ben10* isn't for them. When facing evil, Ben is able to morph into one of 10 different alien creatures. This transformation is accompanied by dramatic visuals,

dialogues and music that may frighten young children because they don't understand the fantasy versus reality concept. Some kids may be alarmed when the villains attack, punch, throw, shoot and do whatever it takes to stop Ben. It is very violent and dark. This creates the impression that the solution to all problems seems to be through violence and destroying things.

Parents should be aware of the negative effects of such cartoons on children.

1. Some children's television shows are so violent that they give youngsters nightmares, a survey claims.
2. They also force children to grow up too quickly and can encourage bad behavior.
3. Sixty-three Japanese children were admitted to hospitals with epileptic seizures. It was caused by watching an episode of *Pokemon* which showed bright explosions with rapidly alternating blue & red colour patterns.
4. Some children became aggressive after watching Ben10.
5. Tom and Jerry & Looney Tunes makes children desensitized.

Another harm done is the change in social behavior.

1. The children copied at school the verbal aggression they had seen on cartoons. Researchers found that children copied & identified with cartoon characters just as much as they would with screen actors. Nowadays in our daily life children are becoming aggressive & violent. Children from the very early age viewing cartoons which are giving lessons of brutality. Have parents ever had a look at what their children are watching in cartoons. Here are some of the views expressed by the parents of enthusiastic

cartoon kids: The media specifically television cartoons for children have been increasingly showing more & more violent programs & making children aggressive day by day.

2. Most of the cartoons are based on fighting, boxing, killing by gun, attack by car, jumping from the roof etc.
3. The cartoons revolve around a hero and villain. Children after watching the cartoons want to be a cartoon hero in real life and in the process often indulge in bad behavior.
4. Children who watched too much cartoons on television are more likely to have mental & emotional problems along with brain and eye injuries and unexpected risk of physical problems.

When children of age of different age groups were asked their opinion about the super heroes of cartoons, most of the children were in favour of violent cartoons. And even said that to them they were necessary part of their lives. Another opinion expressed was that cartoons gave the children the strength to fight with their friends and also gave them the courage to survive in school.

Some of the suggestions to the parents are to spend some time for children. Make a timetable for cartoons and also review the cartoon first and then allow them to see it. Make them spent some time and physical activities than just make them watch TV.

Parents should monitor their children before it is too late to help make them develop into healthy, wholesome citizens. *“People respond in accordance to how you relate to them. If you approach them on the basis of violence, that’s how they’ll react. But if you say, ‘We want peace, we want stability, we can then do a lot of things that will contribute to our society.’*

Nelson Mandela

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Remarkable Truth Revealed in Memoirs of a Geisha: Challenges of Media-Cultural World

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“There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’ be” (12).

- Friedrich Nietzsche.

The narratives of media offer patterns of proper cult improper behaviour, moral messages, ideological conditioning, sugar-coating socio-political ideas, with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment. The receivers negotiate disparate meanings and ideas in complex and paradoxical ways. According to Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it” (7).

Realism, stimulation, and interaction enrich three-dimensional image through media. In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the exotic narration and gorgeous cinematography of rural and urban Japanese geisha foster realistic depiction, erotic stimulation, and sensual interaction among the Westerners. Japanese geisha culture is corrupted in the hands of American author Arthur Golden and American director Rob Marshall evidently. Youngblood argues that, “The notion of ‘reality’ will be utterly and finally obscured when we reach that point ... [of generating] totally convincing reality

within the information processing system ... We're entering a Mythic age of electronic realities that exist only on a metaphysical plane" (206).

Media violence (print and broadcast media) encompasses fact and fiction that misleads accurate conveyance, and mediated flows and lapses disregard cultural nuances. "Whatever our struggles and triumphs, however we may suffer them, all too soon they bleed into a wash, just like watery ink on paper" (428). *Memoirs of a Geisha* and its film adaptation reinforce and prioritize the tastes of Western White audiences and indulge in false racial stereotypes and historical inaccuracies. Westerners' belief adheres that Asian women, especially Japanese women are mysterious, timid, forbidden, submissive, fragile, docile, and domesticated. With the existing stereotypes, geisha are dependent, entrapped, and victimized by their male patrons and geisha houses. The book and the movie depict negative and traumatizing training experiences of Kyoto geisha with positivism and entertainment. It is untrue that *misuage* or virginity is not a passage to become a geisha, and it is not a custom that *danna* or patron sponsor invests their living and training expenses. In order to cater Western viewers' desires, both Golden and Marshall mis-represents geisha's life styles (kimonos, make-ups, hair styles), geisha's mannerisms (entertaining, witty conversations, music, dances), and geisha's trainings (experiences, rituals, customs) through fictitious demonstration. The movie casts a Chinese actress instead of Japanese, with more sensual exposure to please Westerners. A wide variety of Asian ethnicities with less linguistic fluency are exhibited with utter failure. Western audiences with their cultural insensitivity and corrupted ethics, they promote their Orientalist mentality: the Japan that Americans want to view. The stereotypical desirability and submissiveness of Japanese geisha are promoted through *Memoirs of a*

geisha by the Western Orientalist writers. Japanese media criticizes the misinformation and misrepresentation due to the inappropriateness of Japanese culture and geisha tradition. Golden fantasizes an imaginary Japan and geisha world by engaging the readers with an authentic account of the translator's note, first person narrative, and conversational narrative. He uses westernized and gendered perspectives with Orientalist fantasies (Japanese culture) and irrational sexualized symbols (Japanese geisha). As Norman Fairclough says, discourses represent "the world it is (or rather it seems to be), with "projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions" (124). According to Sheridan Prasso, "The West has a continual appetite for the image of sweet, gentle, Japanese child-women; ... real truth and fictionalized them into what has now become a century-old tradition of Western men writing fiction about Japanese women... A 2005 production by Steven Spielberg... promises us yet another permutation of a child-like, pining, devoted Japanese woman on screen in the form of that book's heroine geisha, Sayuri" (87).

The discourse on media ethics intensifies the perception of qualitative and quantitative drop in standards of media practices. Media operates in a climate of intense competition where the value of information and its corresponding quality are assessed in terms of ethics. The discursive relationship between the production and consumption of information is central to the commercialisation of media. The ethical perspectives concerning media are duties, responsibilities, deception, truth, knowledge, value, and objectivity. Normative approach can work within interdisciplinary framework. In mediated culture, one seldom sees explicit struggles with ethical principles—"Shall I lie to this person?" or "What is

fair in this situation?” (7) Brummett says about the concept of ‘constructedness’ in rhetorical perspective that, “Perceptions are constructed rather than natural or necessary ... [which] means that human neurological, physical, social, psychological or cultural mechanisms have intervened to shape an experience. No experience is natural in the sense of being “just so,” or necessary or “that way” for everyone. Whatever is constructed might be constructed differently ... whoever constructs can also be influenced to construct differently” (25).

Reflection/ Selection/ Deflection/ Connection/ Disconnection/ Narrative Inter-connection are fundamental for questioning ethics in mediated culture: “What cultural myths and beliefs does it reinforce or challenge, how do these narrative connections support visions of good or evil, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable practices in this culture?” (57) Novel media technologies provide more diversity of choice, more possibility of autonomy over culture, and more openings for the interventions of alternative culture and ideas.

Memoirs of a Geisha is translated into thirty-two different languages with cross-cultural differences due to transference, borrowing, adaptation, addition, and trans-influence. Here, the naturalization (reality/ original/ truth) becomes modification (fiction). Media is with functionalist approach: function or functions of texts, translations, and adaptations. According to Nord, the ‘functionalist’ features are: Sender/ Author/ Film maker (Writer/ Director of the literary text/ film adaptation), Intention (Intentions that guide literary/ film production), Receivers/ Readers/ Audiences (Critics/ Viewers with specific expectations conditioned by experience), Medium/ Writing/ Screening (way of communication), Place, Time, and Motive (conveying culture-specific features of source and target

situations), Message (Language with connotation/ denotation, expression/ aestheticism), and Effect/ Function (specific value of communication between sender and receiver).

Memoirs of a Geisha is a fiction that is presented as a memoir, with a complete false translator's note regarding the sincerity and fact of Sayuri's story. Because of its authentic aura and narrative ruse, the novel operates in the realm of irrational, heightened emotional response, and intoxication. It is like an Asian Cinderella story with Western reader pleasure and "ethnographic alibi." Stephen Spielberg calls the movie "Memoirs of a Geisha" as a Cinderella story, and Malek Alloula's 'ethnographic alibi' is the phenomenon in *Memoirs of a Geisha*: the story reflects a historically real world with erotics of epistemology (exotic culture and erotic female) and rhetorical strategies.

Following the title page and preceding the main text is a prelude: the "Translator's Note" which is signed by (the fictional) Jakob Haarhuis, Arnold Rusoff, Professor of Japanese History in New York University. This note begins with Haarhuis's recalling the time when, aged fourteen, he first arrives in Japan along with his father, are the only Westerners attending a dance performance in Kyoto. Two memoirs stand out in the moment: how foreign he feels and pleases that he can understand some of the Japanese being speaking. After this Orientalist gesture that establishes the foreigner's presence and knowledge of the other in the memoirs to follow—Haarhuis tells the readers how he comes to know Sayuri. He sees her in the dance performance he attends as a boy, and their paths later crosses in New York in the 1980s, after he has become a famous historian of Japan. We are told of the critical role Haarhuis plays in eliciting Sayuri's memoirs: only by finding someone she can trust is Sayuri who is willing to

record her life. In this self-introduction, the American professor is central to the unfolding of the geisha's tale and the place in which this story is told. It is only when outside Japan- in New York, where she has moved after retiring as a geisha- that Sayuri talks to the outsider about what "geisha simply do not talk" about. With this, the translator's note ends and the main story begins. Then the voice has been fictionalized twice over, with the author posing as both the storyteller herself and the academic authority, to whom (and only whom) the geisha has agreed to speak. These are both creative plots, not unlike those used by other authors in writing fiction. But the effect seems particularly potent and the readers are susceptible to believe the fiction. In the promotion surrounding the book, Golden often tells the story of its writing, that it takes nine years to complete and the scrapping of two entire drafts to hit upon a strategy that works—the first-person story of transformation of Chiyo to Sayuri. Thus the readers are introduced to geisha know-how as Sayuri learns it herself rather than having it pedantically that intrude into the text. The blurring of professorial and personal voices is quite intentional on Golden's part, which has been critical in the book's popularity. The 'professor' is an authenticating shadow, and Mineko Iwasaki is the "real-life" geisha who is introduced through a family friend speaking to Golden with the same "candor" and "intimate detail" that Sayuri herself grants Professor Haarhuis. In the promotional materials accompanying the memoir, Iwasaki and Golden's access to her are invariably hyped with juiciest snippet of geisha stardom in the 1960s and 1970s, and the high price of her mizuage (the ceremony of losing geisha's virginity). The structure of Western authority gaining entrée into the foreign world is consistent with Orientalism. A power dynamic is working when the outsider gains and publishes intimate knowledge of the

other culture, and remaining private about his own cultural secrets. No matter about how sympathetic the resulting portrayal, but the relationship is inherently unequal, with power, both real and imaginary, weighted at one end. In studying the “other” within the framework of Euro-American academia, the sign of her distinctive personality as understood by Sayuri herself. Golden uses ‘eyes’ as a rhetorical device; as the readers see Sayuri in her eyes, but it is also through her eyes that the readers see the world of Gion’s geishas. These eyes are noteworthy that mix something Western--gray colour-- with something Eastern—“too much water”—a mixture through which Western audiences can see someone both like and unlike themselves. In the story, Chiyo befriends with Mr. Tanaka and admires his refinement with fascination and eroticism. Ironically and paradoxically, he exchanges Chiyo to an Okiya (geisha house) because of her eyes, and her sister Satsu to a brothel in Kyoto. Chiyo experiences a savage, mean, and mistreated geisha house with different geisha sisters. The beauty associated with geisha culture is juxtaposed with an ugliness of sensuously horrific dimensions. Chiyo is transfixed: “Every detail of this woman’s kimono was enough to make me forget myself” (41). The reactions of readers are ambivalent that draw contrasts of beauty and hideousness that jarringly fluctuate throughout the book. As the story proceeds, Chiyo begins her geisha training in two months with fascinating details: how geisha apply make-ups, kimonos, witty conversations, dances, etc. A sentiment is elaborated for the Western audiences and performs endlessly for others and denies her own nature is a pain that constantly haunts Sayuri. She has lost the nostalgia of the geisha excitement and thus recreates that in New York when she sets up a salon for visiting Japanese.

Allison intriguingly records many readers' absolute insistence upon the authenticity of Sayuri's story: "In *Memoirs* [...] the fictional abuts continually against what readers absolutely insist is the "authentic," "historically accurate" depiction rendered by Golden of geisha Japan: a presentation that many told me allowed them to better understand Japan and Japanese more broadly" (382). "... Passion, bordering on arousal, was palpable, and what was verbalized was the sensation of being "moved"—by the gripping story, the beautiful writing, the visual magic, the sensual world" (391). Allison labels "passionate Orientalism," "exotic escapism," and "otherness."

The prevalence of both textual and filmic representations of Japanese geisha culture becomes the subject of intense Western cultural scrutiny. It is said that, "For various economic and political reasons, the last couple of decades have witnessed an enormous growth in Western interest in Asia and Asian history" (2). Both the creation and trans-creation leads to unique inter-cultural, transnational contact, two-way interaction, cross-cultural encounter, and cultural resurgence of "Orientalism."

The prevailing conceptions of Asia conjure an eroticized space that forms through desires and anxieties embedded in the "Western gaze." Asia and Asian diasporas produce multiplicity of media texts that circulate on transnational scale: sexually explicit Japanese manga, bollywood cinema, novels, and booming print industry of zines. These mediated texts travel across different "cultural contexts" and thus, Asia is mediated by the interests of globalized capital (as in the excitement surrounding emerging markets) and the imperatives and anxieties of U.S. and European imperial interests. Transnational media constitute complex relationships between erotic yearning, other desires, and fantasies: the travelling tales of erotic

liaisons between Western men and Japanese women and men. Erotic desires produced by media articulate with desire for commodities fused with nostalgia for homeland and inseparable from longings of modernity. “Orientals have always been a mystery, but this book taught me a lot” and “what Japan, and what about Japan, are they learning?” (318) Post-industrial Japan of today is eons apart from the narrow streets of Gion with its wooden teahouses and precious geishas. But this disconnect from the adds to the fantasy placing Japan in a romantic past where history gets emptied out and culture becomes timeless—what Barthes has described as the work of myth. And mythically, the novel takes place in a bygone time, interwar, wartime, post-war, when Japan is getting defeated and occupied by the United States. For American readers, a form of imperialist nostalgia akin to Orientalism does indeed seem to be at play. “Does this mean *Memoirs* is Orientalist?” (318) Golden’s form of storytelling makes his readers feel transported to another world. “I loved the book, but the geisha world is different you know: a different moral universe. Not bad; just different” (314).

Memoirs of a Geisha arrays with brilliant colours of exoticism and sensuality, with unfathomable mysteries and barbaric scenes, with glittering imaginary and mirage. The fictional and authentic memoir of a Japanese geisha with foreignness becomes the target of mass media blitz. Japan is considered as the Orient, and the novel is crafted around cultural difference which is luxuriated in exotic otherness. The Americans like Golden and Marshall writes and edits for the Americans (readers and audiences), who are shocked by the violence and savagery; and beauty and delicacy of cultural aesthetics. “What then can we make of *Memoirs*’ popular appeal in late 1990s America of a book about an Oriental Japan, staged as the life-

history of the conically exotic geisha, and written from the perspective of a Western authority?" (299) The popularity of the media is evoked through the literary devices and imaginative strategies with realness and Oriental erotics of an American author in first-person voice of a foreign and female geisha.

Jan Bardsley says that, the books about Japan that do sell have lots of detail, which makes them seem so 'different.' But the values in *Memoirs* are so American—the rags-to-riches tale, complete with an evil stepsister and stepmother. It's a hybrid of these American values – you gotta have spunk, believe in your American dream with all its suggestions of upward mobility. But to put in these geisha robes [make it] new. The novel is all about barbaric slavery with American ideological investment. It reassures the Westerners about the proper place of our enlightened culture against that of unwashed others, and also pulls the wool over our eyes faced with truly sexist politics that are dressed up as "Japanese." Alison Case argues that, [In real-life geisha culture] there is a culture of women's economic agency, and inter-geisha ties that take priority over those between geisha and men. The effacement of those from Sayuri's consciousness is clearly not authentic, but it serves the larger cultural resistance to perceiving women as active meaning-makers. It makes it easier to align Sayuri with passive womanhood, and the transfer of this American story to a Japanese setting provides a kind of fig leaf for that passivity. Bardsley comments that, it is not Golden's fault, but in the whole context of Japanese ranking twentieth in literatures translated and the fact that most American's can't name a single Japanese woman, or an Asian American woman, his voice becomes so much more powerful. Mineko Iwasaki says that, a 'pot-boiler' where geisha appear as prostitutes – more a fantasy of Western men than an

accurate representation of Japanese geisha. Here, medias (print and broadcast) gain power, superiority, and hegemony over cultural facts and truth due to mis-interpretations and mis-representations. And this leads to unethical and immoral description of Japanese culture and corrupt Japan with exchange-value to satisfy the American appetite. Just for the sake of Western entertainment through media, Japanese culture is politicized with intentional mediated flows and business ethics. So media is a mass-produced fantasy that removes the reality. The media affects the ecological, geographical, material, social, organisational, linguistic, language culture, and cultural taboos, customs, rituals, gestures, ideas, ideologies, habits, metaphors.

As Lesley Downer says that, ever since Westerners arrived in Japan, they have been intrigued by Japanese womanhood and, especially geisha. This fascination has spawned a wealth of extraordinary fictional creations and trans-creations like Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* and Rob Marshall's film adaptation. The contemporary reality and hidden history of the geisha's existence in present day or past history are mythical.

The archetypal journey from eastern culture to western screen triggers the Japanese world, and uses and sells the cultural source with muddled moralities into more than four million English-language copies. Thus, the Asian cultural essence is commoditized and sold by the influential American mass media with its power, hegemony, hierarchy, and domination.

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Fiction, Fact, Media and Judiciary- The Rape of Loopholes – Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine

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The Binding Vine is a story of mothers and daughters and their struggle for establishing their identity and their victimization in a male centred society. The purpose of the study is to explore and analyse Shashi Deshpande's "The Binding Vine" in the theoretical frame work of Foucauldian Power and to assert that media provides a premise of refuge to keep the subjugated and victimized female characters to be prepared to face the difficult phases of life. Man is generally tempted by an instinct for power and domination. This trait is inherent in human nature. People try their best to gain power over others through various devices. Michael Foucault introduced the concept of power by replacing the traditional concepts. Foucauldian power is positive because it is productive. Power produces knowledge, identity, truth and even reality. According to him everything is constructed by power structures operating in a particular period and context. According to him power is cyclical in character. None is permanently posted as the local guardian of power. Politics, religion, business magnates are some of the agents of power and many concepts are designed by their whims and fancies. Power is administered through strategies and not by force. Power and resistance are complementary. If there is power, there is resistance. The objective of the study is to explore and analyse the novel "*The Binding Vine*" by Shashi Deshpande on the theoretical background of Foucauldian power and how the media plays a vital role in the exposition of different facets of the novel to make it an eye-opener in feminist perspectives.

In this novel, the character of Mira, one among the female sufferers has been depicted as one who has suffered a lot in a male dominant social set up. Her attempt to rise above the oppressive forces forced her to be a confessional writer of diaries and poems. Though diary writing is a frivolous art form she made an effort to ventilate her wishes, aspirations and agonies. She resisted the power concerns of social and domestic vicinity by using the pen as a right weapon to resist against the biased condition of women. In a conjugal relation the powerful man often administers the power through sexual intercourse. It becomes an act of encroachment on an individual's privacy and freedom which transforms the individual's body to a colony. Thus sexual intercourse becomes an act of subordination of female body. One day Akka , Urmi's step mother in law brings an old trunk containing some diaries and papers. Her diaries and letters are documents suggesting a communion with herself. From this we can imagine the aspirations, fears, failures and desires of Mira. She had not been happy with her marriage because her husband's love was contrived and was like bait. It did not give her any individual freedom. He was tenacious to possess her. His sporadic sexual overtures are lustful and devoid of the warmth of true love. He was a man who tried to possess another human being against her will. Mira was afraid of her husband's love. His love was a terrible thing for her. She was afraid of the coming of the dark clouded, engulfing night. Her mother had strongly advised her never to resist those sexual forays. Mira's marriage was therefore a saga of surrender to the sexual obsessions of her spouse.

Here marriage functions as an institution to subjugate women in a phallus-centric, hegemonic trap. Being a coercive object of subjugation, she tried to ventilate her resistance through her poems and writings which were

penned like a journal entry in her diaries adding another dimension to her personality. A new subject is constituted by the intervention of external relationship of power which constrained herself merely as an object of passion. Here Mira's husband applies the strategy of male domination through sexual acts. The subjugated body surrenders for want of choice and power to resist. Mira is left only with a strong mental energy which gets a creative dimension. She writes deliberately making a journal of the happenings. This act attains the nature of a diary that reflects her condition humane. She could not for once escape from the constant prodding given by her mother: *'Never say no', don't tread the paths barred to you, obey, never say no, submit and your life will be a paradise'* (83). Like mantra these instructions got etched in her mind and her reactions were never different from what was conditioned within. In other words Mira was locked in a strange psychic state which was closed forever as the key was irrecoverably lost. The blessing offered by the mother was perhaps the last nail that was driven to the lid of her sealed mind.

Mira was perpetually engulfed with a sort of phobia from which there was no deliverance. She was cloistered in a sort of a home condemned to live with a man who could not be loved. Her breath however gave her the energy to push her pen to record her thoughts creatively. On one occasion she met Venu, the eminent poet and spoke to him about her poetic inclinations and gave him some of her poems to read. After reading this he said which startled Mira, *"Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for young women like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men"* (127).

Another female character who became a victim of marginalisation and isolated by the power structures of the society is Kalpana. Her

predicament was one of suppression and perseverance. Kalpana is a smart good looking girl. She was stubborn and self-willed. She was fond of good dresses, nail polish and lip sticks. She walked out keeping her head erect and caring for no one. In fact Kalpana did all this in order to proclaim loudly the existence of herself. Her aunt Sulu had special interest in her. She offered to take her and educate her. By doing this she wanted to make her own life safe. They have no children. So she was afraid that her husband may leave her. So she wanted to make Kalpana to marry her own husband to have children and so that she could also stay with them safely. She is so selfish that without paying any attention to the aspirations of Kalpana, she supports the incestuous relationship for the sake of her own safety and security. Her mother also silently approved of this and even appreciated it. But Kalpana had her own will to resist and return, refusing to go to her aunt. Her mother who did not try to understand this decision of Kalpana showered curses on her.

Kalpana's mother Shakutai , deserted by her husband was a victim of poverty and isolation . He left her for another woman. Now her own children have become a burden to her. She blames her own daughter for welcoming male gazes and inviting trouble. According to her a girl must know fear, stay within the social boundaries. She believes that Kalpana was punished because she violated the social rules. She does not like girls going after any fashions. She says "here boys are like dogs panting after bitches. And if you paint and flaunt yourself, do you think they'll leave you alone?"(145). Urmi, the protagonist of this novel tried her best to convince Shakutai that it is not Kalpana's fault. She was injured and wronged by a man. Shakutai was not ready to listen to anyone. Kalpana was raped by her own maternal uncle Prabhakar. She wanted to get married to the boy whom

she liked. This provoked Prabhakar to commit the brutal crime. It was his urge to prove his power over a feeble object. This was his justification for the incestuous act. Her dreams were shattered because she was poor, helpless and did not co-operate to execute the vicious plans of her aunt and uncle.

When Shakutai came to know about this as a rape case, she panicked and requested the doctor not to report it as a rape case. She was afraid of social humiliation. The police officer was also unwilling to register it as a rape case because it could invite complications to them. She was admitted in the hospital. However after one month the hospital authorities forced them to get a discharge for transfer to some other hospital as they lacked in beds to accommodate other patients. Urmi also talked with the authorities to keep Kalpana in the same hospital. But they refused to do so. They just wanted Kalpana out. Her mother became helpless because she could not shift her to another hospital which was quite far away. At this juncture Urmi gives the details about the rape case to Malcon, a journalist and they get published. It generates a public outcry, even drawing the issue in the Assembly. The government also backtracked. They order an investigation into Kalpana's case stalling her transfer from the hospital.

In some of the headlines Kalpana was portrayed as a prostitute. But for most of the papers Kalpana is represented as a victim. Shakutai who was alone until then, finds her husband's second wife visiting her. Shakutai and her family become celebrities. They appeared on TV news channels. As the government ordered to reopen the case, the rapist makes plot to save himself from the issue and seeks support from his wife. She becomes aware of the fact that Kalpana was raped by her husband. She visits her sister

Shakutai and discloses the matter. She asks her opinion for adopting steps to tackle the complex situation. On returning home she commits suicide by immolating herself. The intervention of the media at this juncture can be viewed more as a boon, defending the offenders inadvertently.

The analysis of the characters of Mira and Kalpana on the basis of Foucauldian power concepts prompt us to think about the depth of endurance, a typical Indian woman has to undergo by being a victim of physical and mental trauma in a patriarchal power structured social set up. The novelist has delineated the female characters in this novel in such a way that their lives have become a replica of an average Indian woman, who tries to establish her identity and existence in a male dominating society. Besides these, this study also helps us to understand how media provides a dais to the women to express their problems. The purpose of this paper therefore is to drive home the role that media plays in addressing women's issues

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Content Analysis of Bhatiali: A Folk Song of West Bengal and Bangladesh

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The word Bhatiali comes from the Bengali word “Bhati”, which means downstream. Boatmen sing Bhatiali songs while they travel downstream thus keeping them entertained. These songs originated in the area known as modern day Bengal comprising of both Bangladesh and West Bengal long before the partition took place. Presently, Bhatiali songs are sung in both Bangladesh and West Bengal. This paper tries to find out the differences or similarities in the style of Bhatiali songs sung in Bangladesh and West Bengal.

The present day area of Bengal comprises of Bangladesh on the eastern side and Indian the state of West Bengal on the western side. Bengal has a very rich cultural history, which is moulded by the various dynasties that ruled the area in different times. The Mayuryas, Guptas, Palas, Senas and the Muslims came one after another to rule the land. Later, the Portuguese, the French and the British also came to the area and brought with them their customs. The British consolidated their position at the expense of the fading Mughal rule. The British then ruled the area for about two hundred years. Folklore in Bengal has the diverse elements from all the ruling dynasties that ruled the area.

The British initiated research in the area and the British civil servants and European missionaries advanced them (A. S. Haque). The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was formed in 1784. Since then, a number of British scholars like William Wilson Hunter, Thomas Harbert Lewin,

E.T. Dalton, G. H. Damant and Sir Bradley Birt, conducted research and contributed in the field through their writings and publications.

Bengali scholars started the second phase of folklore research in the area fuelled by nationalistic tendencies. The pioneer was Rabindranath Tagore (Barma). He penned four essays emphasizing on the importance of folk literature from 1885 to 1899. The national movement in the Indian peninsula led to further research in folklore. Indian nationalist leaders tried to highlight the glorious indigenous culture through the researches. These initiatives brought out the essence of the local Bengali folklore culture.

Even after Indian independence and partition, researches were carried out in the field of folk culture. However, much research has not been conducted in the field of Bhatiali in particular.

Knowing Bhatiali is knowing Bangladesh folk music at once (Abbasi). Bhatiali is the boatmen's song of Bengal and it comes from the Bengali word 'Bhati', i.e. the lower riparian of great rivers. Bengal is blessed with a number of rivers, Ganga and its tributaries in West Bengal and Padma, Meghana, Brahmaputra in Bangladesh. Boatmen sing these songs while they sail downstream. Bhatiali itself has a number of sub genres such as Bichedi, Deholata, Sari, Rakhali, etc (Abbasi). The lyrics of Bhatiali relates to sadness and dejection of life and love. Human love and separation is the subject matter. These songs are sung in solitude when there is no more work in hand. These songs originally neither had any rhythm nor an audience. The songs were sung for the singer's pleasure. And the songs were not accompanied with any instrument. However, to match the taste of city audience instruments such as ektara, dotara, tabla are being used nowadays. (Abbasi) Songs were composed by common people

like fishermen, peasants and even their wives. Bhatiali uses some of the basic tunes among the folksongs of Bengal.

A common form of Bhatiali is:

SA RE MA

PA DHA NI DHA PA DHA MA

PA MA GA RE SA NI DHA

DHA SA

MA GA RE SA RE SA

This research intends to find out the present status of Bhatiali songs and assert the similarities and differences in songs sung in West Bengal and Bangladesh through content analysis of five songs.

Bhatiali is as old as any other folk song in Bengal. However, it has not been studied as extensively as other forms of folk songs such as Baul. In addition to that, West Bengal and Bangladesh have both gone through a number of political and cultural changes over the years. However, the people of both areas share the same language- Bengali. Thus, this research intends to find out the differences or similarities in the style of Bhatiali songs sung in Bangladesh and West Bengal.

The present day Bengal is known to the world for its lush greenery, great rivers, fauna and above all its rich culture. To get a better understanding of the folk culture of Bengal it is very important to know its history and the influences it had from other cultures. Bengal's culture is the result of the intermingling of the cultural traits of various races, castes and tribes over centuries. The journal article named "Folklore research in East Pakistan" conducted by Ashraf Siddiqui and A.S.M Zahurul Haque of Indiana University provides a broad history of the culture of Bengal. The paper throws ample light on how the various settlers like Aryans,

Dravidians, Mongols, Muslims, Arabs, Persians, Turks and the Afghans have made shaped the culture of modern day Bangladesh (A. S. Haque). Then came the Europeans who brought with them their customs and way of life. Among the Europeans, the British were the ones who ruled the area for a long time. The article also throws ample light on the history of folklore research in the area. The Europeans initiated the first folklore research. (A. S. Haque) As soon as the British East India Company became the masters of the land, the British civil servants were directed to get to know the local culture and traditions, which gave a further rush to the research in the field. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was established in 1784. Fort William College was established by the East India Company in 1800. The aim of this college was to make British civilians familiar with the literature, language and culture of India. Nine Bengali scholars were appointed for this purpose to assist the European teachers (A. S. Haque). The next phase of folklore research was pioneered by Bengali scholars like Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore himself compiled a number of essays in 1907 and brought out a book called Lok-Sahitya (Folk-Literature).(A. S. Haque) The first half of the 20th Century witnessed a number of national freedom movements and people started taking pride on the local culture. This proved to be a boon to folklore research in Bengal. Even after the partition researches were being carried out by indigenous researchers. A factor, which gave considerable impetus to folklore study, was the movement for the recognition of Bengali as one of the two national languages of Pakistan. This movement started in the year 1948 and reached its peak in 1952. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, Bengali became its sole national language and initiatives were taken to revive the folk songs of the region.

What makes folk music different to other forms of music is the fact that its sound has not been influenced by modern or classical music. Folk songs have been performed by rural communities and have been produced by the spontaneous outpouring of expressions and emotions. They are songs that tell the tales of daily difficulties and joys experienced by the tribe or community. Bhatiali folk music in Bangladesh is the music of the fishermen and communities that live along the rivers of Bangladesh.

The second article named “Folk Musical Traditions in Bangladesh: Continuity and Change” by Mustafa Zaman Abbasi talks about the various folk songs of Bangladesh. This article provides in-depth knowledge about Bhatiali as a folk song. The writer asserts that knowing Bhatiali is like knowing Bangladesh folk music at once. (Abbasi) Folk music in Bengal is shaped largely due to its geographical features. Bengal is known as the land of rivers and it is home to some of the world’s greatest rivers like Padma, Brahmaputra, and Meghna. Bhatiali is the boatman’s song. The lyrics are generally about boating, rivers and fishing. The tune is simple, sad, and the full throated presentation is heart rendering with ups and downs of the tune (Abbasi). Bhatiali deals with Prakriti-tatva which means about nature. Boatmen rowing downstream in the Brahmaputra River originally started Bhatiali songs in the Mymensingh District of Bangladesh.

The various genres of Bengali folk music have been used in several Indian films. Bimal Roy, Salil Chowdhury, S.D. Burman were all fond of such music and used a number of them in various films. Bimal Roy have used a Bengali folk music such as Kirtan, Baul and Bhatiali in different contexts. It was an excellent way of transforming certain turns in plots from paper to celluloid. (Bhattacharya) ‘Mere Sajjan hai us par’ in Bandini sung by S.D. Burman displays Bhatiali style of singing. Again in the opening

credits roll of Biraj Bahu, famous Bengali folk singer Nirmalendu Chowdhury sings a Bhatiali song set to music by Salil Chowdhury. By 1954, Bollywoodization of such songs had slowly begun (Bhattacharya).

Presently, Bhatiali songs are sung by a number of Bengali bands both in West Bengal and Bangladesh. Such songs are also used in various movies. Although, originally Bhatiali songs were not accompanied with any instruments, present songs are sung along with instruments such as ektara, dotara, tabla, flute and even more westernized instruments such as guitar and synthesizers to match the taste of urban audiences.

The researcher has conducted an in-depth comparative analysis of ten songs to bring out the details of each song. The parameters used for the comparative analysis are-

Types of instruments used.

The dialect in which the songs are sung i.e. rural or urban.

The lyrics of the songs- the lyric varies from love, to the struggles of life, enjoyment, and environment.

The researcher has also read up various online journals, research paper and articles pertaining to this field to help with the descriptive research.

Song 1- Amay Par Koro Re

The song is sung by a Bangladeshi singer- Ms. Putul.

Instruments Used:

The instruments used in this song are dotara, dhol, flute, behala, mondira and the harmonium.

The dialect of the song:

The song is sung in a rural dialect giving it a flavour of rural Bengal.

Lyrics:

The tone of the song is sad. The singer is addressing the boatman to help her cross the river, as she has no one left in the world. The singer has lost all hopes and now wants to cross the river for a better future.

Song 2- Majhi Baya Jao Re.

This is a Bangladeshi Bhatiali song performed in MTV Coke Studio by Saurav Moni.

Instruments used:

The instruments used in the song are dotara, ektara, and other westernized instruments like guitars, synthesizers and drums.

The dialect used in the song:

The song used a very rural dialect particular to boatmen in Bangladesh.

Lyrics:

The singer in the song addresses the boatman by saying that- 'I am leaving my body for you and now if I drown you will have to take the responsibility'. The lyrics signify the singer's unhappiness towards life.

Song 3- O Paraner Majhi.

This is another Bangladeshi Bhatiali song sung by Abbasuddin. The lyrics and music for the song was provided by Jasim Uddin.

Instruments used:

The instruments used in the song are dhol (double-headed drum) and dotara.

The dialect used in the song:

The song is sung in a rural dialect particular to rural Bangladesh.

Lyrics:

The singer tells the boatman to listen to him and dock his boat when a storm approaches. Throughout the song, the singer advises the majhi (boatman) what should be done so that he is safe. The words such as 'pani' and 'pir' used in the song is very particular to the colloquial Bengali particular to Bangladesh.

Song 4- Mon Majhi Tor Boitha Nere Ami Aar Baite Parlam Na.

This is a Bangladeshi Bhatiali song. This was first featured in the movie Nabajanma (1956). This song is sung by Manabendra Mukhopadhyay.

Instruments Used:

The instruments used in the song are flute, tabla and dotara.

The dialect used in the song:

The song has a rural dialect particular to the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh.

Lyrics:

The lyric of the song is addressed towards the boatman. The singer tells the boatman to take his oar as he is tired of sailing. He has sailed his whole life but could not find the shore of his heart. A river of tears is flowing from the heart of the singer as he addresses the boatman. The tone of the song is sad. The lyrics signify the singer's dissatisfaction towards life.

Song 5- Kajol Ganer Naiya

This song is sung by Swapna Chakraborty Lahiri. The song is composed by her father Dwijendra Chandra Chakraborty. This folk song is from West Bengal.

Instruments Used:

The instruments used in the songs are flute, dotara, tabla and the dhol.

The dialect of the song:

Although the song is produced in West Bengal, the dialect used is of rural Bangladesh. The words of the song are pronounced in the Bangladesh accent.

Lyrics:

The singer asks the boatman about his destination. She asks, “Towards which direction are you sailing while humming a Bhatiali song?” The singer has lost her love and the lyrics signify her sadness.

Originally, any musical instrument did not accompany Bhatiali songs. The boatman was both the composer and singer. These songs were his accomplice during his river bound journey. However, with time a number of changes have taken place in this genre. Today instruments such as flutes, dhol and the dotara accompany most Bhatiali songs of India and Bangladesh. Various westernized instruments such as guitars and synthesizers are also being used to match the taste of the urban audience. This is holds true for both India and Bangladesh.

Although Bhatiali songs are produced in the Indian part of Bengal, it is very much influenced by the rural Bangladeshi accent. Bhatiali originated from the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh and even today, most of the singers and composers are from Bangladesh. This is the reason behind its rural Bangladesh accent. The rural dialect is very particular to Bhatiali songs and it cannot be changed to give it an urban touch. There is not much of a difference in the songs from India and Bangladesh regarding the dialect of the songs.

The lyrics of the songs are generally sad irrespective of its origin. Songs from both India and Bangladesh are themed on longings and pathos of love. Originally, boatman sang the songs where the singer just sings and no listeners are presumed. However, presently the Bhatiali songs are being composed and sung by trained musicians. Bhatiali songs reached the metropolis in the late 1930s and today they are being extensively used in Bengali films. However, the lyrics are still the same. Most of them are addressed to the boatman with a sad tune.

Bhatiali songs are present in both India and Bangladesh. Most of the composers and singers of the genre are from Bangladesh. Even Indian versions of Bhatiali songs are very similar to the Bangladeshi version.

There has been an addition of a number of new instruments in this genre but the theme of the songs remains the same irrespective of its place of origin. Songs from both India and Bangladesh talk about nature, longing for the loved ones and the rivers itself. Bhatiali songs are free from religious bias.

Presently, Bhatiali is sung in both rural and the urban areas of both Bangladesh and West Bengal. In the rural context, particularly in the boating and fishing community, Bhatiali is a part of life. While among the urban populace, Bhatiali is more about entertainment. Bhatiali songs are being used in numerous Bengali films both in India and Bangladesh.

The songs of both India and Bangladesh is similar in terms of the types of instruments are used, the dialect of the songs-the rural dialect of Bangladesh, especially Mymensingh district, and the sad theme of the songs.

The research study shall not consist of any kind of plagiarism and passing off (making other's work as one's own). The data and information collected will all be authentic and the research study will maintain the credibility of such data.

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From Book to Film: Archiving the Slave Narrative

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The movie version of Solomon Northup's account of his experiences as a slave explores several of the major themes of a special genre, known to historians and literary critics as "slave narratives". This genre had been a feature of the American and English literary landscapes after the 1760s; it became especially popular in the USA during the ferment over slavery in the period 1840-1860. The various depictions of slavery were used as ammunition by anti-slavery groups in both countries to condemn, first, the slave trade, and then, the institution of slavery itself. Some of these slave narratives became best-sellers in the US. The Confessions of Nat Turner, written by a black insurrectionist hanged for leading a slave uprising, was used by both critics and supporters of slavery, as evidence for their respective cases.

The publication of slave narratives in the antebellum and post emancipation eras challenged former slaves to face their experiences in slavery, and demanded that the nation remember it as part of a collective history. As Frederick Douglass warned in an 1884 speech, "It is not well to forget the past. The past is...the mirror in which we may discern the dim outlines of the future and by which we make them more symmetrical." ((Quoted in Blight, *A Slave No More*, 9)) Recollecting and remembering slavery not only served as a national project to acknowledge its brutality, but it also placed former black slaves at the center and emphasized their agency in the drama for emancipation. By publishing the traumatic aspects of his life in captivity as a southern slave, Northup brought to light the sadism of American slavery, raised awareness in Northern audiences, and

brought national attention to the injustices brought upon him. His book served as a tool for redemption, while raising the consciousness about the barbarity of slavery—the inhumane separation of families, the beatings and torture of overseers and masters, and the sexual exploitation of slave women. Whether we view these narratives as wholly factual or not, they serve as important cultural reminders of an ugly part of American history that left its imprint on those who were its victims as well as on American society as a whole.

Solomon Northup's slave narrative, *Twelve Years A Slave; Narrative of a Citizen of New-York, Solomon Northup, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, Rescued in 1853, From a Cotton Plantation Near the Red River, in Louisiana*, achieved a remarkable degree of success as an abolitionist indictment against slavery. First published in 1853, three years after the Fugitive Slave Act, Northup's narrative served as an important cultural symbol of slave life on southern plantations during antebellum America before the Civil War. This narrative, edited by the New York lawyer and legislator David Wilson, was one of the many written texts used to assist the Abolitionist Movement in the United States. . Northup's narrative is particularly interesting due to its narrative's content, authorship, and its editorial process. Born into freedom, Northup was kidnapped into slavery at the age of thirty. Lured to Washington, D.C. in 1841 by the promise of easy employment, fast money, and adventure, Northup was in reality drugged, beaten, and sold into slavery within sight of the nation's capital. According to historian Ira Berlin, Northup “joined the mass of black humanity—someone million in number—that was forcibly transported South to reconstruct the plantation economy on new ground, as

the center of American slavery shifted from the production of tobacco and rice in the seaboard states to that of cotton and sugar in the interior.

While in captivity, Northup wrote letters to family and friends in the North which later became the raw materials of his slave narrative. From the 1740's to 1865, approximately sixty-five autobiographical slave narratives were published in book or pamphlet form. When the abolitionist movement identified ex-slaves interested in publishing their stories, white editors conformed narratives to the dictates of nineteenth century sentimental literature in order to appeal to audiences nationwide. Publishers and editors reinforced themes that shocked the nation even when ex-slaves wrote their own narratives; many struggled to gain full free expression and narrative authority from the restrictions of white editorial control. Solomon Northup's experience in slavery quickly became national news after his rescue in 1853 from a cotton plantation in Louisiana. Promoted by abolitionist leaders like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and William Lloyd Garrison, Northup's book quickly became a strong seller, going through half a dozen printings. At three hundred and thirty pages, Northup's is one of the longest narratives ever written. To counter critics who would have discredited his narrative as fabrication, Northup—unlike Frederick Douglass or other authors of slave life who preferred generalities and employed pseudonyms—loaded his account with specifics. He cited actual names, places and dates so that his readers could identify and bring his captors to trial. *Twelve Years A Slave*, Northup declared, would “present a full and truthful statement of all the principal events in the history of my life, and...portray the institution of slavery as I have seen and known it.” Northup wanted to present an accurate, first-hand account of the atrocities and terrors of slavery and to bring his captors to trial. *Twelve*

Years A Slave is one of the most authentic descriptions of slavery from the viewpoint of the slave himself. Northup wrote in the first person, and asserted in the first pages that his purpose was “to give a candid and truthful statement of facts: to repeat the story of my life, without exaggeration, leaving it for others to determine, whether even the pages of fiction present a picture of more cruel wrong or a severer bondage.” ((Northup 18) Extreme violence is central in Northup’s narrative; he emphasizes that the slave owner’s authority was only maintained by terrorizing enslaved black people they owned with relentless physical and psychological violence. Whips, paddles, shackles, and the stocks make repeat appearances, especially in Solomon’s description of his life as a newly kidnapped free man. Stripped of his clothing and nailed to the floor, Northup endured blow after blow to his naked body after he awoke in a slave pen; his enslavers paused only to ask if their prisoner would accept his new status.

As Northup recollected,

As soon as these formidable whips appeared, I was seized by both of them, and roughly divested of my clothing. My feet, as has been stated, were fastened to the floor [...]. With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted on my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible, than before. (44-45)

It was only after the paddle broke and his enslaver seized a rope to continue beating him that Northup was finally silenced into accepting his new identity as a slave. In these scenes of brutality, Northup insisted such sadistic events were so traumatic that he could still feel them while writing.

“I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute. Even now the flesh crawls upon my bones, as I recall the scene. I was all on fire. My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell.”

A major theme in Northup’s narrative is the constant and unrelenting hardship of plantation work. The images that Northup captures in his descriptions of life and labor on the plantations of Louisiana depict the sheer exhaustion, monotony, and fear that each slave struggled with physically and psychologically. As Northup recalled,

An hour before daylight the horn is blown. Then the slaves arouse, prepare their `breakfast, fill a gourd with water [...] and hurry to the field again [...]. Then the fears and labors of another day begin; and until its close there is no such thing as rest. He fears he will be caught lagging through the day; he fears to approach the gin house with his basket-load of cotton at night; he fears, when he lies down, that he will oversleep himself in the morning.

Northup’s rendering of the daily life of slavery captures the incessant emotional and physical toll of slavery’s imprisonment¹² Years a Slave serves as a timeless indictment of the practice of “chattel bondage,” or human slavery. Northup’s detailing the abuses he endured—and those he was forced to inflict—provides a warning to all generations of the moral costs that slavery exacts from everyone involved. The slave himself or herself is degraded, made to suffer awful torments, and cruelly robbed of physical, emotional, and spiritual riches. Still, the slave is not the only one who suffers. By participating in slavery, the master is morally degraded and emotionally desensitized. His religion is made hypocrisy. His family legacy is robbed of basic human graces like love, justice, and integrity. In this respect, Northup’s 12 Years a Slave is notable for giving human faces to

the evil that was once common practice, and for sounding a constant warning of the awful consequences of chattel bondage.

12 Years a Slave is a testimony to the power of the human spirit and the enduring determination of hope. Solomon Northup is deceived, kidnapped, abused, removed from family, deprived of identity, and beaten into a long, weary, unjustified submission. Yet he is never broken. Even in his worst days of sorrow lived under the cruelties of Edwin Epps, he never gives up hope that one day he will be free. He never loses faith in his friends, constantly assured that if he can only get word to the North then they will indeed come to his rescue. And they do. In the end, Solomon Northup's heartbreaking journey uplifts because in his testimony is evidence that faith and hope can endure—and triumph.

Northup's narrative, "Twelve Years a Slave," which the director Steve McQueen has brought to life on the big screen, to stunning effect, vividly conveys the realities of life within the peculiar institution. Northup's story deviates from the typical narrative in which the slave gains freedom and then tells his or her story. He was a New Yorker who went from freedom to slavery after being abducted in 1841 and sold down the river, in Louisiana. Readers of the narrative and viewers of the film, as free people, can immediately understand what Northup, a cultured man who made his living as a violinist, lost. Northup eventually regained his freedom and, with the keen eye of an outsider, shared his intimate view of the day-to-day workings of a plantation in the Deep South. Steve McQueen's direction and visual storytelling in the film *12 Years a Slave* (2013) expresses to the movie audience what the narrative written by Solomon Northup and edited by David Wilson proclaims to its readers: Slavery was a form of madness maintained by violence. The film revolves around these

two ideas that Northup stresses: Slavery was an absurd, disordering of the world, and it was upheld by brutality to body, mind, and feeling. The book and the film depict white Americans who do violence to their own humanity and sense by permitting or participating in slavery, and—as their own wealth increases—they commit horrific, unremitting violence to black Americans. The enslaved pursue resistance when and where they can—through outsmarting those they are forced to call “master,” through disobedience born from self-respect, and even through grief—though this resistance is usually met with harsh punishment. The immorality and illogic of slavery is held up to view by Northup and by McQueen, who cinematically conveys the core messages of Northup’s text and thus imparts Northup’s record of his experience, which is also an affecting condemnation of slavery, to a 21st century audience Northup’s story still evokes outrage and indignation, and McQueen’s film tells it as it is. Drugged and beaten, Solomon Northup was illegally kidnapped from his hometown in Saratoga Springs in upstate New York and taken to Washington, D.C. in 1841. He woke up in the slave pen where he was sadistically remade from a black free man in the North into a slave in the South. Questioning his fate, Northup asked, “Could it be possible that I was thousands of miles from home—that I had been chained and beaten without mercy—that I was even herded with a drove of slaves, a slave myself? Detailing his transformation into “chattel” property, Northup recollected that the slave trader, “would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase.” (Northup 89) Forced to accept his new-found status as a

captured slave, Solomon Northup was sold “down river” to Louisiana and labored for twelve years, toiling on cotton and sugar plantations in the South.

As powerful as they are, slave narratives are often said to raise special concerns as items of historical evidence. One argument goes as follows: White abolitionists, who almost always had a hand in helping to prepare and disseminate the narratives, hoped to destroy slavery by highlighting the more shocking aspects of the institution—the whippings, the separations of families, and the sexual abuse of enslaved women. As a result, the argument continues, the narratives adhere to a literary convention in which all of these events must play a prominent role, raising questions about the veracity of the stories. This seems a rather odd complaint, given that we know from other sources that whippings, separation of families, and sexual abuse were endemic to the institution. It would be more incredible, quite frankly, if Solomon Northup had spent twelve years on a slave plantation in Louisiana without encountering all of these things.

Another problem hovers over the slave narrative as a literary genre: the role that race and status played in the reception of stories told by members of a disfavored—or despised—racial group. It is one thing for a Solomon Northup to speak about individuals who are, in historical terms, unimportant in order to indict a system that most people recognize as abhorrent. It is another thing when a narrative presents information that many whites might not wish to hear or to accept.

The director (Steve McQueen) and scriptwriter (John Ridley) of *12 Years a Slave* may well have reason to be proud of their movie, but neither the movie nor the screenplay is as novel and original as the pair have

proclaimed in interviews. Its originality lies in the fact that it focuses on a colored man who was originally free and was then sold into slavery. And the movie was hardly the first to provide a perspective on plantation slavery life. Nor did the pair rescue Northup's memoir from obscurity. The book fell out of publication for some time in the mid- twentieth century, but in 1968 the text was republished in a scholarly edition which contained footnotes, notes, background information and other crucial details. Since then the memoir has been published by several firms in both paperback and hardback, made freely available on the internet, included in extract compilations and used widely in both the USA and other countries in many educational courses, especially literature, history and racism. Indeed, by the time McQueen made his movie *12 Years a Slave* was probably one of the best known and most extensively cited of all slave narratives.

To capture the language and dialects of the era and regions in which the film takes place, dialect coach Michael Buster was brought in to assist the cast in altering their speech. The language has a literary quality related to the style of writing of the day and the strong influence of the King James Bible.

Steve McQueen's movie incorporates crucial features of the slave narrative genre, most obviously in its ethos of "romantic individualism", a fashionable attitude in the first half of the nineteenth century. The figure of Solomon Northup in both his writings and in the movie, is an individual who heroically refuses to accept his condition as a slave and who violently denies the validity his owner's authority over him as a person.

More specifically the movie encapsulates other traditional aspects of the slave narrative genre:

- the movie hero, Solomon, undergoes a descent into servitude and misery accompanied by a growing understanding of the injustice and immorality of the institution of slavery;
- the movie copies slave narratives in its frequent and brutal depiction of the many abuses of slavery e.g. sexual exploitation, whippings, using humans including children for monetary and social gain;
- the movie focuses on the hero's determined attempts to maintain his human dignity and also his attempts to escape slavery;
- it depicts, like the hero in *Pilgrim's Progress*, a person growing in personal and moral stature, and gaining redemption, by overcoming obstacles, suffering and deprivation;
- like Northup's book, the movie shows how slavery warped the spirit and character of those who owned slaves, and infected the values of a society based on the institution;
- the hero realizes that his means of resistance and escape are severely limited;
- the hero, Solomon, becomes a symbol of oppressed people everywhere;
- he is providentially rescued from his captivity with the help of an enlightened white outsider, a Canadian.

With a few rare exceptions, *yes 12 Years a Slave* is based on the book of the same name. Aspects of the story's telling have been questioned by some historians for matching the conventions of the slave narrative genre a little too neatly, but its salient facts were authenticated by the historian Sue Eakin. As adapted by screenwriter John Ridley from Northup's book and Eakin and Logsdon's footnotes, the film adaptation

hews very closely to Northup's telling. While much of the story is condensed, and a few small scenes are invented, nearly all of the most unbelievable details come straight from the book, and many lines are taken verbatim. As Frederick Douglass wrote of the book upon its release in 1853, "Its truth is stranger than fiction."

The movie's telling of Northup's journey into slavery in Louisiana matches Northup's account almost exactly. Northup says he was beaten with a paddle until the paddle broke, only to be whipped after that, all just for asserting his true identity. We see this in the movie. But an attempted mutiny by Northup and others ends much differently in the film than it does in his own account. Northup gives a more charitable account of his onetime master, William Ford, than the movie does. "There never was a more kind, noble, candid, Christian man than William Ford," Northup writes, adding that Ford's circumstances "blinded [Ford] to the inherent wrong at the bottom of the system of Slavery." The movie, on the other hand, frequently undermines Ford, highlighting his hypocrisy by, for example, overlaying his sermons with the mournful screams of his slave Eliza.

Northup actually had two violent encounters with Tibeats. The first scuffle, over a set of nails, is shown in the movie: According to Northup, Tibeats tried to whip him, Northup resisted, and eventually Northup grabbed Tibeats' whip and beat his aggressor. Afterward, Northup was left bound and on the point of hanging for several hours, before Ford rescued him. In the book, there is a second brawl over another of Tibeats' unreasonable demands. According to Northup, he again prevailed, but was afraid of the repercussions, and so this time attempted to run away. Unable to survive on his own in the surrounding swamps, he eventually returned in tatters to Ford, who had mercy on him.

Judging from Northup's book, Epps was even more villainous and repulsive than the movie suggests. In addition to his cruel "dancing moods"—during which he would force the exhausted slaves to dance, screaming "Dance, niggers, dance," and whipping them if they tried to rest—Epps also had his "whipping moods." When he would come home drunk and overcome with one of these moods, he would drive the slaves around the yard, whipping them for fun. There's another small change. The scene that introduces Epps—his reading of Luke 12:47 as a warning to slaves—is actually borrowed from another of the book's characters: Ford's brother-in-law, Peter Tanner. In the movie, Northup's time with Tanner—with whom he lived after his first fight with Tibeats—is omitted. Northup does not portray the relationship between Epps and Patsey as explicitly as the movie does, but he does refer to Epps' "lewd intentions" toward her. As we see in the film, Mistress Epps encourages Master Epps to whip her, out of her own jealousy. This culminates in the horrible whipping shown in the movie, which Northup describes as "the most cruel whipping that ever I was doomed to witness," saying she was "literally flayed." Her request afterward that Northup kill her, to put her out of her misery, is the movie's own invention, but it's a logical one: Patsey is described as falling into a deep depression and, it's implied, dreaming of the relief death would offer her.*

Northup's return home is much as it is in the book, including Solomon's learning that his daughter Margaret (who was 7 years old when he last saw her) now had a child of her own, named Solomon Northup. One devastating detail is left out: After 12 years apart, Margaret did not recognize her father.

The slave trader Goodin is eliminated from the story, along with Northup's experience in his possession. The slaves Arthur and Clemens Ray are combined into one character, with the latter being rescued in New Orleans instead of the former. Northup's time with William Ford is abridged, while the role of John M. Tibeats is inflated for the screen—the role is combined with other minor characters and played more as a crazy man than the bitter, angry man of Northup's narrative. Only one of Tibeats' murder attempts is shown, though it is embellished for dramatic effect. Both Platt's harrowing nighttime escape in the swamp and his time at Peter Tanner's plantation are eliminated completely, and some of Tanner's role is added to Epps instead.

The movie lays the blame for Northup's sale to Epps directly on William Ford, when in fact it was Tibeats who sold "Platt" to the notorious "nigger breaker." Even worse, the film suggests that after Tibeats' murder attempt, Northup told the righteous Ford about his status as a free man and begged Ford to help him. According to the movie, those pleas fell on William Ford's deaf ears. The facts, however, are much different.

Like Northup's real-life experience, the bulk of the film version of *12 Years a Slave* is seen on Epps' plantation. Here, the film concerns itself chiefly with the sorrows of Patsey and, in that regard, stays fairly true to the memoir. However, that means the film downplays or eliminates events in Northup's personal story and generally ignores other significant events that happened to slaves Abram, Wiley, and others. Also, Northup/Platt's eight-year role as the slave-whipping driver on Epps' farm is completely omitted, except for the one brutal whipping of Patsey. Henry B. Northup—the man who actually rescued Solomon from slavery—is not included in the film.

The entire trial and acquittal of James H. Burch is also omitted, reduced to a text-only postscript as a prelude to the final credits.

Overall, the movie *12 Years a Slave* does a better-than-average job of portraying the content of its source material, but there are too many creative licenses taken in the film to trust it as a reliable substitute for reading Northup's memoir.

The film is generally faithful to Northup's memoir as a whole, even lifting some dialogue directly from the memoir, including Freeman's heartless reasons for not selling Emily to William Ford. Out of necessity, though, the movie is not as concerned with factual detail as Solomon Northup was. This results in shortcuts of storytelling and a muddying of facts that are often found in book-to-film adaptations.

Paul MacInnes of *The Guardian* scored the film five out of five stars, writing, "Stark, visceral and unrelenting, *12 Years a Slave* is not just a great film but a necessary one." [76] "a new movie landmark of cruelty and transcendence" and as "a movie about a life that gets taken away, and that's why it lets us touch what life is." He also commented very positively about Ejirofor's performance, while further stating, "*12 Years a Slave* lets us stare at the primal sin of America with open eyes, and at moments it is hard to watch, yet it's a movie of such humanity and grace that at every moment, you feel you're seeing something essential.

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The Heroine Turns Hero, and Doubles as Heroine: Walking Away From Stereotypes

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Advancement in technology and media has been very successful, in bridging the gap between generations, and changing culture. Considering the changing mindset, and differing life style, media has incorporated our values, customs, age old traditions, and beliefs. Media has penetrated into every aspect of our lives, making it a part and parcel of it. In the case of ad films, walking out of set ideas of advertising, and bringing out the changing reality, has developed a positive influence on people, and their mindsets.

The new advertisement released by airtel this year, titled The Boss Film, is a good attempt of the telecom company, towards women empowerment, as it portrays a bold woman, at multitasking. It depicts the drastic improvements of women in their professional fields, and also the changing positive attitude of their life partners towards it. The Boss Film has caused a wave of reactions across the social networking websites, and news channels. The ad definitely shows a woman breaking away from stereotypes.

A recommendation, or an intention of making profit out of a particular product, service or person, is how a commercial advertisement is defined in a dictionary. Advertisements influence our choices and favorites to a large extent. The general motive of a brand/service is to become popular, make profit, and give tight competition to the other brands that exist. These ads are the greatest contributors towards this motive.

Advertising is an art, which persuades people to become fascinated about the product which is advertised, or be completely taken away by its

charm, and the sense of it being better than the rest available. Advertisements use powerful ideas, and bring out strong emotions on every face that witnesses them. That one so-called extraordinary feature of the product in the ad, holds us, and forms an impression that compels us to buy, or use them. Ads bring out competition among brands or services, ensuring a standard quality assurance to the customers. Choice, awareness, emotional connection, consumer satisfaction, accessibility, durability and utility factors, are the features showcased in ads, which help to make a brand, or service popular.

These days, ads come up with innovative ideas, to grab our attention, and influence our choices. For example, white color, which is a symbol of calmness and peace, is used by certain builders in their ads, to show the safety and comfort their housing offers. Associating nature and its serenity to products, to bring in the sense of purity and goodness, is yet another method used by advertisers. But the most common association that products have is with the celebrities, who establish a special greatness to every product, or brand, through the ads. Among many ways adopted by the advertisers, the ones mentioned above are only a few. The influence of certain advertisements on people is so intense that they get completely mesmerized by the product, without being logical. The shorter duration, greater frequency, easier approach, universality, catchy themes, and its ability to hold us, are what make an ad so appealing, and widely acceptable.

Our older generations lived in a society where women were considered inferior to men in every way. The idea that men are more powerful, able, and intelligent, was spread through schools and books. The right to be treated equally, was not something that was practiced in real life. It was only mentioned in social studies textbooks. Born to work amidst

four walls of the kitchen, all that women could do, were, to bear and rear children, make all the sacrifices, and accept life the way it came, without rebelling for their rights. During those days, working outside, or studying, was considered no less than a crime. When we think about the older society in which our forefathers lived, we are reminded of a time when women were treated as a burden, forced to bear all the ill treatment, associated with every superstition, female foeticides and intense discrimination.

With change being the only constant thing in this world, we see the society and its ideas change for the betterment, and good, of women. Lot of women have come up in life by working hard in their fields of interest, and passion. When it comes to multitasking, women are ahead of men. Work, household chores, nurturing children, all of it could be handled by a single woman.

The examples of famous women at multitasking in real life are numerous. Mary Kom, Asha Bhosle, Sonal Mansingh, Madhuri Dixit and Jhumpa Lahiri, are to name a few, from the fields of sports, music, dance, film industry and literature, respectively. Mary Kom is an Indian Boxer, five-time World Amateur Boxing Champion, and the only woman boxer to have won a medal in each one of the six world championships. Asha Bhosle is a famous Indian playback singer, and the Government of India honoured her with the Dadasaheb Phalke award in 2000, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2008. Sonal Mansingh is an eminent Indian classical dancer, and choreographer, of Odissi dancing style; who is also proficient in other Indian classical dancing styles, including Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi and Chhau. Madhuri Dixit is one of the best Bollywood actresses, and is also acknowledged for her accomplished dancing, and beauty. Jhumpa Lahiri is a famous Indian American author who won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for

Fiction. All these honourable ladies are married, and have children also. Yet they accomplished success, by following their passion, and working hard towards making their dream a reality. They have shown that professional success, and consensual domesticity, can go hand-in-hand. Women have hence broken away from stereotypes. They have proven that domesticity cannot be enforced upon them, as well as, stereotypes cannot be reinforced.

Airtel, “connecting people”, is one of the biggest telecom companies in India, which makes a genuine effort to reach out to the public, through their connection. The ads of Airtel, delightfully bring out the emotional connection, and the sense of sameness, people experience.

There is an originality, which adds on to the charm, and beauty of their ads. Bridging values and happiness, is what Airtel and their ads do. The new ad released this year by Airtel--titled *The Boss Film*, and directed by Vinil Mathew, an experienced commercial director in India--creatively depicts the moulded Indian culture, and the fast-paced development in technology. The company attempts to pitch its network, as the cupid in a modern family context. The ad shows a modern-age, double-income couple, where the wife is also the boss of the company in which her husband is a subordinate.

Neither gender power play, nor a friction raised from ego is seen between the couple. In fact, the ad powerfully reveals, the ability of women, at multitasking. This is how the ad rolls – A boss asks her team to get a job done the same day. She indicates that, “cannot be done”, is not an option. The boss leaves at night, while two of her subordinates work hard, on the project she assigned to them. During her drive home, in the chauffeur-driven car, the boss makes a phone call to someone, asking the

person about, what he/she would like to have for dinner. One of the subordinates, gets a call from his wife, who is making dinner for him. She suggests he abandon work, and come home to a great meal. She video calls him through an Airtel 3G network, and shows him the three-course meal that she has prepared for him, to tempt him to come home. It turns out that, the boss is the wife of one of the subordinates. The ad winds up with the message that, smartphones could do magic, in life, and relationships, and that, the Airtel network is specially made for smartphones. Describing the video Airtel says, “Relationships often get strained due to professional demands. At such times, smartphones transcend their role of being a mere communicating device, and play cupid. Watch one such sweet story brought to life by Airtel, the network made for smartphones”.

The ability of women at multitasking is so powerfully portrayed through the ad. The ad is set in a typical 21st century scenario, where a woman’s extend of multitasking could go from being a wife, to the boss of the company in which her husband is only a subordinate to her. This shows a complete breaking away from stereotypes. The role of the lady of a family is maximal, and a major one. With the passage of time, collapse of conventions, disbandment of the patriarchal system, and the changing ideologies, women are breaking away from stereotypes. Education and courage, are the basic necessities, and the keys, to women empowerment. As Brigham Young (American leader in the Latter Day Saint movement) says:

“You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.”

The woman in the ad must be well educated, and highly qualified, as she is the boss of a company. She is also portrayed as a loving wife, as

she cooks a sumptuous meal for her husband, even after returning home at night, from work. The wife cooks, on her own accord, even after her work, without anybody forcing, or even asking her to. Hence the ad shows consensual domesticity, rather than an enforced one, and breaking away from stereotypes rather than reinforcing them.

The Airtel ad has given rise to a wave of reaction from people, on twitter, and news channels. The commercial has created a lot of controversy on the social networking websites. On the one side, some people say that, the ad begins by depicting the woman breaking stereotypes, and ends with consensual domesticity. Whereas on the other side, some feminists and others are offended, and claims that the ad shows reinforcement of stereotypes, and ends with enforced domesticity. People who support the ad claims that, the ad depicts a woman breaking away from stereotypes, as she is the boss of the company, in which her husband is a subordinate. They feel that, the wife cooking for her husband after a day's work is absolutely consensual, as nobody enforces household chores on her. She does it out of her own will. Also, the husband in the ad seems comfortable with the situations in the office, as he does not show frustration, or anguish.

Some comments on twitter by the supporters of the ad were:

Agratha Dinakaran

#Feminism is about choices, people. Husband didn't call and ask her to prepare a hot dinner when he got home. She **wanted** to cook. She didn't cook because she's the wife. She cooked because she got home early.

Namita Handa

What's the big deal about #Airtel ad? The wife chose to cook. She wasn't forced or asked to.

Ashutosh Mishra

Nice ad on TV. Wife is boss in office, yet cooks at home.

Arguments raised by people against the ad are numerous. They feel that the ad is sexist. They are basically of the opinion that, the ad shows the lady as the boss at work, but at home she is forced to play the role of a loving wife, by keeping the food ready. The wife cooking dinner even after a day's work, shows reinforcement of stereotypes, according to them. They claim that the domesticity in the ad is an enforced one, and not consensual. Few comments by people against the ad were:

Chethan S

All those people bashing #airtel ad would probably have been happier if the husband had cooked dinner.

Tedhi Lakeer

Not only is that Airtel wife/boss ad stupid, it's deviously regressive. Lesson to women: You may be BOSS, yet you must cook to please.

Debasmita Dey

Latest #Airtel ad defies logic...modern women isn't about being two-faced! #epic fail.

There are people who have taken a diplomatic stand about the ad. They feel that Airtel has attained its target of popularizing the ad, as it has created such a controversy, and gained the attention of a huge audience on twitter, the social networking site. A live telecast of a discussion, on the news channel NDTV, with eminent personalities like Shobhaa De, Indian author, and commentator, Kavita Krishnan, secretary of All India Progressive Women's Association, and Alyque Padamsee, communication and advertising guru, debating, for, and against the ad, also shows the extent to which Airtel has gained more popularity, through this particular ad. People who are neither against, nor for the ad, feel that, by such a huge discussion arising on twitter, about the ad, people have proven that, they can debate on any trivial topic. They also pointed out that, there are bigger, and more important things, to fight for, or revolt against.

Stereotypes of considering women as a symbol of beauty on the one hand, and weakness on the other, is what has to be erased off. It is high time for people, who have not been able to rise above the created differences between men and women, to understand that, their ideologies no longer overlap with those of the present century. The society has to treat women as equal to men, give them their freedom, help them bring out their best, and encourage them in all aspects of their life, instead of crushing them down and criticizing them for each new step undertaken.

Disbandment of the old, set ideologies, and acceptance of the new, changed ones, is the need of the hour. The initiative taken up by Airtel, as, in *The Boss Film*, is worth appreciation, as they have so beautifully portrayed the great social, and professional acceptance of women in the 21st century. The makers of this ad have taken a very appreciable step, by spreading, the changing, and positive mindset of society, when it comes to gender power play. Creating an ad, by keeping in mind, how influential it can be, upon the viewers, if it is highly appealing, is a very responsible task, executed by the advertisers. Instead of noticing, and appreciating, uniqueness in new initiatives, finding faults just for the sake of it, is an attitude which will never enlighten, and raise us. This paper was to examine the uniqueness, and the changes this ad has brought out in women, relationships, job strata in the society, people's opinion about the ad, and the impression it has created.

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Reality Turns Reel

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Revolutionary with unlimited possibilities television stands as one of the most powerful influence in our lives. Reality show is a genre of television shows or programmes which feature common people & celebrities or both, in real life, scripted situations, environments or a mix of both real and scripted incidents. Reality shows are also referred as “Reality Television”.

Simultaneously they generated good revenues for the television industry and created a very good platform for thousands who wanted to achieve great heights in their field of interest.

Reality shows have become quite a rage of lately, its immense popularity is mainly because the characters that are part of these Indian reality shows are for real. As a result it became easy for the audience to relate with the participants.

The stardom associated with such reality shows are enough to draw attention from the commonmass. Thus we can say that these Indian reality shows makes the most of the emotional quotient of their viewers.

All you have to do is huddle up a handful of average people or small time starlets, create a dramatic situation and then your reality show is ready to go on air! The best part about reality shows is that they give quick fame and recognition even to average people like you and me. Besides, the viewer’s get a kick out of all the emotional drama shown (which is scripted in most cases) that happens on sets.

Therefore there is really no dearth of reality TV show ideas, but most revolves around similar concepts. So, in case you wish to air your

own TV show some day, then you may have to come up with really good ideas for TV shows

Reality shows were non-existent until the 1940's. Reality shows in those times were quite authentic. This was because it was a new concept and as such manipulation was limited to only creating inordinary situations for ordinary citizens.

The boom in the Malayalam reality shows occurred right after the success story of Idea star singer, a musical talent show telecasted by a popular TV channel Asianet. This show offered a maximum cash prize of fifty lakh, which called upon many young minds to count on their luck. The unprecedented success of this reality show opened up numerous avenues for such shows on malayalee television.

Well, the upcoming data throws light on to the impact of such shows on our younger generation and their role in the degradation of our culture.

It was during 1948, that Alan Funt, came up with the idea of the first Reality Show in the form of TV series 'Candid Camera'. It was initially launched as Radio Show, titled – 'Candid Microphone' on 28th June, 1947. Later, he shot a series of theatrical film shorts, also titled Candid Microphone. It was his next venture that materialised into the 'First Reality Show' which appeared on television (ABC channel) on August 10, 1948. The show featured ordinary people encountering unusual situations, who were being secretly taped with concealed cameras..' Peter Funt, his son became the producer and the host of the show from 1998 to 2004.

"Competition and elimination" was introduced by TV producer Charlie Parsons. He created the tv show "expedition robinson", which first aired in 1997 in Sweden. In the show cast members or contestants battled

against each other and were removed from the show until only one winner remained. These shows became popularly known as “elimination shows”.

This reached in the concept books of Malayali television on 2007 and was preceded by many others including the series of IDEA STAR SINGER and many others like MIDUKKI, MAMMOOTTY THE BEST ACTOR AWARDS, GULUMAL, VODAFONE COMEDY STARS, MUNCH STAR SINGER etc.

The end of 90's and the advent of 2000, saw an unprecedented popularity of the reality based shows. These new gen of reality shows were more blunt, witty, sensuous, sensational, glamorous and more. These were produced by specialists who created complex and unexpected shows which stirred the emotions of the masses. Their uniqueness and the “awe” factor made them a huge success.

In the 21st century, reality television shows has dominated our screens ambiguously. The rising popularity of reality shows on television channels has added a new dimension to the production of television programmes. . It has become an essential part of our lives and entertainment as these shows give opportunities to the prodigies residing in the interiors of the country to showcase their talent. These shows have not only changed the destinies of many television but also of many ordinary people.

Reality shows have many disadvantages such as they do not portray reality, develops wrong notions, deviates youth mentality, exploitation, erodes ethical and moral practices, false image of life, humiliation as entertainment, means of business, promotes aggressive behavior, propagation of fake personality, psychological disorders, source of voyeurism and wastage of time and energy.

In reality show, media violence has been a major issue. Violence depicted on such shows effect our children often negatively. For developing value systems and moral behaviour, television can produce a powerful influence on a child. A child's behaviour is evident from the impact of viewing violence that affects them later in life, it can also be responsible for violence initiation. "Media contains violence for the purpose of adult entertainment and realism. But the problem is that parents and society do not properly control accesss to such media, therefore children are exposed to violent behaviour long before they have matured into an adult, and therefore they may try to copy such behaviour".It is thus misleading the youth by diverting them from their studies specially the school going children.

They claim that these contrived scenes of certain situations and reactions are unscripted and unplanned, the character's are placed in these situations to get a natural reaction. But actually their behaviours and the situations become planned and adjusted for certain obscene footage which is edited to create the best entertainment "value for viewers ". Thus more viewers are exposed to these reality distortions which is similar to the real world, the scenes portrayed on television change their perceptions of the real world. "More often than not, the representations of social reality on television are not true to objective reality". The portrayal of these celebrities and their lifestyles throughout the shows affect the views, motives and desires of audience.

Perceptions inculcated by reality shows

Confidence and body image are often eroded by these reality shows. They foist impractical beauty standards making the youth question their bodies and instructing them to change their appearance, and also encourage

an unrealistic plastic appearance of perfection. These shows make the viewer's feel like it is a necessity to adjust ones image with images of attenuated women particularly that erases the perception of a healthy real body. This makes the youth want to look a particular way to create appeal to the society likes males for instance. These images of thin young bodies often link to signs of unhealthy eating habits, depression and low self-esteem including fasting, skipping meals, excessive excersice, laxative abuse and self-included vomiting. The youth is having this pressure to be thin and appear as the exact image of their favourite celebrities. Studies indicate fifty percent of our youth wish to be thinner thus taking part in a diet. The youths looks up to these models and assume that their image is the right and perfect image to display which negatively charges their perception and causes them to damage their physical and emotional well-being. While the people who donot fit in these preconceived notions of beauty categories are totally alienated from the society and seen as taboos.

The shows are concerned with ratings, so it is arguable that there is not much morality going into the production of such shows. There is also a very weird occurrence where the contestents and the audience get so sucked into the shows that they forget that, at the end of the day, it's still only a reality show.

Source of Voyeurism

Reality show also promotes voyeurism in varying dosages to prevent the wane of interest in the audience. Thus they will indulge in partial nudity blurred or otherwise, skimpily clad girls, revealing camera angels and other strategies which titillate the audience and maintain the interest of the audience. Voyeurism further ignites lust and for its

fulfillment some people rape, torture and indulge in other inappropriate behaviour.

Exploitation – Though, it is evident that exploitation does take place as the contestants are portrayed as villains. However, a more grim exploitation takes place when the contestants are kids. Kids of age as less as 6 years are pitted against each other. Exposure to such competition at such an age causes emotional stress, early maturity and other psychological problems. While the kids should be going about their normal daily lives, they are coerced or moulded to be competitors. Those good in dancing imitate vulgar movements of their favourite numbers. Just because someone has a talent does not mean that they should be pushed in a competition. Let the child develop over a course of normal routine. In this ‘Run for Money’ parents forget that they themselves are becoming a part of this ‘Rat-Race’ and further promoting this race as well.

•Erodes Ethical and Moral Practices – Certain obvious shows, like Big Brother, Bachelor, Temptation Island are purposefully filled with glamour, filtrations, indecent acts, promiscuity, greed, jealousy, conflict and other sensitive issues. These are meant to create controversy and its consequent popularity which are promoters of unethical and immoral practices. Humans tend to get affected, more by negative behaviour rather than positive behaviour, thus these shows provide appropriate environment for the propagation of aforesaid behaviour. Ultimately it is the society and the world at large which suffers because these shows are breeding grounds for anti social activities like corruption, murder etc. whose dearth is endless.

•Humiliation as Entertainment – Though not all of us will laugh at humiliations but such shows encourage such behaviour even when we don’t

intend to. However, repetitive humiliations do make us laugh as well, sometimes just because others are laughing. In this manner Humiliation becomes an Entertainment for us and we feel satisfied especially when someone whom we don't like is embarrassed and has to go through pain. It further becomes a known fact which the production houses take special care of while producing the show.

- Means of Business – It is but obvious that more than anything else, these shows are merely profit-making ventures. Production houses are not built on morality, the only morality that they follow is – Profit. It doesn't matter what the means are, what matters is the end result. In this pursuit they will go to great lengths and further strengthen the belief that 'Money is everything'.

- Promotes Aggressive Behaviour – Amongst other anti-social sentiments, aggression is promoted directly or indirectly by the dramatic reality shows. Most of the situations scripted or unscripted showcase conflict of personalities. Contestants often use aggression to make the show spicy, like cat fights, display of anger, use of abusive language etc. While doing so these are glorified with slow motions and impress the viewers as means to an end or otherwise.

Propagation of Fake Personality – Reality based shows have another con, that is creating fake personalities out of ordinary. They will show an ordinary person as a high profiled one, which further stirs the imagination of the viewers to consider it as a suitable behaviour. However, such acceptance has its consequences in the form of humiliation and insult. In other cases, a certain contestant is portrayed as a villain even when she isn't. An edited version of a person is showcased making his personality as someone who should be hated. Unaware of this fact, in the real life the

contestant is hated by the outside world. Similarly, a negative person may be glorified as good human even when the contestant is not so.

•Psychological Disorders – There are certain Psychological Disorders which are often observed in people which are direct effects of such shows. Some of these are - Low Self Esteem, Frustration, Depression, Anger, Addiction, Stealing, Celebrity Imitation and other disorders which further encourage anti-social behaviour. Certain psychological issues go unnoticed and unaddressed which is dangerous for any society as it may result in psychopaths. A glaring example of Psychological Disorder was observed when a contestant in the first version of Survivor, which was made for Swedish television, committed suicide after he was the first person voted off the island.

•Wastage of Time and Energy – Not all but majority of reality based shows are wastage of time and energy both for the contestants and especially for the audiences. If we look at our lives, we have so many sources of entertainment and we spend a certain amount of time in this entertainment. The youth indulge the most in such entertainment as they have a lot of time at their expense. In this world, we have endless ways of entertainment and yet we resort to such shows. It is a waste of time as we have already seen such media. We know what's going to happen and we know to a certain degree that we do not need to watch it, yet we watch it. The time spent on these shows alters our routine to make way for them, we follow it religiously not to miss anything and whilst doing so we often overlook the other aspects of our lives. We forget to exercise, we become lazy and uncooperative. The time and energy if it was to be used for other activities it would benefit us far more than watching these shows.

•Blackmailing – Another form of exploitation, blackmailing though not as much brought forth, is prevalent. In certain instances indecent footage of contestants is used for blackmailing by the production house to suit their interests. Similarly, certain personalities are forced to participate in such shows owing to blackmailing. Politicians and bureaucrats may be involved in such activities making it an accepted practice and source of further blackmailing.

But as this new frenzy of reality shows takes its roots in the minds of our younger generation slowly but evidently they are playing a vital role in degenerating our culture. Reality shows have a huge impact on the youth viewing them. The cast members of these shows impact a certain behaviour in appearance and physiology. It also create a negative impact on the viewers of the new generation when limited reality is present that occasionally is scripted and edited for entertainment purposes. When reality shows are interpreted as “reality “, the viewer’s viewpoint and their actions are affected. Our youth tends to think, reason and endure the characters they perceive, enabling them to lose their sense of vital thinking and true emotion towards actual situations. The action of these shows are infiltrating negative portrayals of body image, graphic violence and diminishing one’s actual viewpoint of reality

So in such ways there is no doubt that the different reality shows aired on various channels are doing wonders for the channels and its producers. People like these shows and with good TRP’s, the channel are collecting huge funds through commercials. Even the singing based kids reality show like ‘MUNCH STAR SINGER’ are receiving huge amount of viewers, but are we doing justice with the future of these innocent kids? Where every year the rate of students committing suicide due to syllabus

pressure is increasing at a tremendous rate, the kids participating in these kind of shows. The young mind which should be engaged in productive activities are lured to such shows in expectation of quick money and fame. The mentality of youth deviated in this way from academic pursuits to seemingly short cuts which actually required as much effort and at times more efforts than the conventional paths. Moreover, the glitz and glamour of possible dims the actual potential of youth, who would have otherwise benefitted the whole through their genius applied in the right direction. It is to be understood that no everyone can achieve fame and fortune in such shows.

Curbing or Limiting the Effects of reality Shows

It is very much evident from the above mentioned pros and cons of reality shows, that the demerits of reality shows outweigh the merits. There are many other aspects which escape the attention of the public and the authorities as well. The scenario is more concerning than one may expect it to be. Yet, these shows are rampant all over the world, they are even infiltrating where they would be least expected to be. Moreover, it is the demand of these shows amongst the masses that there is a market for these shows. There is hardly any reason for watching the one's which only encourage anti-social activities and weaken the moral fabric of the society. However, if not eradicated there are certain measures which can be taken to limit and prevent the malice which these shows encourage to a certain extent.

Viewer Discretion – The major contributing factor in discouraging these shows can be the viewer's themselves. Reality T.V. shows wouldn't be produced if we didn't watch them. Yes, we do find them entertaining or we find them so shocking that we are simply unable to turn away.

However, most of us are by now aware that it is all fake. It is not an easy task because non-traditional element of reality is big pulling factor. But at the same time, we can try and encourage others to do so. Viewer discretion can be encouraged by simply pushing the button to another channel. It can be done in process by limiting the time spent on T.V. One can also watch a few scenes and then turning to another channel. Parents can lock that channel for particular time of period or reward their children from abstaining these by rewards and appreciation in front of others to make them realise the importance of doing so. This also encourages similar behaviour amongst other parents and their siblings.

Renaming ‘Reality Shows’ – Another measure that can be useful in limiting the negative effects of ‘Reality Television. The term reality itself should be removed wherever it is being used to describe these shows. The benefit of this strategy would be that it would lose the charm of being labelled as ‘Real’ and they will be categorised as fictional or regular soaps. This itself will bring them at level of ‘Just Another’ series.

Encourage Parodies and Secret Revealing Series – Certain benefits or incentives should be provided to producers who make parodies in the so called ‘Reality Television’. News agencies and other media should reveal the reality behind these shows to open the eyes of those who believe in them. Award categories by the name of ‘Best Truth Revealing Series’ can also be added to encourage such productions and discourage the production of fake reality shows.

Role of Popular Media – Print media like newspapers, magazines etc. along with audio-video media should also play a pivotal role in revealing the ugly face of such shows. They can also reveal in details the

tact's used by the production houses in making these show appear as genuine.

Limitations on Production Studio – The authorities can limit the production of such shows by applying extras taxes on these type of shows which will act as 'Deterrent' towards the filming of these shows. Similarly, the concerned authorities can put a limit on the number of shows which can be produced in a year.

Censoring or Banning – Special censoring of such shows need to be conducted in order to remove all sorts of obscenities. Removing these discourage the initial practice of resorting to such lowly acts. Banning is another effective way by which these shows can be stopped. Any body found dealing in these should be punished as per the law.

Heavy Penalty on Offenders – Reality based shows which indulge in scripted activities in the name of reality shows should be heavily fined not only monetarily but also by imprisonment on the basis of 'False Presentation' along with insulting coverage in popular media.

Interesting Alternate Entertainment – Special incentives and other support should be given to those who produce alternate entertainment based programs which not only entertain but also provide valuable information through its presentations. If westernised concept of reality shows can be copied, then unique and other useful formats can also be utilised.

Strict Laws – Strict laws should be implemented so that no one can indulge in any kind of malpractice whilst creating these shows. These laws should also be publicised so that the public also knows that such laws exist. They can therefore inform the concerned authorities if such an activity is occurring and informers should be awarded as well.

Late Night Slots – Though not a deterrent but a discouraging measure can be the late night slots which these shows should get and only in weekdays and not on weekends. This will discourage a large audience to abstain from waking up late to see these. These slots should be provided after 12 clock at midnight. Furthermore, these should be made in a format by the producers so that they cannot be recorded and no repeat telecast during the day.

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Media Bridging the Generation Gap

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Media plays a vital role in breaking the old conventions and filling the huge generation gap. “Airtel money transfer and Bill payment” ads and many more which have elevated the value of relationships and have helped to erase off the void among generations. The urge to explore, expand and be updated is not confined to younger generations but has extended to the older generations too. The generation gap between the younger and the older generation was once at the peak level but has now in this present scenario diminished. The visual media has reduced the distance and has made the day to day scheduled events much easier and has eradicated inconvenience from our lives. The social media outstands in every aspect of our lifestyle and is of course a brilliant medium of information flow.

The main objective of this paper is to study the impact on the society of the numerous advertisements in which both the younger and the older generations appear.

Media, culture and society provides a platform for generation of newer information and communication technologies involving the political, social and economic aspects. Media plays a vital role in bridging the huge generation gap which has once been a major concern. There is a hue and cry raised by the elders and the young both that the communication between them has broken down and they accuse each other and bemoan these state affairs. Majority in the society carries along with this moroseness and never pauses to think why and how of the problem.

Generation gap is the result of the fast paced development of the society. This gap could be erased to a great extend through the widespread

of the media. There has always been a generation gap since the dawn of the civilization. Social media allow users the ability to connect, build, create, innovate, shape and change the way we communicate. While the younger generation still leads the age groups in internet and social media the older generations are discovering a world where they can do a myriad of things. The young people today are more experienced and knowledgeable than the older generations were at their age. They are growing up in more of the world than we knew because of the wide travel and high mobility that they have. Young people today have grown up in a time of history and in country of unparalleled affluence.

Media outstands in every aspects of our lifestyle and is of course a brilliant medium of information flow. The Airtel money transfer, bill payment and Vodafone 'Made for the Young' advertisements are some of the best illustrations of how media connects different generations. Every day-to-day affairs are dealt or indulged with the upcoming technologies and growing aspects of media. This has developed an urge to get updated with the current happenings of the world. These advertisements are very apt and help throwing light on the generation gap which the media is erasing off. Through such advertisements media has put an effort to eradicate the misconceptions about the young which further has brought out of fine blend of experience and enthusiasm. Such advertisements had influenced the society in every beneficial ways.

The stereotypes about the older generation are being lost when it comes to media and technology. Images and stereotypes of the older generation have an important impact on society and the way we see and treat older individuals. As the internet has changed the world and online communication, skills are one of the central new competencies which

enable people of all ages to participate in the society. Media literacy is an important issue for young and old. The positive portrayal of older characters in various advertisements has helped break the stereotypes about the older generations. The generation gap once was at a peak level but has now diminished.

Today's youth are connected, are constantly moving peers but to the rest of the world, they are the lazy, apathetic age group. Years ago the world of teen interaction was relatively small compared to today. Social media and social networking, a young person's social world has become bigger. Each generation has its own work style and set of behaviours. Misunderstandings commonly occur when these work styles gets clashed.

New media provide a basis for reducing the after effects of the clash and help to resolve other issues and create a smooth functioning society. If we could spend as much time perfecting how individuals can work effectively together we will have the most productive society. The media has made it easier to collaborate for various efforts, regardless of the ages of the participants. In this way individuals are able to bring their own skills and feed off on another, creating amazing teams and outputs.

Social media relates to the technology and platforms that enable the individuals collaborate and exchange ideas in the public. Even though seniors still rely on email as their main form of communication, they are quickly finding out that social networking sites allow them to reconnect with people from past, find support communities, or connect with younger generations – all of which are driving social networking sites use among older generations. There are few other spaces – online and offline where teens, sandwich generation members, grandparents, friends and neighbours

intersect regularly and communicate from the same network. There have been always differences from generation to generation.

We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our daily activities – entertainment, healthcare, education, personal relationships, travelling and anything else. An urge to explore, expand among the older generations has led to an approach to the media. No two generation are alike in their perceptions and preferences. The reasons for the increasing generation gap can be of ideas of general conduct, morality, of tastes of various aspects, a family unit breaking up and gradually losing the importance once it had. Today's media is playing a major role in balancing the perspective.

Media is a link for better opportunities which are not just confined to the younger generations but also extended to the older generations. It is a true saying that there is no age limit for learning. A new course at New York's Pace University is helping people over 65% to see how devices can enhance their lives. Media is a reason the old have decided to leave their way of lifestyle they had led before and move in pace with the modern world. The dilemma that has disturbed each successive generation is whether the gap between the two generations youth and the old age had widened or being bridged. But in the present scenario media's effort in breaking the old conventions is visible.

Teenagers and youth are increasingly seen to be beyond control and their mind becoming store house of multiple complexes whereas the elders find it difficult to adjust with the fast changing world. The digital media have helped them overcome and perfecting the huge gap created. 30% of the grandparents worldwide agree that connecting online has helped them

better understand their teen and grandchildren. Teenagers agree that a computer increase both quantity and quality, and helps connect with family members living far away. By enhancing communications across all generations technology is improving the quality of life for people of all ages.

No doubt society's values and belief structures rise and fall with changing times. Human relationships are becoming narrower, confined largely to nuclear family. But in the increasing crisis, media through various advertisements, social networking sites has elevated the human values, relations and it has provided a platform to the youngsters for knowing their culture and traditions. More than 50% of the population communicate and stay connected to their children, aging parents and other family members.

The new media has proved that generation gap is never an unbridgeable cleft. Age in this contemporary world is no longer a barrier in the path of advancement. Elevation in the standards of media has led to drastic changes in the outlook and values of life. An optimistic bond has evolved between the younger generations as well as the older generations.

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Canons Curtailed: a Critical Study of Twitterature

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“Long novels written today are perhaps a contradiction : the dimension of time has been shattered , we cannot love or think except in fragments of time each of which goes off along its own trajectory and immediately disappears. We can rediscover the continuity of time only in the novels of the period when time no longer seemed stopped and did not yet seem to have exploded, a period that lasted no more than a hundred years.”

- Calvino, Italo. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*.

The above comment, by the crafty-intrusive narrator in Calvino's novel, is a pointer to the popular sentiment regarding voluminous works of fiction in the postmodern age. Admittedly, the Post –War era of multinational capitalism was one in which people were left with little time to be devoted for decent-sized books. And , with the dawning of the New Media Age in the succeeding decades after 1990, the internet reached a critical mass, and the new technological advancement was adopted by the public; this evolution in daily life has redefined all dimensions of life including the literary and linguistic arena. The ongoing age is marked by the massive participation of millions of netizens, from all over the world, in social networking media. With every status update and tweet, these millions are more than staying connected-they are reading, writing, editing, distilling, and interpreting the written word more than any generation in history. In doing so, they are helping the gradual emergence of a new style of writing, by coupling character- count restriction and

narrative experimentations. The diffusion of cyberculture has engendered its form of writing and publishing which marks a thorough changeover from the traditional conception of literature and reading. For instance, the novel *Love Sky*, which became the number-one selling novel of 2007 in Japan, was written one sentence a time by its author, Mika, not at a desk or even computer desk, but on her cell phone-sending it to her readers one at a time. In a world where busy commuters read a few screens' worth of narrative between subway stops, novels written and read this way seems more than desirable. As a further matter, texts are becoming unstable in the online environment. As e-books, they can be revised, annotated, animated with video, and more. "These are now being called "enhanced" or "enriched" digital books by traditional publishers, who are freaking out as the e-reader and the e-book increasingly threaten their reason for being-the physical, dead-tree, acid-paper printed book" (Cross 97).

Twitterature , published by Penguin Books in 2009, is a unique example to the reformulation of literary practices and production by the influence of cyberculture. Alongside Nano-fiction, Crowd-sourced narratives, Clandestine classics , and Infographics that popped up after the dawning of the New Media Age, *Twitterature* is a postmodern experimentation that retells 60 renowned classics of the past according to the ethos of the ongoing Age. The authors Alexander Aciman and Emmett Rensin, expounds their motive for the attempt in the introduction of the book:

You may be wondering, good sirs, what exactly we intend to do with these great works of art. What one must keep in mind is that the literary canon is not valued for its tens of thousands of dull, dull words but for the raw insight into

humanity it provides ... Virginit y must not be distracted with books, nor damsel-chasing pacified with poetry. Instead we must run free into the world and not once look back. (2)

The paucity of time, in a hectic world to read and understand volumes of philosophical and ornate writings, makes the authors dig for a solution:

What exactly is Hamlet trying to tell me, why must he mince words and muse in lyricism, and, in short, whack about shrub? Such questions are no doubt troubling—and we believe they would have been resolved were the Prince of Denmark a registered user on Twitter.com, well versed in the idiosyncrasies and idioms of the modern day. And this, in essence, is what we have done. (3)

Hamlet, reformulated into that fashion renders the Prince of Denmark a youth of our time, literate in the cyber acronyms, who tweets with his socially - uninhibited digital self. To use a few of his tweet to explain:

@OedipusGothplex

My royal father gone and nobody seems to care.

Mom says to stop wearing black.

STOP TRYING TO CONTROL ME. I won't conform! I wish my skin would just ... melt.

I'm too sad to notice that Ophelia's so sexy and fine. And mother also looks rather fair despite all her struggles.

AN APPARITION! This shit just got HEAVY. Apparently people don't accidentally fall on bottles of poison.

Why is Claudius telling me what to do again? YOU'RE NOT MY REAL DAD! In fact you killed my real dad. :(

2bornt2b? Can one tweet beyond the mortal coil?

I wrote a play. I hope everyone comes tonight! 7pm! Tickets are free w/ great sense of irony.

Uncle just confessed to Dad's murder.

I had a knife to that fat asshole but bitched out. Now he's alive and still taking to bed with that beautiful wo— ... er, my mother.

Gonna try to talk some sense into Mom because boyfriend totally killed Dad. I sense this is the moment of truth, the moment of candour and –
WHAT IS POLONIUS DOING BEHIND THE CURTAIN?

Twitterature is an intriguing amalgamation of the proclivities of the postmodern period that have been well at play since the Post-War periods (1950s), and the writing and reading preferences of the cyber world. The authors have docked the voluminous classics into a few tweets, and the retelling is replete with the subversion of celebrated high-brow texts, parody of the hallowed authors—including Homer, Virgil, and Milton who are formidable presences in the literary history, verbal taboo-breaking, and intertextuality. These features which could justly be called 'anti-canon,' are in line with the fundamental features of postmodernism such as: 'the effacement of the older frontier between high culture and the so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very culture the ideologues of modernism denounced passionately' (Jameson 54).

Frederick Jameson's observatio about this new cultural trend is worthy of note in this context. Jameson' key move was to link the

arguments about parody and postmodernism to a description of late capitalism. According to him, : 'Postmodernist art forms were peculiarly expressive of the logic of the contemporary economy. The cultural logic of late capitalism was distinct from that of previous economic stages, the postmodernist cultural practice in a range of arts expressed this cultural logic, this cultural practice was characterized by endless allusions to other styles in an interminable recycling which mirrors the unending commodity circulation of an absolutely extensive capitalism' (Dentith 155). This logic could be seen in the text in question also. In a capitalist society a literary text is an aesthetic commodity, and the reuse of the text, by customizing it to meet the present - day penchants, reflects the same commodity circulation logic of late capitalism. Besides, the docked form of the texts demonstrates the current preference for miniaturization of commodities.

A text retold as twitterature is shorn of its author's celebrated style, philosophical discussions, venerable passages(soliloquies in the case of Shakespearean plays) , and some of the minor characters. For the retelling, only the linear plots of the texts—which have down the ages been flattened into familiar air—are taken. The Omniscient narrators are eclipsed by the digital narrator (inverted protagonist in most cases) who tweets his story. Parody of the venerable authors and characters of the past is one of the towering features of twitterature, which as explained by Linda Hutcheon, is one of the prominent leanings of the postmodern age : "The prevailing interpretation is that postmodernism offers a value-free, decorative, de-historicized quotation of past forms and that this is a most apt mode for a culture like our own that is oversaturated with images" (Hutcheon 94). The genre negotiates the aesthetic autonomy of literary

productions. The notion of a work of art as a closed, self-sufficient, autonomous object deriving its unity from the formal interrelations of its parts is undermined by the retellings—each retelling is placed in a web of texts and intertexts. The liberal humanist notion of text as the product of its time is also enfeebled by the genre. In doing so, the texts are decontextualized and are mixed with texts of different times, with no heed paid for issues such as anachronism. Thus, in the retelling of *Oedipus the King*, entitled *Oedipus the King by Sophocles @whathappensinThebes*, the narrator's tweet about the troubled mind of Oedipus after marrying his own mother goes: "The bizarre emotions have opened a whole new bag of issues. Must tell Sigmund next session to forget about abandonment and focus on this."

The parodic intertextuality utilizes the canon, but reveals its anti-canon sentiment by the ironic abuse of it. The multiple sources of cultural authority in society, found in the canonic texts are being subjected to parodic undermining in the genre. Thus, in the retelling of Milton's *Paradise Lost*—a text characterized by high-moral seriousness—the whole theological belief in the redemption through Christ is subverted as follows in a single tweet: "How do you defeat your son, born of YOUR OWN DAUGHTER! Freud would have a field day."

The narrating persona in the retellings is a replica of the modern 'socially uninhibited' internet user who is not restrained by the social and moral conditionings of his/her milieu. Therefore, the narrators do not shy away from tweeting their stories in expletive language. Thus, when Pip in *Great Expectations* tweets his story his reflections about his sister and brother-in-law go: "My siste is such a bitch! And her

husband, talk about pussy-whipped. I'm going out on the marshes. I hate this Place.”

Twitterature is an ample example for the dramatic change of language in the cyber world. Participants have to read and write in order to participate in social media, e-mail, texting, instant messaging, blogs, and twitter. Not to say they have found shortcut ways of communication and given the language some new twists. The written material is more like informal conversation. It seems we are back in an oral culture. Even though visual information gets to the brain faster and is rapidly becoming the communication vehicle of choice (e.g. YouTube), print culture continues in a new, viral form online. It has been translated into emoticons like smiley faces, abbreviations, plenty of acronyms (LOL), and considerable slangs and new coinages. There are brand-new verbs: to “friend,” “google,” “text,” “tweet,” “download,” to say nothing of a profusion of new nouns and proper nouns like blog, Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Without editors or gatekeepers, language on the Internet is in constant flux, experimental at best, ungrammatical at worst. Online, language has more immediacy and the flavor of conversation. It is in casual, informal dress, like much of culture, and thus not always presentable. *Twitterature* incorporates all these linguistic features. The tweets abound with abusive acronyms and coinages, such as, CTFO—chill the fuck out, *Bromance*—A bonding of the spirits of two heterosexual men, *Cock-block*—to physically or metaphorically prevent another phallus from arriving at its intended goal, FML—Fuck my life, etc, following the emergent culture.

Even though the proliferation of texts produced in the online environment is negotiating our traditional understandings about ‘text’ and medium, we are to understand that the book is not dying, but its metamorphosis into digital media is changing our relationship with the world of letters. We probably won’t ever be living in a totally post-print world, but the book as e-book is becoming more visual, and entertaining sometimes, with embedded videos, maps, illustrations, and links. The experimentations such as *Twitterature* are actively imbibing the new trends in language, text production, authorship, etc. Yet, only time will tell what these experimentations will cost in the long run. Nevertheless, author-experimenters have an unrestricted space for writing and publishing, and they shall continue to make the most of the space.

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Social Network Sites as Evolving Subculture

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The word culture has its roots in classical antiquity when Roman orator Cicero used it as ‘Cultura Animi’ (cultivation of soul). It reappeared in seventeenth century Europe referring to the refinement of the individual. Later it got several definitions. Edward B Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871) defined culture as “that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, laws, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

Tylor identified subculture as one of the layers of culture which refers to a group of people within a culture that differentiate itself from the larger culture to which it belongs. A subculture may take its origin when people from different parts of the world come in to a complex society and still retain much of their original cultural tradition. As a result they can be a part of an identifiable subculture in their new society. In his 1979 book, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige argued that “A subculture is subversion to normalcy”.

With the rapid expansion of the possibilities of human communication through internet, social network sites have already emerged as a major means of social interaction over the past decade. As it became a part of our consciousness it is a virtual space where social interaction and cultural transmission are being processed. In the 1960 s Canadian cultural scholar Marshall Mc Luhan wrote that “With the rise of electronic media, we have extended our central nervous system in a global embrace”. This study aims at examining the influence of social network sites on culture as a whole and on the creation of subcultures within the society in particular.

Subcultures always emerge out of a dominant culture. If there is a major group of people with similar interests which has been in existence for a long time through their interactions, they form a subculture. For example, the Goth subculture began in England during the early 80 s in the gothic rock scene. The term "gothic rock" was coined in 1967 by music critic John Stickney to describe a meeting he had with Jim Morrison in a dimly lit wine-cellar which he called "the perfect room to honor the Gothic rock of the Doors".^[7] In the late 1970s, one of the first usages of the "gothic" term (as applied to music) was by Joy Division's manager¹. Its imagery and cultural proclivities indicate influences from the 19th century Gothic literature along with horror films. The Goth subculture has associated tastes in music, aesthetics, and fashion. Now Goth is a culture on its own branched out into different subcultures.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a subculture as “a cultural group within a larger culture often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture”. Dick Hedbig argued that subculture bring together like-minded individuals who feel neglected by societal standards and allow them to develop a sense of identity. In real social situations members interact and share their interests to form real social subcultures. The internet has enables a new wave of youth subculture. People who involve in social network sites find their friends and relatives in the cyber space. And they also freely express their thoughts and ideologies, political beliefs, artistic inclinations, lifestyles, fashion interests etc... These ideas and at times obsessions are reaching new heights and extremes due to young peoples' ease of access to information.

There are several subcultures like, Holmies, Haul Girls and other kin are existing on the internet. Holmies includes young people who support or are fascinated by media-notorious mass shooters such as Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold and James Holmes. They create their own media such as mini films, GIFs and Tumblr posts dedicated to their newfound heroes. Haul Girls are video bloggers, known as vloggers who post YouTube videos showcasing new products normally given to them by brands if their subscription following is high. Brands can also pay hefty fees to these influential YouTube stars to buy into their audience and ensure their product reaches as wide an audience as possible. Otherkin, as the name would suggest, are people who believe they are non-human and take on imaginary characters such as vampires, elves or fairies. They use the cyber space with the label subculture. In this study the focus is on the subcultures which are formed without the label of subculture.

Some subcultures originate within the contexts of the dominant culture. The first category of these types is a positive response to the demands of social structures, and those that are in negative response. The subcultures that are in negative responses are those that are delinquents, extremists, etc. There are a lot of negative connotations that go along with the idea of subculture. According to Chris Jenks, subcultures are often non-normative, non-mainstream, deviant, marginalized, criminal, unemployed, “under dog” groups within the social setting. Subcultures materialize as new sources of identity and a new way to signify difference for those who do not fit within the conventional aspects of their social surroundings. Instead of trying to include all different identities under one blanket culture, subcultures allow people to speak for themselves and still feel included, no matter how abject dominant culture assumes their identities to be.

Part of the reason that subcultures are valued positively is that they are, for the most part, actively produced. Joanne Hollows describes this production as a means for people to express their differences from the mainstream, and the culture that they create is defined by both its distance from commerce and for its superior authenticity. This culture, in comparison to mainstream culture, appears deviant, resistant, and transgressive, but more importantly it is an expression of alternate identities.

Youths often create their profiles on social network sites. Their online friends may be their off-line peers and relatives. As there are no geographical boundaries of using these sites, friends may include people from other countries also. It gets popularised because of its many fold benefits. It is a platform for self-expression, it helps us to find out long lost friends and relatives, it is an effective tool for business and many more. Interaction between the members in these sites changes the personal behavioural patterns of the members. Language, a powerful tool of culture has changed drastically. New meanings are attributed to words in cyber world. Words like check in, log in, updates, news feed, posts, likes etc were alien to the world in their present meaning before this cyber revolution. One of the important aspects of culture is language. Kerala and its people value its culture and language as something unique. As a global language, social network sites users interact in English. But the use of English in these sites redefined many of the established notions of propriety and decency. The rules governing the use of language have been causality in this platform, that is, it self not governed by any rules and leading to what N.S Baron interestingly termed as 'linguistics whateverism'.

There are many subcultures within the youth culture. Social network sites users form number of subcultures. Often subcultures refer to a group of people who share some common interests and attitudes and lives within a geographical area. But the subcultures in social network sites have no geographical boundaries. Harlem Shake trend started on 2 February 2012 can be seen as an example of this type of subculture. A group posted a video on you tube of themselves dancing to a song called Harlem Shake by Baaer. By 11 February there were 12000 different versions of the same on you tube. By 24 March it reached 1 billion views. We cannot categorise everyone who uses social network sites as a part of one subculture. Instead there are many subcultures within these users. Because the attitude and purpose of these users are different. Some of them surf on these sites only for entertainment. They give importance to *impression management*, a term in sociology which refers to a process by which people attempt to influence the perception of other people about a person, object and event. They do so by regulating and controlling information in their social relations in real life situations and in their profiles in social network sites. These impression management strategy can further be analysed as a change in global culture ie., individual self is valid more than the collective consciousness. This cultural pull (term by James Lull in *The push and pull of global culture*) is not a conscious process. So social network sites propagate a tendency towards individualism, autonomy and freedom those are associated with the western values. So the entertainment group as a subculture places emphasis on impression management and individualism and there may not be anything beneficial to the society. .

Mc Luhan anticipated the situation of new media network society as he saw electronic technologies introducing a culture of immediacy in which “action and reaction occur almost at the same time” Some critics like Castless argued that network society gives way to individualization of social relationships. In his *The Internet Galaxy*, he argues that network society is founded upon a shift from communities or close-knit social structures based on shared values and genuine interest in others to ‘me-centred’ networks, which are individualised social forms in which people position themselves in order to maximize personal gain.

Increased interactivity of audience through social network sites makes ‘participatory culture’ i.e., not only creating virtual communities but also allowing audience to become producers as well as receivers of media. One- to- one human contact is being neglected on which civilization was based. There is a breakdown of private and public sphere because people treat the public arena of cyberspace as if it were private. Through the over use of social network sites we entered an age of ‘moral relativism’ where little critical or moral judgement can be exercised. For example some believe that gulf war actually happened even if it is a creation of media. Pornography sits along side chat rooms and mobile phones. Because internet offers the users “you can surf what you need”.

Another group of users include professional or academicians. Enhancement of their skill is their prime motive. They share their interests, news updates in their respective fields, newer opportunities etc...It is a subculture beneficial to their group. There are groups of research scholars. It helps the researchers to find out newer ways of research, innovative topics, and take surveys based on their project etc... There is a group called *English,baby!* which is comprised of students and teachers of English as

second language. *Pinsta* is another platform for the world's internet work experts, Sage 32 is an educational group for creative professionals in film, television and theatre and there is students circle network which connects students, teachers and institutions to course resources, study groups and learning spaces.

Some of the social network users include groups and organizations which has some social interests. They propagate news which is useful to the society. Need for blood donation, organ donation, organizing charity programmes and messages and updates against the use of alcohol and other drugs. It is type of social service in cyber world. It reaches so many people with immediacy. As social network sites are a big platform in which so many people interact, good seeds of social work can be imbibed in young generation through this subculture. There are groups like *social vibe* for charity, *daily health* is a support group for physical and mental health, *didlr*, which draws services to people with disabilities and so on.

In the commercial sphere the importance of brands and peer group recommendation conditioned our shopping behaviour. Social network sites are platforms on which business groups can create their profiles with lower cost and thus they can make maximum profit. They can interact with their consumers in the cyber space with just messages and mails send to their profiles with attractive photo and video uploads. The society also inclined to the newer world of online shopping. It saves time for the busy costumers. Social network sites are more embedded in society that ever before what we buy, wear, eat, drink, and think are now informed by network experiences. Groups such as LinkedIn, Meettheboss, Ryze etc... provide platform for those who are ready to take business online. Such groups can also get immediate feed backs about their products from the costumers.

Consumers are in control and can access the content they want, in the format they like, by using software to dictate the output of their media tablet, rather than having to choose between a book, a magazine, or television. We are no longer limited to being described as readers or viewers or listeners. We are now simply users of multimedia; “tableteers,” perhaps.

Most of those exist in the real life situations. As the real subcultures are geographically bound, the virtual subcultures are geographically apart. But we cannot think of the relationship of two people or a small group on-line without considering the broader social network to which they belong.

The group which focuses on impression management and free thinking has no such corresponding groups in reality. Because, in actual communication, one’s personality is more exposed than which is in cyber space. In social interaction, individual consciousness has lesser important than collective consciousness.

Cultures are created and shared within societies. While a culture is a complex of behavioural patterns and perceptions learned from a group, societies are groups of interacting people. Within every society there may be many different cultures and subcultures. As the creation and sharing of culture largely depend on communication, means of communication assume a vital role in human society. Sociologists use a variety of theoretical perspectives to make sense of the world. These perspectives or theories provide a framework for understanding observations on topics such as deviance. The *symbolic interactionist perspective* of sociology views society as a product of everyday social interactions of individuals. Symbolic interactionists also study how people use symbols to create meaning. In studying deviance, these theorists look at how people in

everyday situations define deviance, which differs between cultures and settings.

Sociologist Edwin Sutherland studied deviance from the symbolic interactionist perspective. The basic tenet of his *theory of differential association* is that deviance is a learned behavior—people learn it from the different groups with which they associate. His theory counters arguments that deviant behavior is biological or due to personality. According to Sutherland, people show deviant behaviour because they associate with individuals who act in a deviant manner. He said that the future deviant learns values different from those of the dominant culture, as well as techniques for committing deviance. For example, in a gang environment, current gang members resocialize new members to norms that oppose those of the dominant culture. From the gang, these new members learn that stealing, carrying a gun, and using drugs are acceptable behaviors, whereas they were not before. In the meantime, the norms they learned at home are no longer acceptable within the gang environment, and they must reject those norms and values to accept the new ones. When individuals share a particular form of deviance, they often form a deviant subculture, a way of living that differs from the dominant culture and is based on that shared deviance. Within the deviant subculture, individuals adopt new norms and values and sometimes feel alienated from the larger society. They end up relying more on the group to which they feel they most belong.

When an individual becomes a member of a deviant subculture, the members of his immediate group often become his primary source of social interaction. The deviant feels comfortable among others who have also been rejected from the dominant society. For example, people released from prison often find that the dominant society does not welcome them

back with open arms, and they often drift toward other ex-convicts to attain a sense of belonging and purpose, thereby forming a subculture. This deviant subculture helps to explain why rates of recidivism, or repeated offenses by convicted criminals, are so high. The ex-convict subculture sanctions and encourages further acts of deviance.

Professional or academic groups exist in society. But it is always relatively smaller than those in social network sites. Professional skill can be shared and transmitted beyond the cultural boundaries. It is also the case with social activists' group and business group. Users tend to update their pictures and personal profiles frequently in these sites. They are happy for certain data to be published as long as their privacy is protected. Subcultures can express and propagate their ideas and interest freely as there are no such restrictions on the users about their discussion points and photos or video that they upload.

Social network site is a new revolution in social relationships. They may not necessarily be a threat to the society, though there are certain disadvantages for these sites. Mc Luhan anticipated the situation of new media network society as he saw electronic technologies introducing a culture of immediacy in which "action and reaction occur almost at the same time" Some critics like Castless argue that network society gives way to individualization of social relationships. In his *The Internet Galaxy*, he argues that network society is founded upon a shift from communities or close-knit social structures based on shared values and genuine interest in others to 'me-centred' networks, which are individualised social forms in which people position themselves in order to maximize personal gain.

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In the commercial sphere of Kerala, there is an increased importance of brands and peer group recommendation in conditioning our shopping behaviour. Social network sites are more embedded in society that ever before what we buy, wear, eat, drink, and think are now informed by network experiences. People trust networks as authorities for new, information and entertainment. Kerala culture now can be seen as a mediated culture where media reflects and creates the culture. These networks influences the youth. So the future generation is being affected by the bad effects of network society.

Critics argue that globalization of the world may actually decrease the cultural and national identities as well as all become increasingly alike and culturally homogenous. This is described as 'McDonaldization of Society' (Ritzer 2000). Unlike other countries not everybody has the access to network in India and especially in Kerala. So the disparity between those who uses internet and those who do not is a cultural gap thus created

between the social relationships. This influences of social network sites on Kerala culture can be read together as Mc Luhan put that “it is a world where how something is presented is more important than what is being presented”. The participatory nature of new media has over inflated to such an extent that people now refuses to see its limitations. So the subcultures created through the social network sites can be seen as a deviant behaviour patterns in culture and more and more people are unconsciously becoming parts of one or more internet subcultures.

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An Exploratory Content Analysis of the Facebook Page of Kolkata Traffic Police

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Traffic Management has emerged as one of the most challenging aspects of Metro Policing, and among all Metros, Kolkata offers its own unique challenges. Limited road space, huge volume of traffic, slow-moving vehicles and the sea of humanity make traffic management a daunting task. Balancing of twin principles of speed and safety requires a high degree of skill and motivation. This study aims at analyzing the use of New Media (Facebook) used by Kolkata Traffic Police in combating these challenges. The researcher will be following the Facebook Page and analyses its content, taking interviews and showcase its effectiveness rate by collecting various data related to the page. The study will lead to understand how successfully the Kolkata Traffic Police has adapted to New Media in this technology driven society to communicate and decrease their gap with the general public.

The KTP FB page has made life possible for a commoner to take active participation in regulating the Traffic movements of their own society. This innovation has created a more democratic environment where all can have their own views and suggestions leading to the development of the society. This type of communication and a free platform was never possible for a commoner before. Though there has been various similar incidents which has led to development communication through New Media.

The researcher will be studying on both the pros and cons of this page on terms of its uses and credibility. How effective it has been in combating various traffic related issues and its reach to the audience. The various methods used to promote the page and popularize it (if any) so as maximum people could benefit. To understand how the social media is handled by the KTP and the challenges faced while operating them.

Though the India Law doesn't permit Government Organizations to open an active page on social networking sites, the KTP has managed to open and use it for the betterment of communication of information to the common citizen. This in turn is making a better society by which people could follow the basic traffic rules and create more opportunities for innovation for better traffic movements. The researcher wants to read the use of New Media by Kolkata Traffic Police which has supposedly led to development communication. The page has made interaction possible directly with the police in much easier way. The effectiveness of the page will depend on how much they are able to hold on with active posting and how efficient they are being able to solve the problem of a commoner.

The researcher will be doing content analysis of the Kolkata Traffic Police Facebook Page by following it for a period of 4 weeks (28 days) and observe the posts posted by Kolkata Traffic Police as well as their followers. The researcher will also be taking expert interviews with the Kolkata Traffic Police officials, social media analysts and general public to understand the effectiveness of the use of this page and will also collect data related to this research. Literature review will also be done related to the subject which could be mainly on similar incidents through which the new media has led to development communication and making life easier for both the government and its citizens.

E-Governance, has evolved as an information-age model of governance that seeks to realize processes and structures for harnessing the potentialities of information and communication technologies (ICTs) at various levels of government and public sector and beyond, for the purpose of enhancing good governance. But the critical issue that remains to be understood is why so much interest in e-Governance, the answer can be found in one of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports (1997) that reported that IT is becoming the critical agent of change, the availability of a new digital infrastructure and the Internet's impact on changing set of public expectations are overtaking fiscal pressures as the primary impetus for public sector managerial reforms. In the modern world the state or government is being constantly looked upon as a service provider and is under tremendous pressure to perform. In the process, the governments have to battle built-in dysfunctional features, which may be affecting its performance. Couple this with rapid population growth, in certain regions, has meant that the fiscal health of many governments is deteriorating. The developments in ICT have provided governments all around the world a new possibility for delivery of programs and services in their countries and regions. However, one must understand that at the very onset that the term e-Governance carries different meanings and aims in developing and developed countries. In a developing nation, it does not imply, hooking every citizen to a digital node or having access to Internet or computers, rather it could be linking of every community to information dissemination in a manner that no one is left. This linking of a village / community could be through public or private ICT node or through any other combination of the two. Electronic governance is not only about putting governmental information online but

it goes beyond it, it involves transformation from being a passive information and service provider to ensuring active citizen involvement. The evolution of e-Governance is a highly complex process requiring provision of hardware, networking, and software and more importantly re-engineering of the procedures for examination of cases and decision-making. The essence of the concept is the innovative (re-modelling) opportunities of business being offered by it. Two vital areas are efficiency and scalability, improving efficiency is no doubt imperative but scalability is the key issue here (the reach and innovation). It is more about breadth or stretch than any other thing.

The reform of administration and the provision of improved services to its citizens has long been acknowledged as a major criterion for development and today's thrust on e-Governance can be considered a part of this wider developmental goal.

E-Governance is being recognized as having the potential to change shape and character of Government-to-Citizen (G2C) relationship. The advances in ICT and particularly the Internet has made it possible for governments to streamline their interaction with business people, private citizens, and governmental agencies, while at the same time ensuring that an improved state of affairs regarding the access to government information and services. The ICTs can play an influential role in the process of e-Governance, which can be explained as:

Purely technical: in terms of automation of tedious or repetitive governance tasks, thereby improving the efficiency of the process, example, automated filling of tax forms, etc.

Facilitating/Supportive Role: in terms of complementing the existing efforts/methods to improve governance, example information sharing, opening communication, etc.

Completely Innovative Role: like involving initiating new services and mechanisms to improve levels of governance. (Nagamatsu Toshifumi)

E-governance is also seen as a vehicle to initiate and sustain reforms by focusing on three broad areas:

Governance: Transparency; people's participation; promotion of a democratic society.

Public services: Efficient, cost-effective and responsive governance; convenient services to citizens and businesses; greater citizen access to public information; accountability in delivery of services to citizens.

Management: Simplicity, efficiency and accountability; managing voluminous information and data effectively; information services; swift and secure communication. (Prasad)

Lieutenant Chris Bolton of the Oakland Police Department was skeptical of social media in 2011. As the Chief of Staff for Oakland's Chief of Police and a 13-year-vet at the time, he didn't see the benefits of having a department-monitored social media presence. He had said without having tried (social media) and without knowing anyone else in law enforcement who was using it, he associated it with many more risks and consequences than with benefits. That was Bolton's mind-set until April 2, 2012, when 43-year-old One Goh entered Oikos University, a Korean Christian college in Oakland, Calif. Goh carried with him a .45-caliber handgun which he used to murder seven people at the school before surrendering to police at a nearby Safeway.

The Oakland Police Department had one public information officer at the time, in addition to Bolton. The two officers used Twitter and Nixle, a public notification tool, to push out updates, quiet rumors, and send emergency alerts throughout the day. It was an experience that convinced Bolton of the power of social media technology. That one crisis really changed Bolton's mind on how social media can be used as part of a public information strategy. The Oakland Police Department now uses Facebook and Nextdoor, in addition to Nixle and Twitter, and considers social media an important tool in keeping the general public in the loop day in and day out. Oakland isn't alone. Social media has become an invaluable tool for police departments around the country, helping them to disperse emergency info, gather details from citizens, and even solve crimes.

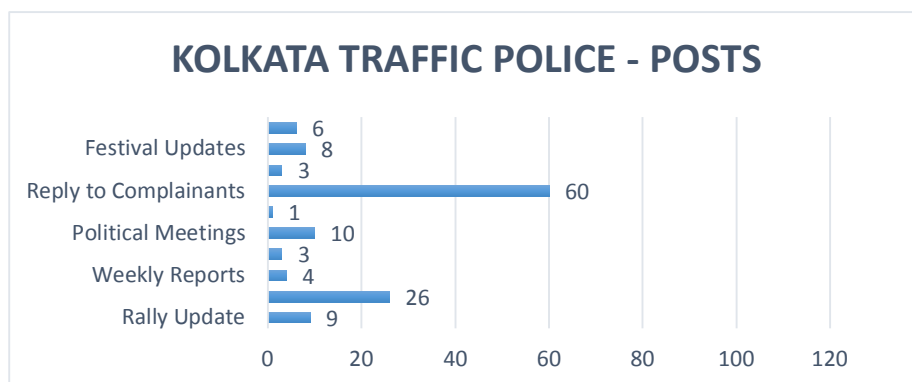
A 2013 social media survey from the International Association of Chiefs of Police found that 96% of police departments use social media in some capacity, and more than 80% say it has helped them solve crimes. Three-quarters of those on social media have joined since 2010.

In the US, Facebook is the most popular platform for police departments, with more than 92% of socially active departments using Facebook. Twitter is next in line with almost 65%, and almost 43% are on YouTube. While it's not as widely adopted as the more traditional social platforms, Nextdoor is another network growing in popularity among police departments. (Wagner)

The content analysis of the Facebook page of Kolkata Traffic Police was done for a period of 4 weeks (28 days) from Jan 12, 2014 till Feb 08, 2014. Following are the data that were collected during this process, and were broadly categorized into 3 sections i.e. posts given by Kolkata Traffic Police, posts given by the followers of the official KTP page and the

Facebook insights that shows how the page has progressed among the weeks in terms of likes and people talking about it.

Table 1: Data collected from the posts of Kolkata Traffic Police



Total No. of Posts: 130

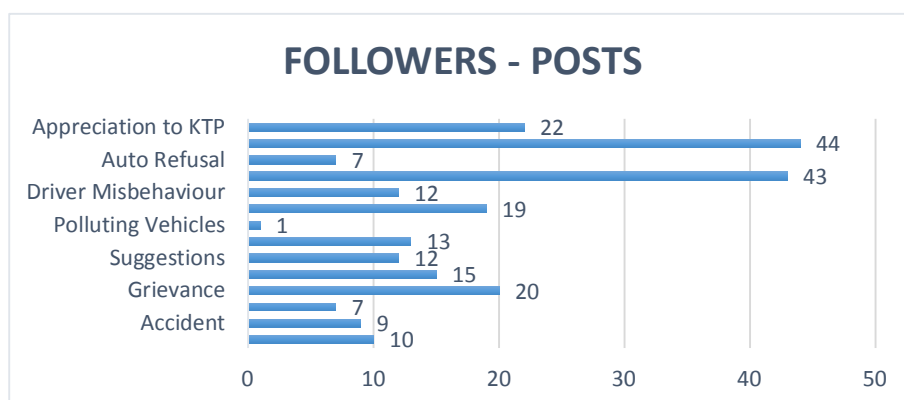
Total No. of Days: 28 (4 Weeks)

No Updates: 5 Days

Interpretation: The above graph shows that most of the posts that are put forward by the Kolkata Traffic Police on their social media (FB) page are Reply to the complainants, i.e. they give status on the cases filed by the users or the complainants. They are generally accompanied by details of the Case No., Case Date and the Complainant's Name, followed by the status. During the period of observation the next most posts were related to Procession Updates, i.e. informing the public beforehand about the processions held by various political or religious groups within the city. These help the public to be aware and avoid those roads which could lead to traffic congestions. The posts are generally accompanied by details of the Procession timings, location and the group's name which is conducting it. Apart from that they give various other posts related to Political Meetings, Rally Update, Festival Updates, Traffic Regulations and Awareness Information, Weekly reports on the complaints lodged by the

users in Facebook, sit-in-demonstrations, road block programs and other general information. There were a total of 130 posts posted across 4 weeks (28 days) among which there were no posts on 5 days. They were generally Sundays or National Holidays.

Table 2: Data collected from the posts of the followers



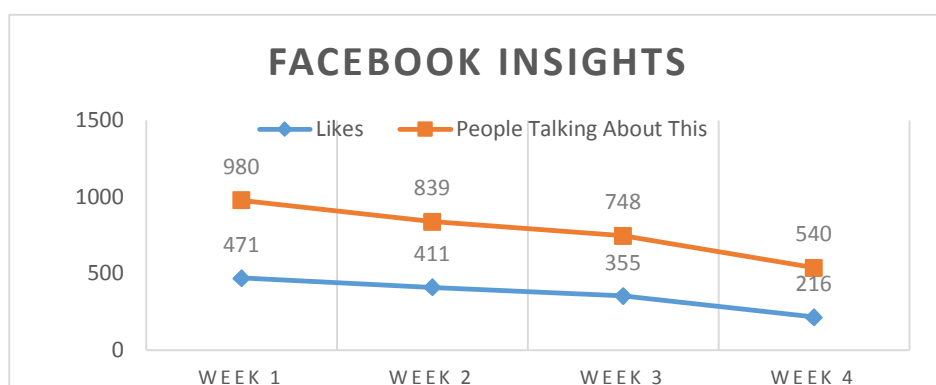
Total No. of Posts: 234

Female: 23 Male: 211

Interpretations: Table 2 shows that most of the posts that has been posted by the followers of the KTP page are regarding Queries which are doubts in the followers mind regarding Traffic related issues, e.g. Questions related to License, PVD/RTO offices, registered complaints on FB, etc. The next most, but just by a margin are the posts complaining about the Taxi Refusals which clearly indicates that people opting Taxis in Kolkata are facing a big time problem. Although there has been a good number of posts appreciating the work done by KTP, there are also posts related to public grievances, taxis operating with false meter or charging over the meter, traffic violations, complaints against KTP, misbehavior by the drivers, accidents, rash driving, auto refusals, polluting vehicles, suggestions on various issues and others. Throughout the 4 weeks (28 days), there has been

a total of 234 post by the followers among which 211 were male and only 23 were females.

Table 3: *Kolkata Traffic Police Facebook Page Insights (Source: Facebook)*



Interpretations: Table 3 clearly shows that there has been a clear dip in the no. of likes as well as people talking about it over the weeks. Week 1 had most no. of likes and peoples talking about it with 471 and 980 respectively, compared to the lowest amongst all weeks on Week 4 with only 216 likes and 540 peoples talking about it. The graph line direction of the no. of likes was somewhat proportional to the no. of peoples talking about it throughout the weeks. It also showed that age group of around 25-34 years are the ones most engaged in the page and the most engaged city is Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

Expert Interview

“The response to our Facebook profile is great. It has provided a round-the-clock two-way communication on traffic requirement problems in Kolkata. We generally get back to the complaints within 24 hours and provide them with the complaint case no. through which they can get back to us on the status any time. Social media has really helped us in making

the whole process of getting the complaints and re-addressing them very fast. We are also trying our best in promoting the page and creating more awareness among the people. Right now we have around 15 officers handling the page. Recently, we have also launched a mobile app for making the process even easier for the citizens of Kolkata.”

– *Tridip Datta, OC, Kolkata Traffic Police*

“The rate of growth in membership has been very encouraging and active participation of the citizens has helped this page evolve into an effective enforcement tool on one hand, and a medium for meaningful self-introspection and development on the other. With a view of making the platform more participatory and the interaction a little more structured, we had organised three sessions of "Facebook Friends' Forum" over the last two years and a half wherein around 150/160 members had face-to-face interactions with senior officers of Kolkata Traffic Police at Lalbazar, the Kolkata Police Headquarters. The idea was to have a frank and no-holds barred exchange of views and find ways to improve traffic management in this beloved city of ours. The first three sessions witnessed overwhelming response and many useful suggestions came from members which were duly implemented.”

– *Supriya Chakraborty, Officer, Kolkata Traffic Police*

E-Governance through social media has been booming over the years, also more and more governance processes are expected to take place over the social media with the main objective of bridging the gap between the Government and its citizens. Kolkata residents will no more have to spend time dialing the traffic police number to lodge complaints or present grievances. They can now log on to the social networking site Facebook and interact with the authorities. Social media and the use of technology are

crucial for policing in the 21st century. In today's online world the KTP Facebook Page is a step to bridge the gap between police force and the citizens to improve the overall traffic conditions and to ease the stress of day to day commuting in the streets of Kolkata. People can follow it for instant traffic related updates and can post their complaints via this page. The Page offers citizens a quick and discrete method for reporting traffic related activity directly and instantaneously to Kolkata Police. Citizens can also send pictures and text messages of traffic related activity which requires Police attention. People are also asked to send in ideas and suggestions through this page and participate in various discussions/forums to improve the overall traffic movement Kolkata. The process helps more as it is fast and efficient. Unlike the previous 9 am to 5 pm government, the process has made 24x7 governance possible. It has also started taking in suggestions via various forums on the social media which could be implemented for a better traffic regulations within the city. The relationship gets better through such processes and people get more aware on the issues in much broader way.

Through the analysis it has been found out that peoples engagement in this process has been quite active and effective, but participation from the males are very high as compared to the females. The process of KTP going on social media is fine, but still it has few drawbacks as well. Such as its not instant, as in they take a fair amount of time to reply back to the posts in most of the cases, which could be ineffective during emergencies, also it has been found out that there has been no posts at all from the KTP on 5 days during the observation period of 4 weeks. Also during expert interviews with the KTP officials it has also been found out that though the process has been helping them in regulating and improving traffic related

issues in a major way, there are many people who just for the sake of complaining post random things on the wall. KTP is trying its best to combat such issues and look at the authenticity of the case. It has although been seen that people prefer asking their queries here on various traffic related issues, as well as complaint against major issues such as taxi refusals, false meter boxes or over charging by the drivers, etc. They strictly take cases which are under their jurisdiction and do not entertain cases which fall under West Bengal Traffic Police or Bidhannagar Traffic Police. Various other police organizations throughout the country such as Delhi Traffic Police (180 K likes), Bangalore Traffic Police (Above 120 K likes), and Chennai City Traffic Police (Above 50 K likes) also have their presence officially on social media on similar terms and functioning. Although during the analysis the graph showed a fall in the no. of likes over the weeks, Kolkata Traffic Police still had above 50 K likes as on March, 2014. They are constantly trying to increase their visibility and encouraging people through radio ads, celebrities and various other campaigns to join the KTP official Facebook page and help them in proper governing in a democratic way.

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Role of media sensationalisation affecting the cultural and behavioral patterns of people

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Media is communication channels through which through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, TV, radio, direct mail, telephone, fax and internet. Media is the plural of medium and can take a plural or singular verb, depending on the sense intended.

Sensationalism is a type of editorial bias in mass media in which events and topics in news stories and pieces are over-hyped to increase viewership or readership numbers. Sensationalism may include reporting about generally insignificant matters and events that don't influence overall society and biased presentations of newsworthy topics in a trivial or tabloid manner.

Some tactics include being deliberately obtuse, appealing to emotions, being controversial, intentionally omitting facts and information, being loud and self-centered and acting to obtain attention. Trivial information and events are sometimes misrepresented and exaggerated as important or significant, and often includes stories about the actions of individuals and small groups of people, the content of which is often insignificant and irrelevant relative to the macro-level day-to-day events that occur globally. Furthermore, the content and subject matter typically doesn't affect the lives of the masses and doesn't affect society, and instead is broadcast and printed to attract viewers and readers. Examples include press coverage about the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal, Casey Anthony Trial, Tonya

Harding's role in the attack of Nancy Kerrigan, the Elian Gonzalez affair and the O.J. Simpson murder case.

Media sensationalism is defined as the style of reporting news to public which involves use of fear, anger, excitement and crude thrill undertaken by the media to increase the viewership, ratings and lastly profits. In the past few decades, media sensationalism has increased and is being religiously practiced by all the channels. Because of the increased use, reporting lost its credibility with reporters reporting false and alarming headlines. This type of reporting depicted the dark side of journalism and it also created panic in the minds of the public.

- It has, in fact, snatched interest from the readers and has caused degradation of values in our society.
- Sensationalism is so deeply embedded with all the channels that the distinction between accurate and inaccurate news has completely vanished.
- The public are now so used to the distorted picture that they don't know which information is true.
- As if this is not enough, even the celebrities are not spared from this evil reporting. News about their break-ups, relationships, anger problems or is it any private matter is instantly shown and splashed in all the channels of communication.
- The vicious circle doesn't end here. After celebrities, its news about the financial world, governmental policies and plight of the common man pictured as an amusement story.
- Right now sensationalism is compared with show business as it includes aspects of theatrical drama.
- The reporting is merely done to up their sales and grab the attention.

- By using this type of journalism, the public in general has limited their viewing time or reading time.
- The rationale behind this concept is not working at present, as the public is now used to taking things lightly.
- The effects of sensationalism corrode the awareness level, contemplate the critical issues and present it in a immature and unrealistic way.

The Mullaperiyar dam located in the highland Idukki district of Kerala bordering Southern Tamil Nadu has become a stormy issue between these two southernmost States. The issue as such is not new at all. The dam itself is 115 years old, which means the technology behind the construction of the dam, chronologically speaking, is archaic. The controversies concerning the height and the storage levels of the dam had erupted now and again, and the case had gone up to the highest court. The Supreme Court in 2006 ruled that the dam was safe enough to increase the storage level by six feet from 136 to 142 ft, but in a subsequent ruling asked the two States to settle the differences through discussions in an amicable manner. Strong demands were aired by all the political parties in Tamil Nadu that Kerala must abide by the earlier Supreme Court ruling about increasing the storage level of the dam. The plea of the Kerala government all through was that raising the storage level of this dam would be a major security threat to the lives and property of the people in three heavily populated districts of the State and to the fauna in Periyar National Park due to increased flooding.

The situation reached the stage of road and rail blockades of the routes leading to Kerala from Tamil Nadu. On Feb. 18 this year the Supreme Court ordered that a 5-member Committee headed by former Chief Justice, A.S. Anand, be constituted to look into the dispute and prepare a report

within 6 months. This Committee was supposed to be formed within a month of the ruling, but this has not yet happened. The Supreme Court has criticized the Union government on its reluctance to fund the empowered Committee and has also refused the Tamil Nadu government's request to scrap the idea of this committee. The tones of all the political parties in Tamil Nadu are acrimonious and strident, giving a not very congenial atmosphere for an amicable settlement of the issue.

Interesting side information to this water dispute is that Tamil Nadu is now embroiled in water disputes with all the three neighbours—Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, with the Cauvery dispute with Karnataka remaining an ever ticking bomb. This dispute had already led to several large scale riots in the two States. Being a water scarce State with its agriculture crucially dependent on irrigation water, and vast areas being rain shadow ones and therefore drought prone, it is easy enough to understand how and why the water issue is a highly emotional issue in Tamil Nadu. The common man in Tamil Nadu firmly believes that Kerala is a water and electricity surplus State, and when its government objects to increasing the storage level it is deliberately obstructing the progress of Tamil Nadu and Tamils. Hundreds of thousands of farming families are crucially dependent on the water from this dam; and Kerala's objections are construed in Tamil Nadu as a deliberate ploy to prevent the development of agriculture here. The veracity of this belief is certainly subject to serious contention. That Tamil Nadu needs more water is indisputable, but how this water can be obtained is the pertinent question.

The history of this dam is interesting. At the stage of negotiations between the British Resident and the King of Travancore it seems that the royalty was not even fully aware that the proposed dam was within the

territory of Travancore. This was typical of the feudal lack of clarity about the extent of territorial jurisdiction and was typical of not only the highlands of Travancore but also of Malabar. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the negotiations centred solely on the amount of compensation and did not study or take into account the impact on the areas through which the river flows. The British had their way without any serious hitches, and it can be safely surmised that there was a certain amount of coercion and manipulation from the side of the colonial administration and all its conditions were accepted by the King's representatives. Subsequent violations of the initial agreement were also resorted to by the colonialists. The aim of the colonialists was to maximize the revenue from the directly ruled adjoining areas of the then Madras Presidency, and irrigation was a must for this revenue farming.

It is certainly possible that Kerala is underutilizing its water resources and much of this precious resource is going waste. But so is the case with Tamil Nadu and all other States in the country. Water management in the entire subcontinent is shabby and unscientific and this is exemplified by the perennial droughts and floods in this whole chunk of the world. Efficient water management with zero environmental hazards is certainly a long term objective which needs priority attention. Unless this objective is achieved bickering on sharing of water is bound to remain, and water being a highly emotional issue, which vitally affects the well being of millions and crores of people the tensions can easily turn nasty.

Kerala agriculture has, over a period of the last several decades, shifted its focus from food production to cash crops production, and it is now crucially dependent on the neighbouring States and the central pool for the day-to-day food requirements. Kerala is particularly dependent on

Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and Andhra for staples as well as vegetables and meat. It is probably this dependency that made the political parties of Tamil Nadu call for a blockade of roads. There is no doubt that if such a blockade is sustained, Kerala will witness massive price rises of essential commodities like vegetables, rice, and meat and even absolute scarcity may result. But to see a dam dispute from this angle is a one-sided approach, which can only be characterized as belonging to competitive brand of politicking which is probably the result of the existing party political dynamics of the State.

If Kerala is dependent on Tamil Nadu for a significant part of its food requirements, the Tamil Nadu farmers and farm workers are equally dependent on the Kerala market as a dependable and sure outlet for their farm products. If the Kerala workers are looking at the Gulf countries for lucrative employment, a large number of Tamil workers, especially from the border districts, are looking to Kerala as their Gulf. The plantation sector in Idukki is marked by almost 100% Tamil migrant workers. The construction sector also is heavily loaded with Tamil workers. The main reason for such massive migrations is the differential wage rates, the same as between the Gulf countries and Kerala. This is the ground level situation devoid of political rhetoric.

The Tamil Nadu angle is a legalistic and populist angle, the only anchor of which is the earlier Supreme Court judgment based on some sort of an “experts’ report”. The Kerala angle is based on a conjectural conclusion on the safety of an old dam, and if both the States stick to their positions it is very clear that there is no point in discussing the issue. How expert was the “experts’ report” is something that can be re-examined. This is especially so because it has been proved within the last one decade that

the Idukki mountain zone is a seismically unstable plate. Within the last ten years two series of quakes have occurred in the region. It is this geological characteristic more than the age of the dam itself that has to be taken into account. Keeping in view this single factor the advisability of large dams in the region has to be re-examined, even if the Kerala side argument that instead of the 115 years old present one a new dam can be constructed, is not really valid in the long run. What is really needed is the construction of several small dams in full agreement with Tamil Nadu on the share of water to each partner. Even these small dams should be constructed only in an environmentally friendly manner with the full concurrence of the people of the areas concerned. There is absolutely no reason why Kerala should not share water with the immediate neighbour, who is contributing a significant share of the food needs of the State, though this developmental model which leads to food insufficiency and import dependency requires a thorough critique and overturning.

River water disputes are there in the entire sub-continent. There are disputes between India and Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and in the not so distant future they are bound to erupt between India and China because the major rivers passing through the Indo-Gangetic plain originate in Tibet, now part of China. There are numerous disputes between States within the country, out of which the Cauvery dispute in peninsular India and the Sutlej-Beas disputes in north-western India are very prominent. Relatively speaking, the Mullaperiyar is a small dispute and can be easily solved. What the resolution needs in the first place is a comprehensive joint study of the present state of the dam itself. This by no means should be an impressionistic study, but a proper scientific study. Once the study is done and discussed at all possible levels appropriate decisions can be made and

implemented. This is not such a big task and there is little real space for raking up a ruckus. A ruckus may serve the sectarian interests of political parties in both the States, but negatively serve the interests of the peoples of both the States.

What we are witnessing in Tamil Nadu is that the issue is being steadily converted into a highly emotional one, which the political parties are bent upon using for their own sectarian interests. The same cannot be said about the main political parties in Kerala. There are no Vaikos or Jayalalithas in Kerala, but this gap is efficiently filled up by the media, both visual and print. The media there are fully involved in competitive populism of the most degenerate variety with all efforts to sensationalize the issue without looking at the ground realities and possible solutions.

Actually, there is a real political angle too, and this refers to the federal rights of States to decide on matters that pertain to them alone. Why the Centre has to come and preside over as arbitrator in a dispute that concerns only Kerala and Tamil Nadu is inexplicable. Who will be the gainers if bad blood is created between two neighbours who have very, very long historical, cultural, linguistic and geographic ties, is anybody's guess. Who gained from the Punjab tangle on river waters is well known. It is advocates of unitary India that politically gained there. It will be sad, if in the interests of short term political and economic gains the actors concerned lose sight of this vital political implication.

Recent news on the weak infrastructure of Mullaperiyar dam caused havoc among Kerala people and because of that land price in and around Mullaperiyar area went down. The people of that area were shocked and mentally affected negatively because of the sensationalisation of

Mullaperiyar. This affected the living standards of the people. People started migrating from there.

Movie is a strong medium for disseminating ideas. Sensationalisation also extended his dark hands in movie which created a bad impact in the minds of viewers .During earlier times only villain were portrayed as a man having alcohol ,drugs etc. Now a day the hero is also portrayed as a character having alcohol and drugs. The youth are getting inspired of this sensationalisation where hero is portrayed as a character having alcohol and drugs .The youth see this as a good this and start imitating this trend which hazardously affect the health patterns of youth Moreover women were depicted as teetotalers in old movies now they scenario has changed .They are depicted same like men having alcohols and drinks which cause an increasing trend in using alcoholism among women which is also considered as a part of sensationalisation through movies. This increased use of alcoholism among women affects the health of future generation also.

According to the cultivation theory proposed by Gebner, cultivation effect (imitating what we see) occurs only after long-term, cumulative exposure to television. The people are more prone to these kings of sensationalisation of facts, they negatively affect the cultural and behavioral aspect of people. Dependency theory which says people are dependent on the media clearly explains this scenario. Agenda setting theory of McComb also explains the sensationalisation perspective of media in its fullest.

The sensationalisation of certain information hazardously affected the life of people especially in their cultural and behavioural patterns . The sensationalisation of news elements creates unwanted shock in the mind sets

of people which is a negative trend. The sensationalisation not only creates negative image in the minds of the people. But also misleads the people to do the wrong because of the tension created while believing the sensationalized fact is correct.

The main objectives of this study is

- Is to find out how news sensationalisation affects the cultural and behavioural aspects of people.
- It started to influence people in their life style beliefs and thoughts.
- People get addicted in these kinds of sensationalised information and they were started to follow it.
- The cultural elements in films are also changed.
- The people become imitating what media portrays irrespective of thinking which I best explained through agenda setting theory.
- The cultural elements of films have changed.
- Life style of people have changed due to sensationalisation

According to this research, the researcher have reached in several hypothesis

- (1) The media culture had undergone through several changes which negatively after the cultural and behavioural pattern of the people.
- (2) The sensationalisation through which the people are negatively affected.
- (3) The cultural elements have changed in media.
- (4) The outlook of media has drastically changed and its only focus is to improve their business.
- (5) The media has a vital role in the behavioral pattern of human being.

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Camera Speaks

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“I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking...

Someday all this will have to be developed carefully printed fixed “–

Christopher Isherwood, an English Novelist

Photography, which had only been a dream once, is now a nostalgic form of art which exposes life's mingled beauty and terror with the help of a camera. A photograph, even though confined to 20 * 30 canvas is in reality an unbounded ocean in which lurks the most treasured and rare emotions and expressions from real life. Etymologically, 'photography' has been derived from the Greek words 'photos' and 'graphein' meaning "drawing with line". It is the science or art of creating durable images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation, either chemically or electronically. From a 'camera obscura' to the latest digital camera photography has evolved in its form. It was *Thomas Wedgwood* who first made an attempt to capture an image using a light sensitive substance in early 1820's. Later in 1822, *Nicephore Niepce* perfected it. Modern photography began in 1839 when *Louis Daguerre* invented his '*Eponymous Daguerreotype*'. The commercial introduction of digital camera in the 1990's soon revolutionized photography

Photography as we know today is one of the most influential sects in media. It has all the transcendental features of a strong expressionist medium. Among all media it stands out for its unique way of conveying ideas through a single 2D phase. Even though photographs can provide a more straight depiction than painting or other forms, they are sometimes manipulated. Although at present, photography is the greatest fad among

youngsters, history reveals the fact that it is much more than a camera's cool and mechanical gaze. It has played its breathtaking role in capturing the most beautiful as well as the most disgusting sights in our society. The multitude of photographs portraying various social events shows the photographers' conspicuous and steady growth of interest in empathizing with the contemporary world. One even risks his life to capture the perfect snapshot. A photo may or may not stir up the human spirit in an observer. And there is that distinct division amongst photographs which exposes the veracity and intentions behind those clicks. Thus the photographer, though anonymous to an observer, reveals himself before the world through his photography. All the extravagances in photographing would only result in losing a part of its soul. A snapshot brims with life in simplicity. Our eyes linger on those photos which triggers our conscience and progresses in cognition.

This paper's objective is to make a study on the transformation that has occurred in photography since its invention in the 19th century through analyzing its role played in the important wars in world history. We shall see how it has provided an objective record of real events. They were key, for instance, in conforming the public ravages of the civil war and horrors of the Holocaust. However, we know that photographic images can be manipulated.

The impact of photography on society as one of the new media forms changes the structure of the world. It also plays an inevitable role in globalization and brings closer the relations. There has been a virile discomfort caused by the photographing in regards to being insensitive. Photos of war and pornography has always caused a stir in the society. It is also feared that such disturbing or explicit images would be easily

accessible to children. It is a concern today that people are turned into objects that can be easily possessed by the devouring waves of media.

With the invention of photography in 1830's, the possibility of capturing the events of war to enhance public awareness was first explored. Photographs of trauma, poverty and helplessness have always affected humanity and we never fail to empathize with such conditions too. Such photography lives on to be looked upon by generations to come. Of all those entire mind – captivating events portrayed in photography, war photography is one of the most influential.

Over the centuries we have given heed to countries and organizations declaring war against each other in order to attain the ultimate ruling power. While taking concern in the differences in war photography of ancient and present world, we find the astonishing transformation that it has gone through. What once had been a not – so – professional hobby has now turned completely professional and the whole world gains by it. Whenever and wherever a war has happened, millions of people thereafter dread any such situations in future. But a war photographer, apparently dies as the world recovers from the aftermath of a war. He is obliged to retreat into taking photographs of any other common event in the society. The photograph of a child shedding a teardrop over a dead body literally makes us realize not only the hardships of that single child but also of the whole society which surrendered to the catastrophic waves of war. Moreover there are photographers of the modern world who are ready to risk their own lives to captures the miseries of war victims and render help to the weary.

Journalists and photographers of the past were equally an industrious group of people. They had to face as many hardships as our

present photographers. It has been recorded that during the wars of the 19th century, photography played a very significant role in conveying to the world the striking reality of a war. *John McCosh*, the first known war photographer captured the images of the Second Sikh War (1848-1849). A new possibility drifted in, as this new technology captured events of war and enhanced public awareness. It was a disadvantage during those times that it was impossible to create images of moving targets or rapid action of combat. So, we are to blame only the technical insufficiency of those times, if actual images-in-action are inaccessible. Moreover, many photographers avoided making pictures of the dead, injured or mutilated soldiers. They were all preoccupied in photographing images of calmness and serenity. And war photographers were less in number. Though journalists and photographers are protected by International conventions of armed warfare, history shows that they are often considered targets by the warring groups. The “Images of Spanish Civil War” is a collection of photos depicting the scenes of the Spanish Civil War, which was published 50 years later from the war’s outbreak. Though these images are a reflection of a terrifying past, it provides a romantic and nostalgic view of those times.

The Gaza – Palestine combat is an ideal context for this comparative study of the old and new war photography. We saw and heard of the unimaginable condition of the people in Gaza. Thousands of innocent people, both young and old surrendered to the unsympathetic pangs of death. And so, this conflict has now been widely referred to as the world's “most intractable conflict “. Many attempts have been made to bring in reconciliation, involving the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. The violence of the conflict, in a region rich in sites of historic, cultural and religious interests worldwide, has been the

object of numerous international conferences dealing with historic rights, security issues and human rights and has been a factor hampering tourism and general access to areas that are hotly contested. Many photographers from all over the world visited the war field and experienced the tremors of the bombing and bloodshed. *Oliver Weiken* and *Andrew Burton*, two very dedicated photographers accompanied the war victims in all their hardships. Their snapshots reflect their commitment to their job and at the same time their tactics in creating an innovative work of art. *Oliver Weiken*, a German photographer who had been working the world cup in Brazil when the fatal abductions of three Israeli teenagers led to the sequential attacks in Israel, says that there was 'no question' that he intended to cover the battle from Gaza.

“It gives you a bit of time to think about what you want to see, what you don't want to see and what you probably will see,” he tells TIME.

Andrew Burton, an American based in New York also covered the revolution in Egypt, the war in Afghanistan and he spent time in South Sudan.

“I mentioned to my editor that I'd be interested in going, I like to cover stories where there's a narrative arc; where there's the possibility of an ending”, he tells TIME .

He hoped for a reconciliation among the countries and he says,” The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for many decades, and I felt this was an important chapter in their story — hopefully one that would move them closer to peace.”

Sreenivasan Jain, an Indian journalist working as a reporter for the NDTV, covered the same incident and his coverage and videos emerged as a remarkable epitome of the condition in Gaza. His report showed Hamas

militants assembling and firing a rocket from deep within a civilian neighborhood in Gaza. Just minutes before the 72-hour ceasefire began, the NDTV crew filmed the smokey aftermath of a rocket fired from that same location. The New York Times writes,

“The video was notable because journalists have captured few images of stealthy guerilla fighters in recent weeks and because it appeared to show Islamist militants using residential area to provide cover while they fire at Israel, putting civilians at risk as homemade rockets fly out and potential retaliatory strikes come back in “.

These photographers are living examples, whose hearts and hands work together for the welfare of our world. While many flee from the thundering sounds of a warship, many photographers track down these sirens and respond effectively to the cries of helpless victims. It is true that photographing is an easier task today and technology is at its pinnacle. But technology renders no help while zooming in and out over a distressful sight. And it is a more challenging task when the photographer is chained to his profession and he is unable to lend a helping hand to the needy. Unlike what photography had meant in the past, it is now closer to our sentiments and thoughts. It is not a superficial way of presentation anymore: what once had been explicit is now accepted as an evocative image.

Today, Newspapers and numerous other magazines helps in promoting photography to a great extent .In “The Determination of New Photographs “,Stuart Hall indicates how the transparency of photography to the real allows the ideological to pervade the visual. Press photographers as much as the newspapers which publish them depend in a fundamental way upon these ‘common- sense constructions’ in order to signify.

“The continuous dialogue between image and culture – not the culture of the photograph’s subject but of the society which produces and consumes the image- offers insights both into the way these photographs transmit meaning to their public , and into the collective imagination of that society at that time”.[cited from “WAR AND PHOTOGRAPHY :A Cultural History” by *Caroline Brothers*]

Although war and photography, has not always been on the same page, we now know how photography speaks to the world. It leaves behind its footprints just as how a war leaves behind the remnants from a mournful past. War is an inescapable and integral part of human nature and somehow it helps in transforming the society and shields the world from stagnancy. And just as that, photography is one among the reasons why compassion and love are not just words recorded in a dictionary. Photojournalists gleefully accept their responsibilities and nurture the need for more dedicated photographers by speaking out their experiences.

Through the words of *Don McCullin*, a photojournalist,

“I have only ever considered myself a photographer - nothing more, nothing less. I went to war and thought of people and pain, not exhibitions and awards. I looked into people's eyes and they would look back and there would be something like a meeting of guilt. As a war photographer, you cannot escape guilt, particularly when the man in front of you who is just about to be shot appeals to you to help him. Photography is not just about photographs; it's about communication. It's not about you. It's not about art. You're there to record. Sometimes, all too rarely, what you record is acts of human decency, of kindness and compassion - I have seen men cradling dying comrades and weeping. But that's the only side of war you will see that is beautiful. “

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Growing Materialism, Seen Through the Movie “Swale”, In Journalism

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“The purpose of journalism is not defined by technology, nor by the journalist or the technique that they employ, rather the principle and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic; the function news plays in the lives of people. These are the words of Bill Novach and Tom Rosenstiel as written in “The Elements of Journalism”. The duty of a journalist is to provide the citizens with the correct information they need, to understand the society better and take the best possible decision. Due to the increasing number of biased news channels and the extreme competition to attain and publish sensational news, have the journalists lost basic human values? The Malayalam movie ‘Swale’ (swantham lekhakan) directed by P. Sukumar best portrays the fact that journalists in the present day has turned out to be materialistic. Loyalty, the most essential quality expected from a journalist, is absent in the entire journalist depicted in the movie, due to peak competition.

This paper attempts to draw the attention of people towards the changing objectives of journalism, due to the extreme competition that they face.

Greater interest in material possessions and comfort than in spiritual values is known as ‘Materialism’. Being materialistic is thinking that money and possession is the most important thing in life. It is often restricted with a value system which regards social status as being determined by wealth. People are concerned with the image they have in the society. This is a great mar in the culture. Culture and media - a fertile

meeting ground for the theories about public and audience, power and subjectivity. Media including the print and visual play an important position in politics, business, education, entertainment which is the key to understand how cultures are shaped. The values of the society as well as the tendencies in the field of media are altering at a remarkable speed. Everything is determined by the need (greed) of the market. The mindset of the crowd is differing. Each and everything is changing according to the alarming swiftness of the society.

P. Sukumar's directorial debut "Swale" clearly depicts the materialistic attitude of the present day journalists. The situation is such that they go to any extent in order to earn a name for themselves as well as the channel or newspaper they work for. The reporters have tended to lose their basic humanity. There is a vital need to point out the materialistic state of mind of these journalists and reporters. The increasing tendency to be materialistic should not be encouraged. Media no longer serves public interest, but a self interest which is the demand rating. The main core of journalism is the sensational new. Now it turned to a competitive level between the reporters.

Newspaper is considered to be a business which is now flourishing in alarming pace. Huge capitals are behind them. The owners of many of the important dailies are also the owners of other profitable business enterprises. The media owner decides the ethics, editorial concepts, aims and other policies. The modern press has dual aspect – it is a mode to express and communicate information and also ideas, it is also the medium in which publication and printing can be carried out only for the profit. Journalism was a committed service decades ago, now it is a mere profit making activity. This is the main reason for the change of people towards

journalism. Nowadays the journalists report politics according to their own needs and interests. They convert the topics from their own perspectives and professional values. Reporters were paid to reveal the truths in the past. Patriotism and pressures were determining factors for the journalists. They were not paid for their patriotism.

Journalists are professional people who always try to work within their code of professional ethics. The journalists face pressure from many sources making them to behave in a way against their choice. The world is an imperfect place and thus the journalists also tend to become imperfect. When a person works under a government-owned news organization it makes it very difficult to report something critically about the government. Most of the ministers also pressurize the journalists to report something in favour for themselves and their party favorable to the government. Advertisers can also bring great pressure. They may threaten to stop advertising if nothing is reported favorable to them. Journalists do not usually earn big money. Therefore they are more vulnerable to bribery in favour of a good story or report. A person's first loyalty is the members of his/her family. Journalists face conflicts in the case of this loyalty also. Pressure by the higher authorities is another reason which results in fights for an exclusive news.

Indian journalism is 230 years old. Two things helped the growth of journalism in the olden years, missionary work and the freedom struggle. The first newspaper is "Calcutta General Advertising". First Indian attributed to have played a role in journalism was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who started a Bengali weekly named "Samvad Kaumudi". In the 19th century it was the time of struggle against colonial rule – time of technological and scientific advancement. In the past, journalism was a

service and the people's involvement was much dedicated towards their job. Job was their first priority. Later television, radio and other media worked together with great team spirit due to the poor financial strength. During the time of Gandhi journalism lost its worth. If the paper loses its worth and value, the reader will lose their confidence in it. In journalism, the voice of journalist was the echo of his or her conscience. Everybody had a trust in the newspaper of the old times. There was neither threat to the journalist nor any fearful incidents because they were very sincere and invested all their talents to their profession. At the time of pre-independence, newspapers and All India Radio were the main media for communication. The entire society followed the path of Gandhiji and obeyed his rules for being a good journalist. Gandhiji attached great importance to moral and ethical standards in journalism. The society got a moral strength to fight for justice. The sole aim of journalism was to serve the country and its people by updating them with the events of the world. In the past decades, newspaper was the main medium for proper education. Journalism had a clear vision on what to do and was committed towards their aim.

The present journalism reports everything that people are interested in rather than everything they should know. Now it is dominated by money and influenced by rich authorities according to their needs. Basic duties like reporting truth and informing people about the side stories are reduced and it is something that cannot be compromised at any cost. Patriotism and pressure were the determining factors. Now journalism and newspapers have become a business and only of materialistic earning. All the journalists should report something which is significant and sound business inputs to the journals for survival. This is a profession where the stakes are

much higher and it is a profession which has the power to create opinion about others and can shape the nation using good and bad in its present and future. Journalists are paid to turn over the truth related to politicians. We all live in the 21st century. Technology plays a major role in journalism. Good journalism is no longer practiced nowadays. It is polluted with advertisements, consultants & corporate sponsors.

Today most of the journalists and newspaper houses are under the murky shadows of untruth and even bribery. Now journalism has become a way of making money and get converted as business. Patriotic feeling of journalists is very less than that of the people in pre-independence period. All the national leaders consider patriotism as humanity. Giving false information through the newspaper and misguiding the people through incorrect news. Sometimes picturing a known person's character in the bad way through the newspapers. It's all because of the peak competitive mind of the reporters and also the owners of different newspapers. They all need sensational news and that news should be revealed first through this paper or that paper. Today media omits the creation of consumer culture in the society. Common people effortlessly become victims of this culture. The power of communication is also misused by the newspapers. If the media took a wrong path, automatically all the others will go through that way and never ever try to think its positive path. Newspapers misguide the common people in the society nowadays.

Modern technological advancement had changed the thoughts of public towards newspaper and journalism. Advertisements have occupied a major portion of the newspapers. Newspapers adopt modern management techniques. This creates an important change in society. Journalism was a service years back, but now it turned as a profit making field by the people.

Attitude towards journalism had also changed but even then they follow. Today newspapers need huge enterprises which need huge investments. With the closing down of the small newspapers, big newspapers started to flourish. Now it is money that matters in the market and media and it is seen as one among an industrial issue. Now the usage of newspapers is reduced and all the people in our society started using the other modes like television, internet, mobile phones, radio etc. mainly for time management. Our present day lifestyle is very busy which shows the influences of technologies and other media in the daily life. Today we hear that journalists and newspaper owners accept money and other gifts for publishing news. Now journalism has turned into a money making business. Yellow journalism also comes under the present journalism because it affects the individuality of a person which causes violation of human rights. The reports of this newspaper may not be true or accurate. They eagerly wait for writing a juicy story related to a political leader or celebrity. Now in the present journalism, a journalist feeds on rumors and they spread lies and insult common people. Newspaper is a big business now, it needs new content. Forced circulation must not become natural circulation in the ordinary case. Free copies are given; they are becoming information packets and study guides. Advertisement field is another level of competitive method.

According to the main directions of the International Federation of Journalists there are few traits to be followed by a journalist. Few of them are as follows:

- A journalist must collect only truthful news and reports.
- He / she must write only what is true to his / her belief knowledge.
- The main objective of a journalist is to avoid baseless criticism.

- A journalist should stick to the rules of the country.
- A journalist must obey the rules of copy rights.
- Another important aim of a journalist is to consider the welfare of the society.

A good reporter is considered as an individual of influence, a spreader of wisdom, a mold of opinions and a shaper of society. Whatever the reporter writes, it touches the lives of other people. With influence of a reporter, just as celebrities' spring up, obscurity and dispossession can come to people. An accountable journalist should never incorporate their personal opinions and should stick to facts. A journalist should always keep in mind that he is just an onlooker and judge his alliances. A journalist should not proceed without evidences. An ideal journalist should always hold on to some professional principles or moral code. A journalist may come closer to a person's private life and other confidential areas, but they should not be betraying the person's confidence. They should not reveal the secrets under any circumstances and should keep their faith. The trustworthiness should become the key to his success and not their materialistic yearning.

Materialistic journalism is portrayed in many Malayalam movies. Now journalism has changed as materialistic vary widely. The movie "Swale" throws light on the pressure faced by the protagonist of the movie, a character named Unni Madhavan which is played by Dileep. He is working as a journalist with "Jana Chintha" daily in the 80's who slogs himself to make both ends meet. The director P. Sukumar shows his idea about the present journalists through this movie. The story mainly goes through the life of Unni Madhavan and the world around him. His wife Vimala, played by Gopika, is pregnant. She slowly starts experiencing

bouts of anxiety and depression because of her husband's erratic work schedules given to him by his head officers of the newspaper which forces Unni Madhavan to stay away from his wife for longer periods of time. He was assigned a task of covering a story on the famous writer Palazhi Sivasankara Pillai's role played by Nedumudi Venu, who is on his death bed. Death is one of the main themes in the movie and everyone is waiting for that moment to report the flash news. There are many reporters like Unni Madhavan. All the reporters have camped outside the writer's house to grab the exclusive news of his death. While this situation goes on, another character of Salim Kumar appears as the official photographer and tells about his way of making the situation into his own, for making profit. He brings one married couple to the place and takes photos of them. It's another method of making money. Unni Madhavan started suffering difficulties with the work assigned to him and is upset about the situation of his wife. At last he decides to take a leave, but it was not possible. The head officers asked him to give up the assigned work. He totally lost the control over his mind. Both his wife and teacher (the writer on the death bed) were important to him. This film shows the competitive mind of the reporters who are waiting for the writer's death so that they get their exclusive news. Due to the illness and lack of improvement in the writer's health condition, reporters tend to think negatively. Finally Unni Madhavan will also decide to remove the oxygen tube of the teacher. It is very difficult for him, but situations made him to think like that. With all strength and courage he reaches this place to remove the tube. But when he reaches there, already another reporter (character played by Asokan) had removed the oxygen tube. All of them are facing different problems; and their minds arrive at a conclusion that all their problems could be solved by

the death of this writer. All are forced to do the assigned job by forgetting their personal needs and issues. But in this world of peak competition, all reporters are found to do such deeds in their life. The director has clearly shown the materialistic mind set of people who makes it exclusive news without mourning over the death of a human being, for increasing their profit. Another movie called “Run Baby Run” directed by Joshiy is also telling about the materialistic aspect of journalism. Nowadays, the journalists are creating and using certain issues for getting news for their channel. They want to increase their channel’s TRP rating and newspaper’s circulation rating than other newspapers and channels. It is because of the competitive attitude of people, that now they consider newspaper as a business and profit making source. To get good rating for newspaper, the reporter and the owners of the newspaper are ready to do whatever it takes.

Earlier, journalism was considered as a weapon to fight against the atrocities and evils in the society. Now it is not so. Unbiased, uncongenial, fair reports are the necessity of the time. Cooked-up stories should not be encouraged. Journalism should lead to the building up of a healthier society. Ethical journalism will boost the honour or integrity of the journalist as well as the newspaper or channel. Newspaper has always been the prime channel or mode of a journalist since the 18th century, with magazines and reviews added in the 19th century, radio and television in the 20th century and now in the 21st century, it is the extensive web of Internet. Bill Novach and Tom Rosentiel said in “The Elements of Journalism”:

“The purpose of journalism is not defined by journalist or the technique they employ. Rather the principle and purpose of journalism are

defined by something more basic; the function news plays in the lives of people”

Journalists tends to become materialistic as there are more news agencies than earlier and also there is abundance in mobile news, independent writers, bloggers, leaking news stories without subscription which is the reason for the increasing competition. Journalism is all about collecting information and disseminating the fact and figures to the public via print, television and Internet. Journalists should present the news in a manner that is useful, informative and thought provoking.

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A Content Analysis of the Changes in Margamkali and Its Present Scenario

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Margamkali is the Folk dance that originated amongst the Syrian Christians of Kerala. The term Margamkali means: The play of the way. The term margam is a biblically oriented term which has a reference from the Book of Acts. In the context of Christianity, it depicts the faith and religion where the story of Christ and Christianity is portrayed. The songs of Margamkali is themed on Syriac apocryphal called Acts of Thomas

The Acts of Thomas which was written in the early part of the third century consists of the Apostolate of St.Thomas, a disciple of Jesus Christ and his martyrdom in India. This book which was written in the favour of the pilgrims who came to visit the Shrine of St.Thomas in the basilica of Edessa, where the relics of the saint was kept.

The Malayalam rendering of the story of St .Thomas was adapted to the Kerala situation. The King of Chozha empire situated in South India who wanted to get a skilled carpenter to build a beautiful palace for himself in par with Solomons temple in Jerusalem. The king send his minister to Jerusalem where Jesus appeared and entrusted Thomas with the task of building the palace. Instead of building the earthly palace, the apostle helped the poor with the resources given to him by the king and preached “the way” of Lord Jesus to the people. The story continues with how the people accepted the way of Christ, and how because of “the way”, St. Thomas was persecuted and martyred.

Knanaya Christians, one of the ancient congregation of the Christianity in India have the sole credit in building this folk form. Even Though

Margamkali is in vogue among the Syrian Christians of Kerala, a close and critical observation shows that the practise and propagation of Margamkali were amongst the Knanites.

Margamkali has a legacy of more than 500 years. The story of St. Thomas was passed down to generations in the form of songs which also acquired dance form which entertained and educated people. The information on the existence of Margamkali is seen in the sculptures at the bottom of the famous “Granite Cross “in Kadutharuthi, Kerala which is known to have been blessed in 1559.(Fr. Jacob Vellian .2001)

The performance of Margamkali is associated with certain style and practise. 12 players stand in a circle around a lighted bronze lamb symbolizing Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles. The theme of Margamkali is the story telling of the life, missionary work and martyrdom of St Thomas.

Margam kali is generally performed on the occasion of reception of eminent person of Church, parish festivals, Knanite Wedding celebrations and so on. The text of Margamkali song consisting of 450 lines which is divided into 14 strophes. It contains syriac and tamil words which indicates its antiquity. It was usually performed by men.(Fr. Jacob Vellian ,2012)

A good part of the lyrics of Margam kali goes to the sixteenth century and few parts like the initial prayer song Vandana Gaanam antedate this period.

The researcher will adopt the method of content analysis and in depth interviews with the professional MargamKali experts and folklore researchers in Kerala. Interview with the Margam kali expert from the Knanaya community in Kerala will serve a meaningful foundation for the research. The researcher also reviewed available literature and has taken a qualitative method for the research.

The research intends to find out the changes happened to Margamkali which has a tradition of many centuries. The researcher intends to explore and verify the significant changes happened to this folk form after the attempt to revive it from fading away.

Cultural activities in rural areas which earlier based on the participation of the entire village or local community have now increasingly become associative and entrepreneurial. Although, they are now being more efficiently organized, it lost its age old participatory character at the same time. This has been happening to local cultures in most parts of the country even before globalization process gained policy support and brought in possibilities of new dimensions of inter cultural contacts through new modes of communication and market openings.(Singh,2000)

Folk lore dances like Margamkali, unless community or other cultural agency supports it, can languish or even die out. Since financial support was given to the teachers to maintain it, it lost its popularity in the long run.(Vellian,2012)

Folk media represents the people in their natural habitat, with all their contradictions and multifarious activities. It gives a glimpse of their style of speech, music, dance, dress and wisdom. It contains a rich store of mythological heroes, medieval romances, chivalric tales, social customs, beliefs, and legends. In order to understand the colourful diversity and unity of India, it is important to see the folk theatre in its natural settings. Folk Dances India is a land of diverse cultures and traditions. Each region of the country has a unique culture, which is also prominently visible in its various art forms. Almost all the regions of the country have their specific folk music and dance, which proves to be a wonderful way of expression of

their community and its traditions. Though these folk dances are not as complex as the classical dance forms, they are very beautiful, because of the essence of rawness in them. The folk dances of any community are performed on almost every special occasion and festival, to express elation and joy. These dances are also considered to be auspicious by many of the tribal communities in the country.

Folk arts are the products of folkways where a culture of the society is associated. People live and die with folk arts, hence, they become easy to understand and decode. The common masses in a society will find it easy to understand because of their nature of origin. This phenomenon of mass media is exploited by several government and non-government organizations for their individual and common purposes. Traditional folk media includes folk dance, folk drama, folk songs, and puppetry and various other indigenous performances. Traditional folk media which is the cultural symbol of society is also known as performance of the masses. Most of these performances correspond with the changing time pattern. This is the distinct quality of folk media which makes it different. Folk forms borrow elements from different platforms without any prejudice and break every barrier to reach the audience. They communicate within the terms and conditions of the society. This phenomenon makes it participatory as people identify with it and it gives an opportunity to everyone to take an active part. No special skill is required in its operation and even an ordinary person can learn and contribute in its functioning. Its participatory nature gives it an edge over rest of the mass media. Apart from audio-visual quality folk media's effectiveness rests heavily on its unique method of communication (Garhis, 1966).

The practitioners in these fields mostly come from illiterate as well as socially backward groups or occupational communities. They will lose their right to various traditional creations before they even become aware of the new realities. The present situation has arisen due to the evolution of new electronic media like cassettes, CDs, film, videos, albums, multimedia programmes, digital photography, television, radio, and many other replicable scientific gadgets. All these are linked to the global market. (Kothari, 2004)

A populist commercial view is that, by patronizing traditional forms of arts and crafts, they are upholding the society through the mass media. The society demands that a proper commercial share should come to it in concrete form. The present proliferation of broadcast mediums flourishing industry of audio-video recording, web and internet.

A news story from the National Daily the Hindu shows the effort to preserve the purity of Margamkali by conducting a training programme for various teachers across Kerala. The effort is to pass on the authenticity of the folk form to the others.

- The dance starts with a Vandanaganam(invocation song). Vandana Ganam made mandatory for all performance and this is to invoke prayer mode to the performance. The steps are structured to favour the mood.(Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)

The song goes like this:

Meykanintha piliyumayil
melthonthum Meniyum, tei tei
Pitinha daendum kayum meyum
Enmanneykum vazhkave tei tei...

The overall meaning confers to the wish of the Knanite Christians to stay together as a group for which they extract the help of St Thomas. It invokes the presence of Christ in the venue of performance. (Fr Jacob Vellian, 2011,p.15).

The lyrics of the songs are poetic in structure. Initial parts of the lyrics follow an oriental music or a Suriyani style and each line ends with Karnatic music style. The lyrics contain both syriac and tamil words apart from malayalam, which were included in its composition.(Jacob Vellian,2012, p.11)

- Only 6 - 10 minutes are taken for the performance. Only few stanzas are taken for the performance according to the convenience. No order in following the strophes one after the other.
- Margamkali is performed by both men and women. It was a male dance Performance. It is introduced to women to perpetuate it. After introducing it into Youth festivals, it is seen that most group performances are that of women. 7 members participate including the singer even though the number varies for each performance. The dance was usually performed by 12 members usually representing the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. Now it is changed to 7 members for competitions and other purposes. One member will sing the songs and other dancers will sing along with them. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)
- The basic form of dance is circular where the dancers move in circle. Round dance is signifying the Christian expression of togetherness. Basically Margamkali followed a south Indian choreographic structure. The performers move clockwise and anticlockwise around the Lamp which is placed at the centre. It does not conform to the meaning of the lyrics. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)

- A brass lamp with 12 wicks is placed in the centre of the Performing area. In the earlier history of Margamkali, students used to take formal training from the Kalari or the learning centre. After the training, the first performance of the dance takes place on an auspicious day in the church premises. The Aashaan or the teacher will approach the lamp barefoot and light all the wicks. The students take blessing from the Aashaan by touching his feet which is a Hindu tradition. Now this tradition is not followed. One of the dancers will light the lamp and sing the song. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)
- Elathalam (Jallara) which is the only instrument played during the performance. The pace and pitch of the song increases along with the steps of the dance, which goes according to the pace of the instrument. This instrument serves the purpose of a timer. No other instruments are encouraged for the performance and no recorded music is played during the performance. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)
- The dress used for Margamkali is the traditional Syrian Christian attire. Men wear mundu and thorthu. Red cloth belt around waist is recently introduced to ensure tightness. Men wear thorthu which is tied around the head as a headdress. Thorthu signifies nobility. Women wear pudava (white double mundu), panichatta (decorated top for women), kunuku (a one inch golden earring at the top of the ear), kasumala (necklace with coin pendants), silken kavani (thorthu) and specific hair style called mayikettu, golden painted bracelets and silver anklets. The dress code is maintained for all the performances. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013.)

The songs of Margamkali does not have an author in particular. Traditionally handed down lyrics are modified from time to time by the teachers of Margamkali. (Fr Jacob Vellian, 2011, p.12).

- Margamkali is now staged as a competitive item in youth festivals and reality shows in Kerala which is the most visible platform of the performance. In the earlier days Margamkali was confined to the religious and societal platform of Knanaya Christians and Syrian Christians. Even now it is performed by the Syrian Christians in Kerala. It has grown to become a part and parcel of Kerala culture even though it projects a communal support. (Fr. Jacob Vellian, Personal Interview, December, 31, 2013).

Introducing Margamkali as a competitive item in youth festivals and opening the dance floor for women has perpetuated the folk form and regained its popularity. The government had taken measures to bring the original art form back to the stage by providing funds to set up the All India Margamkali Institute, Hadusa, to revitalize, systemize and propagate folk forms in Kerala. Margamkali is recognised as the folk dance of Kerala as well as India.

In Knanite Community History and culture by Fr. Jacob Vellian he says Folk lore dances like Margamkali, unless community or other cultural agency supports it, can languish or even die out. Since financial support was not given to the teachers to maintain it, it lost its popularity in the long run. In order to perpetuate this folk form it was introduced to women and measures were taken to introduce Margamkali in Youth festival. This concept is relatively explained in Balwant Garhgi's Folk Theatre of India. Traditional folk media which is the cultural symbol of society is also known as performance of the masses where most of these performances

correspond with the changing time pattern. This is the distinct quality of folk media which makes it different. The participatory nature of these folk forms makes people identify with it and it gives an opportunity to everyone to take an active part. No special skill is required in its operation and even an ordinary person can learn and contribute in its functioning in the long run.

Dr. Shaji Jacob, Associate Professor at Sri Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kerala, (telephone interview, June 14,2014), says Folk forms like Margamkali will have a future only by promoting it as a religious or caste art because art by itself is a market culture at present and folk arts have no market value. More over there is a communal colour and taste in every folk art forms now. This is evident through the communal interest in propagating this folk form.

Audio cassettes and videos are released to instruct and guide those who wanted to train in Margamkali yet people have attempted to materialize this form in a trivial way to bring in convenience.

With the evolution of broadcast mediums, the folk forms were losing its popularity and its authenticity. People have come up with suggestions to materialize this art form by taking the copyrights. However these suggestions were not taken to serious considerations as the folk form cannot risk on losing its originality except for the changes which were made to perpetuate this folk form. This is explained in Kamal Kotharis essay, Copyright of folk and indigenous art forms - Need for accountability. This situation at present has arisen due to the evolution of new electronic media like cassettes, CDs, film, videos, albums, multimedia programmes, digital photography, television, radio, and many other replicable scientific gadgets. All these are linked to the global market and he7.

Margamkali is one of the major Christian folklores of Kerala. The art form is regaining its popularity after making it an item for youth competitions. Women participants are more compared to men at the present. Even women professional trainers are taking the place of men to propagate this folk form. Margamkali has become a means of income to many trainers after introducing it in Youth festivals. Malayalam movies like *lelam* , *Sphadikam* that has Christian wedding scenes, show the Margamkali performance by women to add the significance. Only when a powerful cultural groups or community supports it, folk forms like Margamkali sustain. Margamkali can remain as a popular medium for mass communication that can be used to identify Christian culture and messages. Margamkali, which was confined within the platforms of Syrian Christians have moved outside from its communal and societal walls and have become a part and parcel of Kerala culture and is performed worldwide leading to the losing popularity of original folk forms.

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