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"ONLINE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: A STUDY ON INTERNET AND INDIAN PUBLIC SPHERE"
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Introduction

Background of the study

The communication scenario around the world is changing in a fast manner. The arrival of new technologies, sophisticated digital devices and novel concepts has given pace to this process of information flow. Along with this technological explosion, the media content also have changed a lot. The existing 'Murdochisation' (Thussu, 2006) , Convergence and 'Transnational Conglomeration' of mainstream media have ignited debates on democracy, the nation-state, citizenship and the role and functions of media. Moreover, the politics of globalisation which altered the power and state of functioning of the governments is also evident before us in many forms. In the midst of this capitalist intervention in states all over the world, it is relevant to think about the role of media in a democratic system.

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

Opinion leaders and influencers preferred mass media over traditional way of public speaking and writing (McKee, 2009). The public gets more influenced by mass media than

they think. This influential function of mass media is exploited by promoters and advertisers for their commercial benefits. On other hand, media needed support of such power centres for sustainment. In such case, there is no doubt that media houses need to rely on content sponsored from such power centres. This will also lead to evade the voices of unheard. Thus, the public sphere and forum gets diluted and need for a counter-public occurs.

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

The advent in the field of New Media technologies has prompted the academic community around the world to revisit the varying socio-political scenario of the societies in various countries. The new media technologies with its innate capabilities like radically decentralised architecture, interactivity, lightning speed etc. have created a new level of consciousness in the field of media communication. When compared to the traditional mass media forms, which are traditionally under gate keeping process, the new media can contribute much to the enhancement of public sphere. It can be an alternative media form to recapture the public sphere from its current commercial, political and other various kinds of biases.

The new media discourses have impacted profoundly in almost all the realms of contemporary social life. Culture, Politics, Law, Literature, Art, Economic order, lifestyle etc. are some of the fields where the new technologies has its persistent presence. New media technologies like internet and mobile telephony has extended the personal freedom to new heights where the user has attained spaces of his/her own.

Digital Public Sphere

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

technology and liberated network policies, internet or digital space helped to fill the gap of that alternative medium.

Problem formulation

The heinous incident of a gang rape happened in Delhi in 2012 created ripples in the social sphere. The rape and the subsequent death of a Physiotherapy student from Delhi made turbulent responses in the country in general and the capital city in specific. Thousands of youth gathered in the squares and streets of New Delhi proclaiming solidarity with the victim and demanding the arrests and punishment to the accused.

Soon after the gang rape was reported over the media, social media became a crucial platform for the mass mobilization. Activists those who were in the forefront used the major social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and various messenger services. Thousands of people were informed and mobilized with the rapid sharing over new media. For this, activists adopted several approaches to nomenclature to mobilize and energize participants. Some activists tagged content with generic subject matter headings, which functioned much like common search terms, as in the case of the #delhirapecase or #delhigangrape hashtags (Losh, 2014). The emancipatory potential of new media have been the major feature of the anti-rape movement which often called as the 'Arab Spring' of India. By bringing the discourse of freedom, sexuality, choice and desire into the public realm – in the streets and through social media – this agitation

forced the government to expand its legal definition of rape, introducing harsher punishment for rapists and criminalizing stalking and voyeurism (Kurien, 2018). The incident happened to be a tipping point for the emergence of cyber feminist era in India which had its strong presence in the cyberspace through various online initiatives, social media and other platforms.

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

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

about the swift ouster of many men in positions of power both in the United States and, as it spread, around the world (Wikipedia, 2017). The campaign was swiftly adapted into #BalanceTonPorc, #YoTambien, #Ana_kaman and many others all over the world.

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

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

Quest for a revamped public sphere and democratic idles became common in the intellectual as well as academic circles. In this era, main stream Indian print and broadcast media, inadequately contributes to the empowerment of public sphere which is an integral part of any functioning democracy. The public sphere, which is ideally a free realm of social life, is getting adulterated due to commercial interests, religiosity and trivial political goals in India.

Only a strong public sphere, which is independent of all sorts of pressures and interests, can strengthen the democracy. With its innate technological capabilities, the internet or the new digital media possesses the capabilities for the revival of public sphere in India.

Online media boosts discourses, both deliberative and casual, on varied topics and provide space for every user to voice users' opinion irrespective of the social, cultural, economic and political status. Social networking sites, instant messenger services and blogs play crucial role in the modern information sphere and the information processing system. They could well be seen as modern public sphere.

The modern public sphere has strong bindings on the cyber space and its activities. The absence of a gatekeeper provides freedom in communication and equity in participation. Social media responses and content often sets agenda for other media to follow on. Strong socio-cultural, economic and political reasons can be seen behind a large number of online initiatives.

Here, the major problem which is being addressed by the researcher is the shrinking public sphere of India. Such a situation could impact much on the quality of the democracy being practiced in this country. The aspects like free speech, access to the content creation and the existence of an expressive space is being tested against the existing media climate.

Here, the study focuses on the potential of internet technologies and platforms in addressing the problems faced by the subaltern sections of the society. The subaltern status means a subordinate status. In our society, despite of the social reforms happening over decades of independence, large sections of people are still being facing this sort of social subordination in their daily lives. Women, Transgenders, Dalits, Children, Low level workers

etc. are some of the examples of subaltern community who faces social discrimination at different levels. Though, the reasons for such subordinations are varied, their experiences have similarities in general. The subaltern status should be perceived in a historic standpoint and it has strong connections with the acquired cultural capital woven from the bourgeois past. The public sphere too is highly enmeshed with the dominant notions of patriarchy and the traditional mass media also serves to strengthen such a sphere.

This study intends to see the internet and other social media platforms as a liberating space which can reinforce the voice of the subaltern and strengthen a democratic public sphere. Here, the focus is on the women community and their online interactions. The online deliberations of the women participants through various social media channels are analysed for the instances of emergence of a new age online subaltern digital public sphere.

Relevance of the research Problem

. The study 'ONLINE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: A STUDY ON INTERNET AND INDIAN PUBLIC SPHERE' aims at analysing the potential of the Internet in democratizing the public sphere. The study has its focus on the distinct features of the online media, like costless reproduction, instantaneous dissemination, interactivity, hyper-textuality and radical decentralisation in the content creation, which help in regaining or reclaiming the public sphere. As a medium of the future, the studies on internet and the aspects of democracy and society have boundless significance.

• **Interdisciplinary relevance**

The study is probing into the aspects of New Media, Democracy, Nation State, Citizenship, Public Sphere, Gender issues etc., it shares the common platform spanning Media Studies, Political Science, Sociology and Social Psychology.

Objectives

1. To understand Internet as an alternative media in Indian context

2. To map the online media initiatives in promoting a democratic sphere for the subaltern sections of the society like women, dalits, transgender etc.

3. To find the potentials and possibilities of internet in democratizing Indian public sphere

4. To explore whether internet can act as a heterotopia, a space that function in non-hegemonic conditions.

Hypothesis

Internet or the new online digital media possesses the potentials for the revival of the public sphere in India through the inclusive, democratic nature of communication.

• **Review of Research and Development in the Subject:**

International status

There have been major studies in this field since the inception and spreading of World Wide Web. Works of Vincent Miller, Christian Fuchs, Lev Manovich, Lincoln James Dahlberg provide some guiding notions in the field of New Media studies. The works of Jurgen Habermas of Frankfurt School in the elaboration of Public Sphere and Communicative action has been critical in this study. Douglas Kellner and Manuel Castelles are two critical theorists whom the study relies upon. They are known for their work exploring the potentials of new media. They have contributed important studies of alter globalization processes, and has always been concerned with counter-hegemonic movements and alternative cultural expressions in the name of a more radically democratic society. Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, Rockefeller Foundation and Social Science Research Council, Intercommunication Center in Tokyo, MIT are some leading institutions now engaged in New Media Research.

Works of theorists like Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge were significant in conceptualising the post habermasian public sphere. Their studies focussed mainly on the theory of proletarian public sphere. Studies by Gayathri Spivak, Donna Harraway, Rita Felski, Nancy Fraser etc. are also significant in analysing the diversified notions on public sphere. Fraser's conceptions on Subaltern Public became a major step forward in subaltern studies.

National Status

In India, the new media related studies are in the introductory phase as our media surrounding is still dominated by the conventional media forms. Institutions like Internet Democracy.in, Society for Knowledge Commons, Centre for Internet and Society, Free Software Movement of India, Wiki Commons etc. are seriously engaged in the New Media research and have provided significant works in the sociological aspects of new media.

Independent initiatives like the hoot.org created under the auspices of Media Foundation, which is based in New Delhi, are very much into internet research. There are also websites like Kafila.online which provides serious insights into diverse social issues. Websites like kafila.online and thewire.in acts as an online repository of comments and hashtag posts. When considering the online feminist initiatives, feminisminindia.com provides serious research insights into the women related issues in India. There are many other websites like www.womensweb.in, theindianfeminist.com and blogs like www.shesays.in, http://gendermatters.in/, http://theladiesfinger.com/ etc are also very much functional in the field of internet feminist research in India. A significant online study named "Violence" Online in India: Cybercrimes against Women and Minorities on Social Media was carried out by Japleen Pasricha under Feminism in India.com. The study has its focus mainly on the online abuse of women internet users and one of the key finding of the study was online abuse is affecting a major portion of the women users and there is no support mechanism for them to either respond or react.

The study uses multiple methods to probe into the aspects of democratic communication and public sphere in India. Major methods used are online discourse analysis of the web contents, online survey and expert interviews. Next chapter elaborates the methods and research design.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

Internet based communication has become a popular method. Vast amount of data which includes text, pictures and video are getting uploaded through various web platforms like websites, blogs, social media etc. The increased penetration of smart mobile phones has made significant changes in the consumption and usage patterns of internet in India. In 2017, 23.93 percent of the population accessed the internet from their mobile phone. This figure is expected to grow to 34.85 percent in 2022 (Statista, 2018). The vastness of the internet transactions have made it difficult for the researcher to narrow down the research and make it feasible as per the research objectives.

The study had its focus mainly on the issues related to gender identity. For this, cases have selected based on both the online and offline popularity. Although the popularity definition covers the qualifier as the most discussed topic, it would be of great shortcoming if we generalise the results considering the immense diversity of Indian society. Also, the issues relating to internet like anonymity, data credibility, fake identities, fake responses etc. were also some hindering issues.

When we look into the scope of this study, we can very well say that the results and insights gained through the study could serve as groundwork on the use and impact of internet in India with special emphasis on strengthening democracy and public sphere. Further studies on the impact of internet platforms like social media, blogs and websites can be done in future. More deliberations are possible considering the status of subaltern sections of the society in future.

Due to constrain related to time and resources, the researcher have limited the study to the women among the subaltern sections of the society. More areas are to be probed in this regard. So this study could act as a foundation for further studies on impact of internet on other subaltern sections like transgender, Dalit of the society in reclaiming the communication and public sphere.

Again, here in this study, the major internet social media like Facebook and Twitter and messenger service Whatsapp were selected for study. There are many other internet platforms like blogs, websites, social media like YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, My Space etc. are there to further the analysis. Great scope is therefore there to improve the study both on quantitative and qualitative basis. This study will prove to be an initiator towards the inspection of social media and other networks.

While conducting the survey method, the limitation faced was relating to the analysis of responses. Though, there was a mix of objective and subjective questions, many of the

respondents failed to register their views in a discursive manner, leaving behind very short responses, often in one word, for the subjective questions. This happened to be a problem in the analysis phase.

Disposition of the study

This section is intended to provide the nature of the study through summary of the chapters.

CHAPTER 2 **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology chapter explains the choice of literature and briefly describes the main sources. It also provides information on the methods used in the study, their merits and demerits.

CHAPTER 3 **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter provides notions and explanation of main concepts and theories, namely Public Sphere, Democracy, Digital Public Sphere, Counter Public Sphere, Cyber Feminism etc. To make it easy for the reader to see the logic, the previous section is set as a basis for the following one.

CHAPTER 4 **RESULTS**

In this chapter, the analysis and results of the study are presented in several sections depending on the method used analysis.

CHAPTER 5 **CONCLUSION** AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the findings of the study by mentioning the respective theories once

again.

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

Literature

As part of the task in formulating the theoretical framework for my study, I had studied works by eminent academics in the area of research. My review was mainly directed to books and articles (both online and offline) published in the area of media studies, new media, communication and democracy.

I have relied upon massively on the phenomenal work The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1991) by German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas. This book is a great tool in analysing the evolutionary aspects of public sphere in Europe. Regarding the critical appreciation of Habermasian public sphere, Nancy Fraser's work on subaltern counter public provided the theoretical insights to this study. Nancy Fraser, through her work 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' (1990), revised the views on subalternity. She elaborated the lapses of Habermasian bourgeoisie public sphere and emancipated the counter discursive spaces occupied by the subaltern sections of the society. Another significant book to name is Christian Fusch's Social Media (2013). The book provided critical visions on the social media. Study of Lincoln James Dahlberg on the impact of online discourses in enhancing deliberative democracy happened to be helpful for me in understanding the nuances of the democracy and its applications. Robert Dahl's Polyarchy (1971), and R.Sclove's Democracy and Technology (1995) were

furthered my awareness about democratic practices. Rajani Kothari's Rethinking Democracy (2005) and S.K Datta Ray's India – Country Report in Media and Democracy in Asia (2000) provided an India-specific view on democracy and its contemporary discontents.

I have relied on two books namely, Conducting Research Literature Reviews From Internet to the Paper (2014) by Arlene Frank and Web Social Science (2013) by Reobert Ackland for the methodological understanding.

Other major literature which made this study authentic and objective are the literature published through various news media like news reports, comments and social reviews by eminent journalists, academics and social activists on a number of incidents, specifically Delhi rape case. Responses from the social media forums like group posts, comments, tweets were also taken as literature for the study. Prominent part of the social media data is based on the responses on experiences by the admins and members of the groups who have participated in the online protests and subsequent activities.

Online Discourse Analysis

In general, discourse means the various forms of communications. It is the totality of codified language (vocabulary) used in a given field of intellectual enquiry and of social practice, such as legal discourse, medical discourse, religious discourse, et cetera (Marks,2001). Each sort of discourse probes deeper into the language and context, exceeding the semantics of the text.

Michael Foucault describes discourse as an entity of sequences, of signs, in that they are enouncements (*énoncés*), statements in conversation (Foucault, 1969). Being the statements from a subject at a given social position, discourses have great significance in analysing the socio-political layers behind the text.

Discourse analysis is an approach to analyse the semiotic content of the language. It can be used to decipher the aural, visual, written or graphic content of a text. The objects of discourse analysis (discourse, writing, conversation, communicative event) are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, propositions, speech, or turns-at-talk (Wikipedia). In humanities and social sciences, Discourse analysis is widely used to make out embedded meanings from texts emanating from various contexts. Contrary to much of traditional linguistics, discourse analysts not only study language use 'beyond the sentence boundary' but also prefer to analyze 'naturally occurring' language use, not invented examples (*www.linguisticsociety.org*).

Online discourse analysis uses the methods of DA to analyse the online texts. A convergent media like internet provides larger scope for DA as it transmits all forms of media content. One major aspect that makes the online discourses attractive for analysis is the real time, synchronous, interactive nature of communication enabled via group chats, messenger services and other social media platforms. Here in this study, the texts from the social media, blogs and websites are selected for analysis. The whole analysis is based on the political

discourse analysis method. Among the various themes under DA, the relations between text and context and between discourse and power have been used in this study.

Several online groups were formed after the Delhi rape incident 2012 through platforms like facebook and twitter. The community discussion threads and tweets were used for online discourse analysis. 12 blogs were taken for study, out of them 6 were of independent bloggers and the rest 6 were of feminist organisations. The blogs were taken on the basis of their popularity and the consistency factor.

The discussions taken over whatsapp, an instant messenger were also considered for the study because of the factors like instantaneity and communicative immediacy. Groups where the researcher himself was a member were taken for the analysis as it adds an online ethnographic experience to the research.

Quantitative Method

Quantitative research also has been used for the study. An online questionnaire was published over google forms and shared among the social media platforms asking for voluntary participation from the public. The questionnaire was circulated among the various groups, friends, friends of friends in Facebook, whatsapp groups, various twitter handles etc. (the questionnaire can be found at https://goo.gl/forms/VylTYNCK074I2FZB3). Majority of the respondents are youngsters who have regular social media presence. The survey was conducted in a confidential manner. Quantitative data is not a final word in analysis social

issues with multiple dimensions. But the survey method provided a good picture in understanding many aspects like participants attitude towards the online communication media, their preferences, available best medium to communicate etc.

Also, quantitative assessment of the Facebook discussion threads were considered for assessing the user engagement, currency of the topic, reach of the issue and user responsiveness. This helped a lot in selecting the events for analysis.

Online Analysis of Portals

Content analysis is a method which can be used for the effective analysis of media text. Online content analysis or online textual analysis refers to a collection of research techniques used to describe and make inferences about online material through systematic coding and interpretation (Wikipedia, 2018). For internet based texts, online content analysis is an efficient tool for interpretation and analysis. Berelson's definition provides an underlying basis for textual analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Krippendorff, 2012). While content analysis is often quantitative, researchers conceptualize the technique as inherently mixed methods because textual coding requires a high degree of qualitative interpretation (van Selm, Jankowski, 2005). Kerlinger's (2000) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

Harold D Lasswell and Bernard Berelson were pioneers in the method of analysing the content of the media. Lass well used this method for the analysis of propaganda. Content analysis became popular in analysing various media texts like news stories, radio productions, movies, and advertisements etc. in the wake of commercialisation of mass media.

With the advancement in the internet based online communications, techniques of content analysis have been applied and incorporated in online research also. In web content analysis, the traditional techniques employed in CA as well as non- traditional techniques are used.

As Krippendrof (1980) writes, the content analysis consists of steps like the formulation of the hypothesis, sample selection, definition of categories for coding, reliability checking of the codes after the content coding and data analysis and interpretation.

Here for this study, content analysis is used for the analysis of the contents related to women in Malayalam portal Utharakalam.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SPHERE

Public Sphere

In his phenomenal work, German philosopher Jurgen Habermas states that:

> The public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be *eo ipso* excluded was less than merely incomplete; it was not a public sphere at all.
>
> (Habermas, 1989, p. 85)

For the growth and nourishment of publics sphere, he suggests three institutional criteria.

1. Public sphere should develop as an integral outcome of the debate about a realm of common interest.

2. It should be seen as a new space for exchange of ideas for many who has never ever been included for such a process.

3. As the last criterion, suggested that ideas presented in the public sphere are considered on the basis of their merits, disregarding social status. According to him, universal access to the public sphere from all classes of people is the main thing that matters.

A public sphere can be seen as a space distinct from both the state and the market. It is that domain of our social life in which such things as public opinion can be formed. It

echoes the core concepts of freedom in democratic society and freedom from commoditization of life. But, when analysing the scene in India, the existence of such a public sphere is a pertinent question. The public sphere of India (if one such exists) is enmeshed with the inputs from commercial advertisements, entertainment, religiosity and petty political agendas. The mainstream media including the print and broadcast media, fail to democratize the public communication act thus weakening the public sphere of this great society. Through the selective representation, the traditional media bypasses the voice of the underprivileged and the weaker sections of the society. Throughout the ages, our mainstream media has created a favourable climate for the creation of a public sphere which is highly elitist, parochial, exclusive and patriarchal.

Media has a significant role in the working of the democracies. At the political level, evolution towards a democracy needs a 'public sphere' and it ensures every citizen's participation in the democratic process as he/she is getting a space for discussion and deliberation on the matters concerning his society. It is the very act of communicative participation guarantees his/her political participation. The act of communication cannot be negated to just an act of passing trivial information and entertainment. Communication is essentially a political activity which thrives on the notions of plurality and inclusiveness as far a prospective democracy is concerned.

German philosopher Jurgen Habermas viewed the ideal public sphere as being a space distinct from both the state and the market where citizens could exchange views on matters of

importance to the common good, so that public opinion could be formed. (Habermas, 1989).

Habermas traced the origins of our current media world in the development of this so called

democratic public sphere from the seventeenth century. In his study, The Structural

Transformation of the Public Sphere, which was published in 1962, he argued that economic

independence provided by private property contributed a lot in the formation of an

autonomous arena of public debate. Through the work, he analysed the historical genesis of

the public sphere, followed by an account of the structural change of the public sphere in the

contemporary era. ie. From the era of liberal democracy to an era which is experiencing the

rise of state capitalism, the culture and entertainment industries, and the giant economy's

proliferation in public life. (Calhoun, 1992). Eventually, big economic and governmental

agencies took over and started controlling the media as well as the public sphere, while

citizens became passive and followed the priorities projected by this nexus. Even the

democratic governments of third world countries like India, many a times, faced the criticism

of being a crony-capitalistic structure promoting the interests of multinational and national

corporate giants. The rampant takeovers, mergers and acquisitions in the media sector proved

to be fatal to the interests of democratic communication. Currently, major media houses in

India have international funding and economic patronage.

New media and subaltern studies have become a major area in international academic

sphere. Critical reflections on Habermasian Public sphere from various traditions have

arrived. More diversified notions on Publics and various counter publics intensified the discourse.

Criticism on Habermasian public sphere by his student Oscar Negt and his associate Alexander Kluge were significant to begin with. They were focusing on the fallibility and vulnerability of the bourgeoisie public sphere citing the historical context under Nazi regime. Kluge elucidates this as:

Our point of departure always remains the public sphere of 1933 that could be conquered by the National Socialists. This must be fortified in different ways so that it cannot be conquered. If the public sphere, that is, the container for the political, was inadequate and therefore conquered by the Nazis, then it is useless to study the achievements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to repeat and defend the old conception of the public sphere, as Habermas does, for no moral resistance was objectively possible within it. (Alexander Kluge, 42).

Negt and Kluge worked for a "Proletarian Public Sphere" theory which is more inclusive, non- bureaucratic, non-diplomatic and movement-performance based levels of human life.

Nancy Fraser, coining the term from Gayatri Spivak's "subaltern" and Rita Felski's "counterpublic", argues that counterpublics are formed as a response to the exclusions of the dominant publics and that their existence better promotes the ideal of participatory parity (Kampourakis, 2016). As per Fraser, the bourgeoisie public sphere conceptualised by

Habermas had significant social exclusions. It was conceived and legitimized primarily as masculine and elitist. The significant exclusions were women and the working class. These excluded groups tried to form competing counter publics (Ryan.M,1990).

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

Feminism, Indian women and Online Media

Indian feminism is hardly a half century old. Though it is not a popular concept even in the women community in India, it could dare the centuries old patriarchy existing here. Women have come out to question the discrepancies in the social sphere like violence against

women, unequal wealth distribution relating kinship, political representation, discriminatory religious practices etc. broadly under the influence of feminist discourses and actions.

The nature of Indian feminism now has arrived in such an inclusive fashion where it purports to embrace many movements under this umbrella. It has evolved to a platform where not only women's groups are interacting, but larger diverse movements are also getting integrated with it. Democratic/Human rights groups, Women's political organisations, sexual minorities (LGBTQ alike), eco-feminists; broad-left thinkers, non-feminist thinkers etc. are some potential addendums to the feminist discourses in India though they are not properly combined.

Also there are a lot more challenges to Indian feminism which has resulted in disconnect between the theory and practice. Rampant commercialisation of public domains, patriarchal media, cultural revivalism etc. exerts much pressure on the feminist ideals of current era. The apolitical, skewed public sphere, which is highly statusquoist in its very existence, is a prevalent social scenario which hinders the spread of women's liberative ideals.

The digital media here offers a heteropian space where women can voice their voice. The presence of digital space for women provided much more than feminism (second-wave feminism and third-wave feminism), which were defined by gender binary and gender roles. The shift from "gender feminism" to "equity feminism" which is also a dictum of post-

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On ethical failings of Indian Media and the state of Indian Public sphere

Indian news media have been largely celebrated for its freedom, vigour and plurality. As Amartya Sen succinctly puts it "*the survival and flowering of Indian democracy owes a great deal to the freedom and vigour of our media*". But the credibility and image of our news media have taken a fatal beating due to some recent episodes of their serious transgressions. The following excesses signify the media that is palpably in credibility crisis,

1. Paid news

2. Private Treaties with advertisers

3. Media Net - celebrity coverage for a fee

4. PR feeds masquerading as reportage

5. Devaluation of editorial content

6. To win circulation and T R P wars, universally recognised journalistic ethics are frequently flouted

7. Inherent class biases in reporting

These unethical media practices ostensibly originate from media's over-commercialisation and insatiable appetite for profit. But attempts to explain the media crisis in terms of the basic structural factors with in which they operate are needed. To this end, Propaganda model, a framework for analysing U.S. media performance, jointly sketched out by Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky in Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media in 1988, can be applied to Indian media systems.

The connection of the media houses with the other dominant social organisations in ownership, management and social circles is evident today and they have been restricting their ability to remain analytically detached from other dominant institutional sectors for various reasons pertaining power and dominance. *"Media, according to this framework, do not have to be controlled nor does their behaviour have to be patterned, as it is assumed that they are integral actors in class warfare, fully integrated into the institutional framework of society, and act in unison with other ideological sectors, i.e. the academy, to establish, enforce, reinforce and 'police' corporate hegemony"* (Klaehn, 2002), says Jeffery Klaehn in a critical review of the Herman – Chomsky Model. Application of propaganda model in Indian media scene is more relevant in the technological, regulatory, economic and political contexts of media globalisation.

Media Globalisation

Indian media systems and structures have undergone dramatic transformation since the mid 1980s. According to American media critics Edward. S. Herman and Robert W. Mc Chesny, ' *the central features of media globalisation have been larger cross-border flows of media out puts, the growth of media TNCs and the tendency toward centralisation of media control, and the spread and intensification of commercialisation'* (Herman, 1988). They regard the primary effect of globalisation process to be the implantation of a commercial model of communication, its extension to broadcasting and the new media and its gradual intensification under the force of competition and bottom-line pressures.

According to them, ' *the commercial model has its own internal logic and, being privately owned and relying on advertiser support, tends to erode the public sphere and to create a culture of entertainment that is incompatible with a democratic order. Media outputs are commoditised and are designed to serve market ends, not citizenship needs'.*

The process of media globalization made the public sphere to shrink in a fast manner. It is not good for a democratic developing country where news as well as the media content is not giving the audience a chance of effective intervention in the issues of public concern and scrutiny. According to Indian media professionals Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma,

'*Signs and symptoms of media globalisation process are very much in evidence in Indian media today: early stages of media concentration (including cross-media ownership),*

growing ascendancy of the profit motive, dilution of the public service role of the media, promotion of certain ideologies and values, decline in public discourse in terms of both seriousness and plurality, spread of a culture of entertainment and so on' (Joseph, 2006).

Propaganda Model

Herman and Chomsky introduced the Propaganda model in their path-breaking treatise Manufacturing Consent published in 1988. The basic premise of the model is that among their other functions, the media serve and propagandise on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The model also describes the structural forces that cause the media to play a propaganda role. As Herman and Chomsky say it *"choices, emphases, and omissions of media can often be understood best by analysing them in terms of the structural factors that control them. These structural factors largely dictate the behaviour of mainstream U.S. media. But they also maintain that such constraints do not always produce simple and homogeneous results and mass media are not a solid monolith on all issues. Where the powerful are in disagreement, there will be a certain diversity of tactical judgements on how to achieve the shared goals, reflected in media debate. But views that challenge basic premises or suggest that the observed modes of exercise of state power are based on systemic factors will be excluded from mass media"* (Herman, 2002).

Five Filters: Main constituents of propaganda model

The five news filters, the essential ingredients of propaganda model, filter out the news fit to print, marginalise, dissent and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. They fall under the following headings:

1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms

2) Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media

3) The reliance of media on information provided by government, business and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power.

4) Flak as means of disciplining the media.

5) Anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism.

Updating their treatise in 2000 after a dozen years in which politics and communication have undergone a sea change Herman and Chomsky predicted the enhanced applicability of the propaganda model.

According to them,

"The increase in corporate power and global reach, further centralisation of the media, and the decline of public broadcasting have made bottom-line considerations more influential both in the United States and abroad. The competition for advertising has become more intense and the boundaries between editorial and advertising departments have weakened

further" (Herman, 2002). Sourcing and flak have also strengthened as news filters. The force of anti-communist ideology has possibly weakened, but this is easily offset by the greater ideological force of market fundamentalism.

Applicability of the model in Indian context

Updated version of Propaganda model fits well with the Indian media, notwithstanding some minor 'desi' variations. Since the model focuses on inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices, its applicability in Indian media is obvious. Inherent class bias evident in the reportage of Indian media can be explained in terms of the powerful societal interests that govern them. For Amartya Sen, the class bias of Indian media relates to the divisiveness of the Indian society. The division that introduces a generic bias in Indian news coverage, related to the interest of the newspaper reading public, is more like one between a fortunate fifth of the population who are doing just fine on the basis of the economic progress that is taking place in India, and the rest who are left behind " he says.

Five filters and mainstream Indian media

It is worth examining how the five news filters, the essential ingredients of propaganda model perform as the mechanisms of elite influence in Indian media.

The First Filter: Size, Ownership, and Profit Orientation of the Mass Media

The first filter of the propaganda model has remarkable applicability in Indian media scene. Mainstream Indian media are large, profit seeking corporations owned and controlled by quite wealthy people. The ownership of media with any substantial outreach is limited to those who are capable of bringing in the requisite large size of investment. Identical to the scenario in United States start up cost of a media enterprise is beyond the means of small investors in India. Such entry-level restrictions in the so-called free market squelch the possibilities of alternative media. Similar to American media, monopolies and cross-media ventures dot Indian mediascape, though of a much less size. As Vanitha Kohli, a business journalist argues there are no media conglomerates in India to match the size of News Corporation, Time-Warner, Disney or Viacom. True again that Indian media ownership is fragmented because of the large populations and the many languages that need to be catered to. But Keval. J. Kumar, a media analyst and a noted academician has contrarian views. For him, "*the growing trend in Indian media towards concentration of ownership and cross-media consolidation is undeniable*" (Kumar, 2010). The Times of India group, the largest publishing house of India which brings out multiple-audience publications can be said to have a monopoly in print. The Indian Express group, the Hindustan Times group, Living Media (publishers of India Today and the owners of Aaj Tak bouquet of TV channels) are the other contenders. There are monopolies in the regional media such as Jargon Prakashan, Bhaskar group, Eenadu group and Malayala Manorama publications. Ownership of leading national dailies is thus concentrated in the hands of these few groups which as a result wield

much power. On cross-media consolidation media critics have cited instances of newspaper publishers like TOI, Eenadu, Dainik Jargan moving into TV network and FM radio ownership and TV networks like Zee and Sun turning their attention to newspaper publishing. Indian media's large scale integration into the market is exemplified by the fact that more than a dozen of them are floated on the stock exchange. Paradoxically, none of them yet runs the risk of passing out of family control. "*In the English-speaking world, media today tend to be owned by faceless corporations, listed on stock exchanges and dedicated not so much to truth and justice, even to the glorification of their owners, but to the highest annual returns for their shareholders. India, on the other hand, has more than two dozen media-owning families who pursue their businesses with a combination of self-interest, self-importance, public interest and flair. For those families, owning a newspaper can also be a spine-tingling ego trip that, ownership of steel mills and supermarkets can never equal though consolidation of ownership and public listing on the stock exchanges probably lie in the not-too-distant future*" says Robin Jeffrey, author of India's Newspaper Revolution, a groundbreaking book on Indian media.

The Second Filter: the Advertising Licence to Do Business

Advertising as a filter to protect elite interests and to marginalise radical, dissident opinion is as much potent in Indian media as in advanced capitalist countries. One of the main features of Indian media in its new 'avatar' since 1980s is advertiser domination which pushed editors to the margins and reduced journalists to handymen. Institutional crisis of Indian media

manifested in its transgressions can be largely attributed to this phenomenon. A commercial

paradigm was formally implanted in Indian media in the late1980s when Samir Jain threw

aside any remaining pretences and remade the Times of India into a ferociously aggressive

and innovative newspaper brand. He was perfectly poised when the liberalisation reform in

1991 unleashed a new Indian with money to spend and desires to gratify. Jain's business

proposition was simple: he would connect advertisers to this vast market of consumers. While

narrating what Samir Jain did to Indian media business, Vanitha Kohli, a financial

correspondent cannot contain her excitement; "*he tried to look at a newspaper as any other*

consumer product and played around with almost every element in the product mix. From

colour supplements, to different pricing on different days, to cross-brand advertising

packages and price-cutting, Samir Jain did everything to maximise return. It was during this

time that the first advertising encroachments in to editorial space started" (Kohli, 2003).

Sumir Lal, a journalist-turned-public policy analyst who saw the Times of India's make-over

from close quarters, puts Indian media's commercialisation in proper context when he says

"*Samir's generation of proprietors aped his every move, so that today Indian media industry*

has unapologetic clarity about the nature of its business: it sells the media platform to

commercial clients, not news to readers". According to him the crisis in India is not one of

the media industry, but of the profession of journalism for proprietors generally are not

interested in selling what good journalists produce. With extreme intensification of a

commercial media paradigm mostly due to advertiser dominance, news today is sleight of

hand: paid news by politicians, private treaties with advertisers, celebrity coverage for a fee, PR feeds masquerading as reportage, the business story slanted to serve the stock market, the deserving story not done.

The Third Filter: Sourcing Mass Media News

Akin to United States, government and corporates are the pre-eminent sources for Indian news media .As a corollary they profoundly influence media performance and behaviour. As Herman and Chomsky clarify the mass media are drawn in to a symbiotic relationship with these powerful sources of news by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. Indian media's list of sources of status and prestige include mainstream political parties, bureaucracy, show business and sports. The trend of giving heavy weight to official sources to maintain the myth of objectivity is as much discernible in India as in U.S. media. The primacy of corporates as sources can be gauged by the huge quantity of PR feeds masquerading as news in the mainstream media. As Keval. J. Kumar describes, "*Indian newspapers are packed with reports and features that have their sources in press releases and backgrounders issued by business ,social and political groups who wish to publicise their activities*" (Kumar, 2010). For him the most blatant of these practices in PR disguised as journalism is the Times of India's Medianet initiative (for its daily city supplements). It is a business arm of the newspaper which sells editorial space to publicity-seekers for a price. The reports and photographs in these city supplements are presented as the work of staff

reporters; nowhere readers are told that these are sponsored or are indeed advertisements and have been directly paid for.

In a striking similarity to U.S. media, experts who espouse dominant centrist views (meaning those protecting the interests of elites and bourgeoisie) are in study supply in ours .This opinion inertia is reflected in the media's insensitive coverage of issues of concern to agricultural labourers, petty producers and other low-income groups. Critical sources who hold dissident views such leftists, labour activists and feminists are either given a short shrift or are completely blacked out.

The Fourth Filter: Flack and the Enforcers

In Propaganda model flack refers to organised negative responses to media's stance or content produced by individuals or groups with substantial resources. Direct flak would include critical letters to the editor, threatening phone calls and libel suits. Indirect flak would take the forms of bills before parliament to muzzle the media, cancellation of journalistic accreditations and withdrawal of advertisements. Flak generated by the state and corporate community are generally effective in curbing any deviationism in the media. Take the instance of Tehelka, a New Delhi based web portal which did an undercover expose of corruption in India's defence establishments named Operation West End in 2001. B.G.Varghese, an eminent journalist, describes the magnitude of official wrath Tehelka's Big Story generated like this: "*A wounded government turned the screws on Tehelka. It was*

raided, questioned by the investigatory agencies and pilloried. Its financiers, two young venture capitalists, were hounded viciously and put out of business. Tehelka found itself unable to function or pay its staff and was reduced to a shell. The staff stood by loyalty as long as it could and then was laid off or quit. The portal, rather than those whom it had exposed, was put in the dock in an inversion of due process" (Varghese, 2003). But in India, attempts of the government, the largest producer of flack, to silence the media through draconian laws and repressive measures are largely resisted by the judicial system and the public at large. It is actually a tribute to the presumptive adversarial-watchdog role media play in our democratic society. But due to its gross ethical failings, public support base of media is declining sharply.

The Fifth Filter: Anticommunism as a Control Mechanism

The filter of anticommunism as the dominant ideology of mass media has fairly good applicability in Indian scenario. Media generally portray left parties as cantankerous, obstinate lot who tend to spoil India's market-driven growth story. Mainstream media, with some exceptions, expressed their glee when communists were thrashed in the last parliamentary elections. Media fundamentally abhor lefties for their sceptical attitude to free-market. For media, regardless of evidence, markets are benevolent and even democratic. Media's propaganda on behalf of free-market is purely a self-serving one. Corporate advertising being its primary source of income, media have immanent obligations to capitalism. But this fundamental fact is rarely foregrounded while analysing media

performance and behaviour. Rather media's image as truth-searching defender of justice is given enormous play.

According to Prabhat Patnaik, an economist, for building consensus on market populism and its anti-democratic agendas, media employ the following tactics:

1. Hate campaigns against public sector undertakings and keeping mum on corporate oligopoly and profiteering.

2. Demonisation of politicians of all hues there by weakening the importance of legislature

3. Portray instances of collective praxis like rallies, hartals, and bandhs as anarchy or as holding the country to ransom and hence undermining the role of mass action in democracy.

4. Obliterate the differences between the programmes of different parties to reduce politics to a vapid choice and there by attenuating the democratic content of democracy.

Amartya Sen, emphasises the same point when he castigates the Indian media's intellectual dishonesty in defending the present profligacy in catering to the relatively better off while ringing fiscal alarm bells whenever proposals for helping the poor, the hungry, the chronically unemployed come up.

A scenario has reached where we could see unprecedented corporate concentration in media and mounting corporate pressures on them. It is high time for the redefinition of the ethical stands and platforms of the media with added emphasis on the recent failings.

Definition of some important concepts used in this study

1. **New Media/ New Digital Media**

The term 'New Media' is often confusing and ambiguous, leaving holes to fill about what all technologies encompass the new media. Lev Manovich, in his book, The language of New Media, tries to clarify this. According to Manovich, along with internet, websites, DVDs and Virtual Reality environments, we should consider television programmes shot with digital video, 3D animation techniques etc. as part of this. So it is not just a 'New Media' but a 'Converged' media that provide humans with much accountability and conviction to make use of it in their daily life, both for interaction and for seeking information.

Here, in this study, the term new media refers to the new digital media forms which enables the transmission, comparison, storage and transformation of information through a digital communication channel. Interactivity and the digital distribution are the major highlights of this new form of communication which guarantees unprecedented user participation. The internet and mobile phones have been the major communication media for new media which play a crucial role in the creation of new identities and experiences in the virtual world. Social Networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and various blogs and websites were taken for the study.

The rapid growth of new media technologies – internet, mobile phones, iPods, iPads – in every field of social life significantly emphasizes its potential in creating a technical world,

without which nothing is possible. (Castells, 2007). The internet is one of the examples of a medium that brings revolutions to new media technology. It also allows the users to define new representations of the world by using computer mediated communications such as emails, chat rooms, avtars, forums and other social networking sites, thus providing a new platform to distribute and consume media texts such as simulated virtual reality, interactive websites and online computer games. (Raj sony,) (Woolsey, 2009) calls it 'internet soup', a dynamic communication that incorporates different media types.

2. Internet and Society

Internet has completed (35) years of existence in our society. This medium has impacted the human life in multiple ways. The impact of Internet on our social life could not just assessed on the basis of its entertainment services. Unlike that the impact could be measured in various fields of social life like politics, economics, science and technology, academics etc. ICT or the Information and Communication Technologies are now the blanket term used to refer the modern communication technologies which rely on computer technologies and networking. ICTs is a term that is used for technologies of cognition, communication, and cooperation that are computerized (i.e., work with digital logic) and networked. (Fuchs, 2008). Internet is such a technology that relies upon the world wide network which works on transmission protocols like TCP/IP. The term Internet frequently is used for a specific type of ICTs, the global network of computer networks that is based on the TCP/IP protocol and has developed from the ARPANET. (Fuchs, 2008)

Like any other modern media form which has its production and reception patterns carefully designed and managed by human intervention, ICT and Internet too has double significance in its analysis part. As Christian Fuchs, states ICT&S research is a double process, consisting of

1. a process in which human actors design ICTs and in which it is analyzed how society shapes ICTs, and

2. of a process in which it is assessed how the usage of ICTs transforms society.

Both the internet and society are mutually connected and there exists a very dynamic relationship between the two. Christian Fuchs elaborates this on the grounds of dialectics. (Fuchs, 2008). He argues that in dialectics, two separate entities become connected and form a higher-level unity that feeds back onto its parts. Any study which has its focus on the internet and society should be analysed from this dialectical conception that humans in society shape (i.e., design and use) ICTs and that in this process technology conditions, that is, enables and constrains, human cognition, communication, and cooperation. Such a self-referential loop has been described as the approach of mutual shaping of society and ICTs (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006; Herdin, Hofkirchner, and Maier-Rabler 2007). So it would be interesting to check whether the Internet and the allied channels of communication are actually enhances the possibilities of expression, or merely communication. Can this be an alternative to the mainstream media and posses enough democratic potential to effect the masses.

The advent in the field of New Media technologies has prompted the academic community around the world to revisit the varying socio-political scenario of the nations. The new media technologies with its innate capabilities like radically decentralized architecture, interactivity, lightning speed etc. have created a new level of consciousness in the field of media communication. When compared to the traditional mass media forms, which are traditionally under gate keeping process, the new media can contribute much to the enhancement of public sphere. It can be an alternative media form to recapture the public sphere from its current commercial, political and various biases.

Ever since the popularity or the global availability of Internet, the academic community around the globe were keenly watching the impacts of internet over political and social institutions. Much attention was on the discourses on democracy. Many a researchers were interested in enquiring about the impact of internet over the development of democratic systems and ideals.

Importance of Internet over traditional ways of learning and understanding

The possibility of Internet is the possibility of the screen itself. The possibility of the cyberspace is immense as it extends the opportunity of the user to go beyond the limits of the physical screen size. The screen here acts as a multiple connector via hyperlinks to various resources. Reading is no more a divine activity but has become an activity carried out along with writing. The attraction of these writings is that it could be shared real-time across the globe. Such texts are being created in huge volumes day by day.

The major difference of internet texts when compared to the traditional text generations is that Internet texts are reflections of contemporary responses. These texts are not challenging the old texts but they are some inevitable expressions our own times. These expressions exhibit wide range of hues culminating from different socio, cultural, political and personal spheres of creators.

Again on hyper textuality, Bertrand Gervais (Navamadhyamangal) opines that "We are confronted with increasingly different forms of texts produced with the aid of computers. More often than not this text exists only in the internet. They are often animated filled with sounds and images, accessible through a network, related to one another by hyperlinks, and inscribed in complex environments"

The advantage of hyperlinks make internet a never-before experience as far as the cognitive process is concerned. Reading a printed matter is a linear process where the text prompts us in-wait and allow a little beyond the verbally expressed realm. Hyperlinks integrate textual, aural and visual capabilities of expressions and provide choices before the user to select and navigate. This multimedia learning platform is a crucial one in understanding the multi-dimensionality of the world affairs. Better perceptive time along with augmented reality environments with animations and graphics provide the best environment for learning. Here the effectiveness rests upon how well you integrate the multimedia tools for the communication of a message and how effectively you use the resources in its multimedia form itself.

Many a thinkers see internet as a post-modern medium. According to Jean Francois Luther, post-modernism is the device used to express the inexpressible. The virtual reality paradox of cyber technology suits well with this notion. Nothing from the past governs a post-modernist. Here, in the case of cyber technology also, no technological tradition oversees the developments and activities of cyber space.

3.   Language and medium of the cyber space

The language of the cyber space is the most novel one. Plurality is the basis of the language of cyber space. Easiness in content creation and the speed of dissemination are two major specialities of the language of cyber space. The absence of a 'Gatekeeper' opens a seamless terrain of subjective expressions. The language and expressive realm have never been democratic like now before. People use multiple platforms like blogs, micro-blogs, messengers, chat-rooms, social networking home pages/timelines etc. Each expression has its technological speciality associated with it. For eg; a person can elaborate much over an issue through his blog. He could use the maximum screen space and storage space for this. But the same person uses different expressive strategy when he uses a micro-blog like twitter. There he uses the most economical expression to match with the technical standards of the channel.

The language of cyberspace is essentially multimedia driven. This is another major attraction why people prefer this novel medium. An internet communicator has the independence of selecting multiple media platforms at a time. He/she could use the static text matter. Or the user can integrate a hypertext with it. He/ she could post audio/video clips,

photographs, 2D and 3D animations, graphic design expressions etc. This technological edge transcends internet to new heights of creative expression and aesthetic value.

"Books and printed matter were considered to be the hallmark features of modernism. Whereas in the current age, the screen space of the digital devices have substituted printing. It is the reading over screen that matters most" (V.K Adarsh, Page 102).

4. Internet and Democracy

Democracy can be seen as the most successful political conception of the last century. Apart from the non-electoral aspects, democracy should be seen as the best option to promote and ensure human rights and social equity.

In-order to strengthen the democratic ideals, access to information and freedom of expression is essential. A free and fair communication system would ensures that citizens make accountable, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. This can in-turn serve as as a checking function by ensuring that the authorities respond to the needs and demands of the people.

Within the varied conceptions, a deliberative or discursive mode of functioning is advisable for the deepening of democracy. Unlike the electoral method of traditional democracy, here authentic deliberations on matters pertaining public life is crucial. Here, in this study also, the researcher aims to assess the potential of internet and other new media platforms to enhance the public deliberations. Through rational deliberations and discourses

happening in various social media platforms, internet channels like blogs, vlogs, messenger services etc., Internet contributes a lot to the strengthening of the modern public sphere. Several studies have even name social media like Facebook and Twitter as a new age public sphere.

In the populist conception of deliberative democracy, principles of deliberative democracy apply to groups of lay citizens who are empowered to make decisions (Leibj, 2006). James Fishkin, lays down the essential characteristics of legitimate deliberations as,

- *Information*: The extent to which participants are given access to reasonably accurate information that they believe to be relevant to the issue

- *Substantive balance*: The extent to which arguments offered by one side or from one perspective are answered by considerations offered by those who hold other perspectives

- *Diversity*: The extent to which the major position in the public are represented by participants in the discussion

  Conscientiousness: The extent to which participants sincerely weigh the merits of the arguments

- *Equal consideration*: The extent to which arguments offered by all participants are considered on the merits regardless of which participants offer them (Fishkin, 2003).

Though the above mentioned qualifiers are viewed within the greater spans of deliberative democracy which essentially results in the electoral democratic process, in the context of internet communication also, they are relevant. The quality of deliberations happening over internet should also possess the above said features in order to strengthen the digital public sphere.

5. Online media and New Indian Feminism

As in the case of other forms of networking, Indian feminism is also using the new avenues like social media, blogging, websites etc. created as the aftermath of ICT revolution. They use these platforms for the effective dissemination of their ideas in a speedy and distributed manner. Feminists groups have made excellent use of social media by launching Yahoo and Google groups besides setting up cyber forums, blogs, and similar outlets for quick communication and coordinated action, sharing of intellectual work and resources, creating archives with photographic memories, reports, posters, diaries, songs, documentary on women's issues which are available online (Patel and Khajuria, 2016).

The online space has now becoming more and more a place to overcome the normative patriarchal compulsions. Feminist groups and women activists are using this cyber space and re-inventing its potential to make it a heteropian space where a woman can freely express his voice without the fear of external pressures of society. Since the Delhi rape incident, women and girls are coming forward to use the Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter,

Blogs and many other platforms to discuss about and intimate the society about the harassments, both sexual and mental, they came across every day. They feel free to discuss many a topics which previously considered as taboo rather unbecoming by the patriarchal society and the mainstream media. There are a number of feminist websites like http://www.shesays.in/, https://feminisminindia.com/, http://theladiesfinger.com/, https://youngfeminists.wordpress.com/, http://gendermatters.in/ etc. are seriously involved in discussing and deliberating over many issues including menstruation and female health, women sexuality, harassment, gender equity, law reforms, political women etc. in detailed manner. Many issues like pre-marital sexual relationship, menstrual hygiene, lesbian-queer sexualities, pornography, masturbation etc. which were considered so mean by the society for women to discuss are brought for debate and self-expression.

There is also a concerted effort from the cyber feminist to break the stereotypes of women created by the mass media of India over these decades. Through a series of powerful images, it mocks the notion of 'appropriate' roles for women (Patel and Khajuria, 2016). They use all the available online platforms to break the dictums of patriarchy regarding dressing, food, entertainment, relationship, political preferences etc. They regularly posts pictures over Instagram.com, Flickr.com, Facebook etc. to voice their preferences and command over their life and body. They engage in radical discussions over many issues concerning their life and health.

Though this age can be seen as an intersectional feminist age bridging the digital divide existing between the minority women community with internet literacy and access and the majority non-literates, prospects are more for further empowerment as the availability of technology is more and cheaper now. Along with this prospective developments in cyber feminism in India, there is a huge increment happened to the online violence and harassment against women every year. Social media slandering, hate speech, targeted image spoiling like cyber bullying is on a hike and there are many instances where the women is succumbed to this digital violence. According to the National Crimes Records Bureau statistics, every second, one woman in India gets tricked to be a victim of cybercrimes and the online platform is now the new platform where a woman's dignity, privacy and security is increasingly being challenged every moment. Trolling, abusing, threatening, stalking, voyeurism, body-shaming, defaming, surveillance, revenge porn and other forms of indecent representation of women are rampant in the cyber world (Kapadia, 2018).

This age of the proliferation of social media, on the one hand, widens space for expression and dialogue. On the other, its form and culture is one that thrives on binaries of 'for' or 'against', leaving no space for grey, and creating fixed positions, instant responses and gladiatorial communication (Patel and Khajuria, 2016).

The online communication platforms have recently been getting transformed into a patriarchal normative space as like the offline world. The grand promise of an online heteropia is getting blurred on a very fast basis. There are concerted attacks from the radical

anti-democratic factions on a number of feminine responses on the web. While it is clearly difficult to accept that women can be independent, thinking voices for peace over conflict or for progressive ideas that seek to break restrictive boundaries, the violent backlash of every expression of their agency is also amplified in an increasingly digital arena of debate. Nonetheless, online activism has been effective in calling out sexism and misogyny (Seshu, 2018).

As Sujatha Subrahmanian points out in her research paper on feminist activism on social media in the Economic and Political Weekly, that "online spaces have given rise to multiple counterpublics" which have helped create spaces for women to share personal narratives and form solidarity networks. But it is also a space circumscribed by unequal access and gendered violence, restricting the expression of marginalised groups."

These are the latest challenge before us in escalating the potentials of the online media in enhancing the communicative realm of the female and transcending the virtual sphere as a democratic platform for the free and fair transaction of ideas and opinions irrespective of gender and social status.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online survey

The Nirbhaya gangrape case 2012 and aftermath protest on Indian streets and digital space proved that digital space for women in here to stay and there is a much work needed. In this connection an online survey using the google forms was conducted taking responses from all over India. An online questionnaire was published over google forms and shared among the social media platforms asking for voluntary participation from the public. The questionnaire was circulated among the various groups, friends, friends of friends in Facebook, whatsapp groups, various twitter handles etc. (the questionnaire can be found at https://goo.gl/forms/VylTYNCK074I2FZB3).

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

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

Indian scenario (Figure 4). It is also an interesting finding that people rely on websites for getting engaged with gender related disclosures. This catalyses the role of independent and other mainstream websites which work in the area of gender issues and women rights.
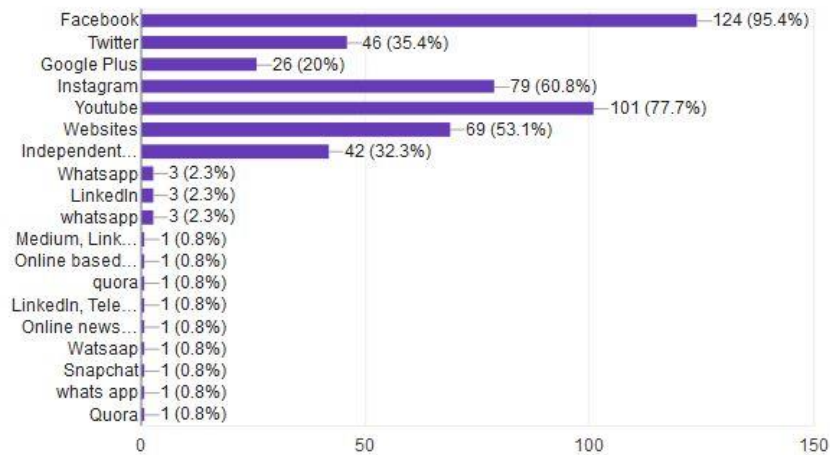
1. *Figure 1*

The articles and posts on websites and social media are read, shared and discussed on digital public sphere where users become agents of change. There are digital sphere instruments which enable users to act and react on the front. These instruments (like hast tags), play crucial role in the deliberation.
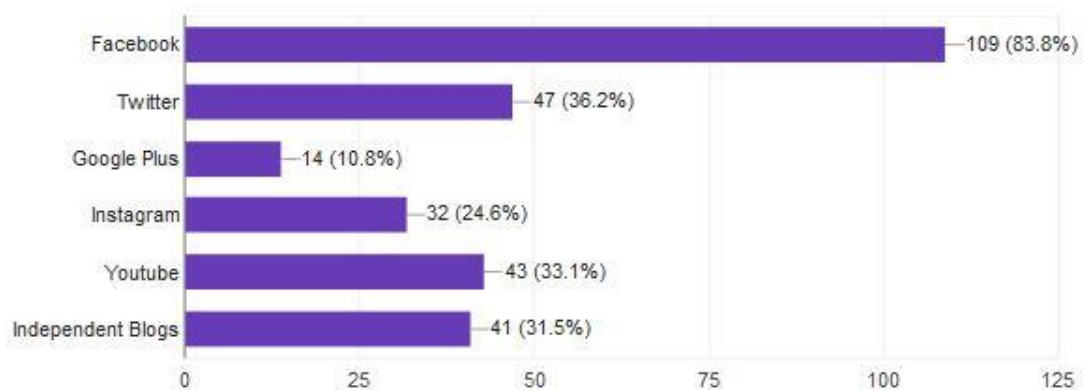
2. *Figure 2*

Further, majority of the responses share that Facebook is the most effective online medium to articulate one's opinion followed by twitter.
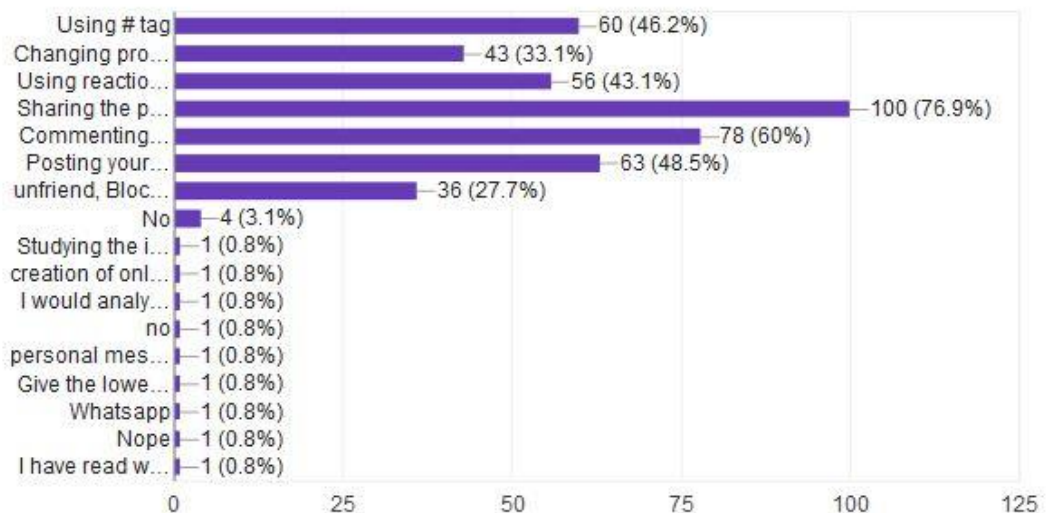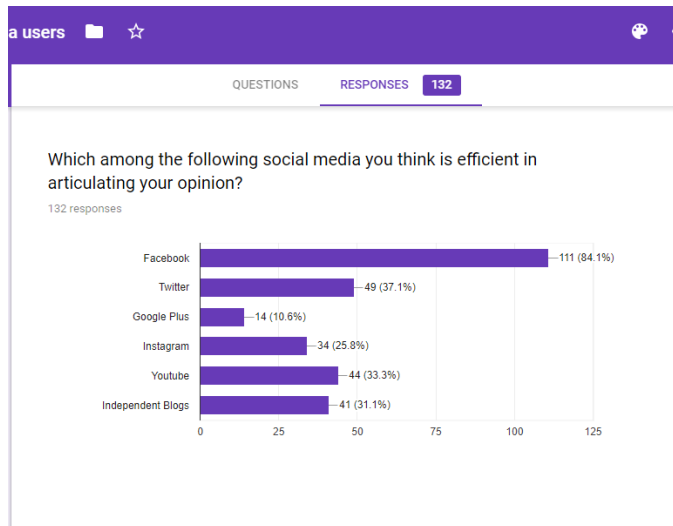
3.   Figure 3

From Figure , it is can understood that maximum users find themselves in engaged on digital public sphere by sharing (>76%) and comments (>60%) the ideas and posts of others through which they agree their ideology and help them to reach within their community. Other statistics from our study also shows the positive notion on the user engagement in digital

public sphere on women and gender issues. Such as posting own opinion (>48%), using hash tag (>46%), using various reactions to others post (>43%), changing profile picture as part of online campaign (>33%) and unfriend or block the profiles (>27%) to show the protest.

Majority of the respondents took part in the social media discussions followed by the Delhi Rape incident.

Fig. 4

Other inferences from the online study

- From the random database selected out of the personal contacts of the investigator, some 200 requests had send. Out of which 132 responses were received. Among the respondents 56.8% were males and 41.7% were females. Even in this era of information explosion women are finding it hard to get online connectivity. Some of the women respondents shared their problems pertaining new media usage, through personal mails in the later phase of the study. The major issues faced by the women regarding new media usage are:

- Lack of freedom to use internet extensively as men does.

- Lack of quality time for internet use due to their preoccupation with household affairs

- Lack of availability of latest smart phones and other gadgets. More often, men are having greater edge in possessing latest devices

- Social pressure which prevents women using internet as a taboo

- Lack of financial freedom to bear the data charges

- Dependency on others for many issues like data recharge, lodging a network complaint, rectification of technical issues etc.
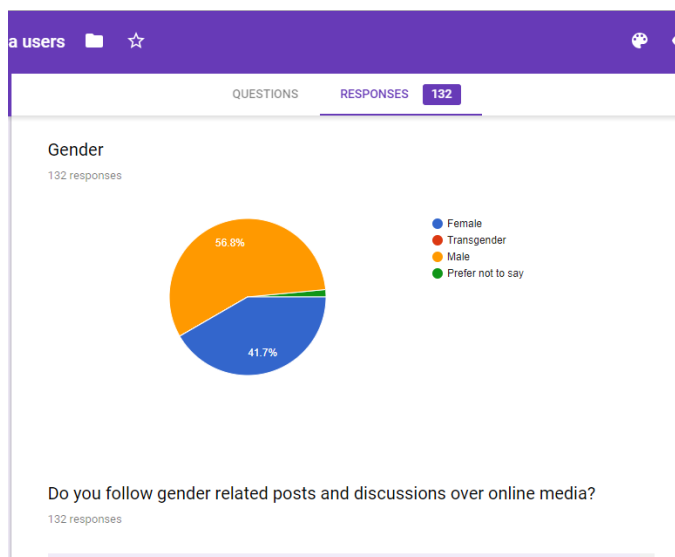
- Lack of technical knowhow.

Fig.5

Regarding the participation in any of the protests related to gender as part of social media mobilization, many of the respondents provided the details of their participation. Some popular online engagements were #Metoo, Kiss of Love, Online protest on the murder of Jisha, a young law student of Kerala, Who cares colour, # Happy to bleed, #Happy to wait, #shave your opinion, #with her etc.

There were online protests which transcended from virtual space to reality through civic engagements. 7 of the respondents were participated in protest conducted by Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath on account of the murder of Jisha. 13 of the respondents participated in the pride march, a protest and participated in LGBTQ related events and protests organized in Manaveeyam veedhi, Trivandrum. As members of change.org, an online campaign platform, 21 have signed on various kind of issues. Among which there were gender related issues too like accepting the marriage of gay couple, protest on female genital mutilation, many rape cases, child sexual abuse and many more cases.

It was an interesting when the survey found that there were members who stands for opposing point-of-views on a particular issue. #Happy to bleed and #Happy to wait is an example. Both the campaigns were related to the menstruation discussion on the wake of 'Sabarimala' women entry. There were opposing stand points from women who belong to the menstruating age limit.

Regarding the scope of online media as an alternative medium to empower women and the transgender community, 89 respondents expressed their hope in the online platforms. Here is a sample response from respondent #10;

"Social Media gave voice to previously unheard voices. It is there for everybody to use it. Abuses might be there. But here in SM, opinion is not holy. Anybody can critic and employ counter narration tactics. Empowerment is not direct. But when those voices also enter the discussion table, there will be someone who listen, someone who change his opinion. It is a slow process, but working".

Respondent #21 also have the same opinion;

"Yes, the online social media is not just a place to look good and share personal details, but to the core, it is a mode of communicating ones own beliefs, ideas. Politicians, corrupt officials, businessmen etc use these methods effectively to feed their propaganda, so why not normal people. The online social media is one of the most powerful outlets of expression and according to human nature of following others' suit, if we propagate these ideas through the social media, others may speak up and support it as well."

Respondent #39 has a bit different take on this;

"I can say a partial yes. Social media can be used as a platform for the empowerment of the transgender community. Enlightenment should happen in the majority. A post related to transgender issues invites a hell lot of mischiefs. Supporting a transgender is considered as an act of indignity even by the family. I've experienced it even from my own family. And this happens in a state where people worship Ardhanarishwar."

Some of the respondents possess different view on this. For example Respondent #45 shares opinion as;

"Social Media can create awareness. But empowering should come from the government. Only when trials for cases such as rape and physical abuse on women are fast tracked, when transgenders are given special consideration for education and employment by the government will empowerment actually be attained. Social media can just be used as a tool for discussing ones concerns and throwing rants. That too is short lived. Everyday there is a new story to discuss about and old ones are forgotten."

Many of the believers of the potential use of online media are sceptical about the role played by online media in the real-life situations. They see it as a virtual activity with limited span of attention.

Regarding the merits of online media as a discussion forum over offline platforms, 41 of the respondents believe that it is a better platform than the traditional forums of discussion. 23 believe that both are equally good and complementary. 33 believe that traditional platforms have more edge than online media. Others have no specific opinion in this.

Analysis of Malayalam portal

The study chose www.utharakalam.com, a website in Malayalam for the analysis. www.utharakalam.com is one of the top discussed portals in Malayalam which discusses a number of issues related to caste, gender, politics, nature etc. The website discusses issues in a deeper manner other than the mainstream media reportage and they also include diverse and off-beat opinion on social issues. They contribute a lot to the discursive space available online through the publication of such contents.

www.utharakalam.com is regarded as the first ever Dalit website in Malayalam. Here is an excerpt from the about us section of Uthrakalam:

"The prolonged struggles of marginalized groups have resulted in the formation of a new political sensibility. It was necessary to bring together the elements of this fragmented consciousness that was multilayered to build a powerful social agency. For this, it is necessary to build up a new media culture. Further, contemporary mainstream media has its own deep-rooted race/ caste/gender character and class interests. In this context, it is necessary to create an independent media establishment that represents this consciousness."

Some of the commonalities of the selected web site are:

- They approach the on-going social issues also from a subaltern perspective.
- They criticizes the patriarchal ideology and the prevailing caste concepts
- They discusses issues relating them within the frames of liberative ideologies

- They help to promote discourses which could enrich the streams of counter public sphere

- They engage in discussions to popularise the women's movements and other subaltern movements.

- They can be seen as potential online media which negates the popular dimensions on gender and gendered pre-occupations.

utharakalam.com has the following sections as the main menu:

Sections	Subsections	Total Posts	Issues Related to Women
Politics	Caste	175	26
	Education	13	0
	Gender	40	40
	Media	30	5
	Religion	58	3
Culture	Cinema	70	15
	History	40	0
	Literature	69	6
	Music	15	3
	Painting	4	0
	Performing Arts	3	1
	Science	2	0
	Sports	10	0
	Theatre	0	0
Campus	Events	13	1

	Letters	33	5
Editor's Choice	4	4	0
Creative Writings	3	3	0
Book Review	21	21	2

There is also another section called social media pulse which showcases excerpts from the Facebook posts by persons from different walks of life. This section is a very useful compilation of opinions. Through this, the reader gets a chance to engage in the variety of discussions happening in the virtual sphere. It is very current and updated so that the social media pulse could be traced with the allied comments, tags and shares. This representative nature provides the strong signs of a deliberative sphere which engages in serious discussions on topics of currency.

Among the featured articles, the following topics related to gender are discussed both by the external contributors and the website admin.

Section: Politics

This section has 5 subsections namely Caste, Education, Gender, Media and Religion

Caste

Among the 175 articles posted during the study period, 26 were discussing the issues related to women both in general and specific way. Some of the commendable stories are:

1. The story #Metoo:Jathiyum Samudayavum koodi pariganikkanam by Dalit Women Fight posted on October 17, 2018 revisits the #metoo movement within the premises of dalit identity. The story alleges that the 'Me' in Metoo campaigns failed to

incorporate dalits and as a result, dalits couldn't find any 'Me' associated with the movement.

2. The article Manusmruthiyilekkulla Madakkayathra by K.K Kochu posted on October 8, 2018 discusses the Sabarimala issue from the women's perspective and argues that the on-going demands from the Hindutwa group is an effort to take back the society to the ancient ages where Manusmruthi was the law.

3. The article Mulayarinja Nangeli: Samoohyandassinte Pratheekam by Pradeep Kulangara posted on March 2017 provides a stark observation on the women's liberation citing the historic story of a brave woman who cut her breasts in protest against the 'Mulakkaram' (Breast tax) imposed by the rulers.

4. In an interesting article Chumbana Samaram: Oru Keezhala Sthreepaksha vayana by Jeni Rovina posted on Feb 5 2015 provides a dissenting view on the much celebrated Kiss of Love protest. The article argues that the Kiss of Love event was basically a cast elitist expression which omitted the views from the dalit women. The pageant was essentially for the 'White woman' who still epitomises the womanhood in the society, the article argues.

List of articles which discussed the issues related to women

1. Meetoo:Jathiyum Samudayavum koodi pariganikkanam - Dalit Women Fight - October 17 2018

2. Hinduvum Jathi-Linga Prasnangalum: Kodathividhiyeppatti chila nireekshanangal - Sudesh M Raghu - October 5 2018

3. Mulayarinja Nangeli: Samoohyandassinte Pratheekam - Pradeep Kulangara - March 2017

4. Manhole: Vruthiyude Jathi - Mrudula Devi - March 13, 2017

5. EE kolayil Bharanakoodathinte Kaikalindu - K Sunil Kumar - May 18 2016

6. Chithralekhakku Parayanullathu - Utharakalam Admin - Jaury 7 2016

7. Samvarana Vivadangalum Samakaleena Lingaraashtreeyathile Prasnangalum - K K Baburaj - December 14 2015

8. Savarna Sareerangalum Keezhala idapedalukalum : Puthiya cheruppathinte Varthamanangal - Thahir Jamal K.M September 2 , 2015

9. Chithralekhayude Samaram - Jeni Rovina May 12 2015

10. Kudumba Virudhathayo Puthan Kudiyirakkukalo - Dr. O.K Santhosh April 29 2015

11. Chumbana Samaram: Oru Keezhala Sthreepaksha vayana - Jeni Rovina - Feb 5 2015

12. Vamsheeyathayude Porno-tropic Kazhchakal - K.K Baburaj - January 14 2015

13. Aanathangalekkurich - Utharakalam Admin -December 6 2014

14. D.H.R.M : Anandamo Mayakkamo? K.K Kochu - October 5 2014

15. Sthree Prathishedhangalude Ouchithyavum Anouchithyavum - Sandhya Mallika - September 15 2014

16. Vigatha Vasthuthakal - Dr. M.B Manoj - August 1 2014

17. Badavoonile Penkuttikal - Sruthi Helbert - July 14 - 2014

18. Cotton Hill uyarthunna chila samasyakal - A S Ajith Kumar July 6 2014

19. Cool Space: Samakaleena Yuvajanangalude Prasna Ajandakal - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 26 2013

20. Kazhchayude Apara Sthree Rekhakal - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 21 2013

21. Karuthamma enna arayathiyum - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 20 2013

22. Manabhangam: Prathikalum idanilakkarum - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 15 2013

23. Njanoru Kakkakkarumbi - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 9 2013

24. Sukumarikal Undakunnathengine? - Uthrakalam Admin - Dec 4 2013

25.Sangeethathinte Jatheeya manangal - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 1 2013

26. Delhi Prathishedangalum Desheeyaytha manadandangalum - Utharakalam Admin - Nov 3 2013

Education

There are no relevant articles in this subsection

Gender

All the 40 stories posted here which discusses various issues related to women.

1. In the article Feminist Rashtreeyam: Bahuswarathykkulla sadhyathakal by Sreejitha Jayabharathi posted on September 12, 2018 discusses about the need of diverse feminist streams in the social sphere. There is a need to review the feminine political stereotypes by the woman herself to engage in a more powerful political discourse, the writer argues.

2. Another article Ithu njangalude Rashtreeyamalla! Dalit Bahujan Sthreekalude Aakhyanangalum (Savarna) Feminisavum by Jeni Rovina and Sreebitha P.V posted on September 5, 2018 provides a standpoint on the re-interpretation of feminism in the wake of Kiss of Love and subsequent developments.

3. Feminist Iconukalum apara sthreekalum is another story written by Ladeeda Sakhaloon posted on Feb 11, 2018. This article explores how the powerful feminist politics in India marks the 'other' women here. It also discusses about the complexities in the representation of Muslim women in the political climate which promotes Elite Fascist norms.

4. An article titled Jisha, Nee ottakkalla by Jose Peter posted on May 4, 2016 discusses the brutal murder of a Dalit woman named Jisha in Perubavoor, Kerala. Here the author argues that her dalit identity poses great threat to social acceptance. The heinous act of murder too was not properly discussed due to the social aversion towards dalitness.

5. Lyngika fantasikal, Apara Sthreekal, Nyoonapakshangal.. Chumbanasamarathodulla Viyojippinte Rashtreeyam by K.K Baburaj posted on Feb23, 2015 discusses about two possible absences in the much celebrated Kiss of Love pageant. Here the author uses absence/presence theory to analyse the nuances in the politics. The absence of the victims of the mob violence which initiated the Kiss of Love was discussed. The second absence was of the owner of the restaurant where the right wing protestors led destructive mode of protest.

Media

Among the 30 published articles, 5 were discussing women related issues.

1. Manju Pravesham Attakkatha:Madhyamangalude ulppulakavum varenya nirvruthiyum by Ajay Shekhar posted on Dec 22, 2013 discusses the deep rooted anti-dalit, anti-downtrodden stance of the media industry. The article critically evaluates the warm welcome given by the media to the re-entry of popular Malayalam Actress Manju Warrier after a break. The author here argues that the mainstream media culture is subservient to the elitist norms and are loyal to the caste hierarchy of the society.

2. Madhyamangalude Naattunadappu (Nammudeyum) by Utharakalam Admin posted on Dec 30, 2012 provides a different perspective on the representative aspect of subaltern sections in the media. The marginalised sections of the society namely the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Gender Minorities, Dalits, Minorities were misrepresented in mainstream media narratives and often their movements were under represented in media.

Other articles are:

1. Clarayude Kripayal (Kuruvilayudeyum) by Utharakalam Admin posted on Dec 18, 2013

2. Jaseentha, nee marichalenthu? Njangalkku rating koodanam by Utharakalam Admin posted on Dec 12 2012

3. Malayali Housum Jathi Chinthayum by Utharakalam Admin posted on Dec 20, 2013

Religion

Among the 58 articles posted here, only 3 were discussing issues related to women under this tag.

1. Mathethara Liberal Chattakkodukalum Sthree Jeevithalokangalum: Saba Mahmoodinu Parayanullathu by Jeni Rovina posted on March 23, 2018 discusses the inadequacies in feminist reading of the society. The author initiates discussion quoting Saba Mahmood, a feminist scholar, and reviews the feminist tools and methods with which the social research is going on. The article provides excellent insights on the pervasive colonial frameworks and the resultant gaze emanating from it.

2. Binarikalude Sadacharam by Muhammad Shah.S posted on November 23, 2014 discusses about the ideological aspects behind the Kiss of Love pageant. Author here argues that the existing deliberations diluted the gravity of the issue through bypassing the deeper aspects of Religion, Caste, Gender, Sexuality etc.

3. Muslim Sthreekalude Vasthradharanavum Islamika Swathwavum by Utharakalam Admin posted on Dec 22, 2012 discusses the politics associated with dressing and dress code. The author argues that it is the dominant Hindu norms are taken as the basis of Indian culture and all other cultural traditions are compared with this dominant tradition. Here the Hindu customs and rituals including festivals, delicacies, dressing etc. are considered normal and good and others are treated as non-national.

List of Articles in other sections:

CULTURE

CINEMA

1. Premam - Aanathangalude Ghoshayathra - Roopesh Kumar -July 3 2015

2. Clara oru thonnalalla - Blaze Johny - October 18, 2014

3. Irangippokkinte Sthreepaksha padangal - Anila Indira Balakrishnan - May 27 2014

4. Aanathangalum Malayala Cinemayum - Utharakalam Admin - December 28 2013

5. Matrhuthwathinte bahulathakal - Utharakalam Admin - December 16 2013

6. Olinjunottakkarude kumbasarangal - Utharakalam Admin December 13 2013

7. Njanoru Kakkakkarumbi - Utharakalam Admin - December 9 2013

8. Sukumarikal Undakunnathengine - Utharakalam Admin - December 4 2013

9. Cellulloidile dalit yuvathiyum malayalikalum - Jenni Rovina December 3 2013

10. Rasoolum annayum thurannu parayunnathu - Utharakalam admin - Nov 14 2013

11. Anarharum arharude alikhitha niyamangalum - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 28 2012

12. Samoohika virudharude lodge - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 26 2012

13. Jeevithavashishtangalude thayverukal - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 25 2012

14. Beautiful: Nayikakkum villanumideyil - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 22 2012

15. 'Usthad Hottalile' muslim sthree akanmkshakal - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 8 2012

LITERATURE

1. Mulapporavum Thottukoodatha mishihayum - April 21 2014

2. Karuthamma enna arayathiyum - Utharakalam Admin - December 20 2014

3. Neethikku vila koodunnu - Utharakalam admin - December 8 2014

4. Islamum Feminisavum sahithyathil - Randu vyathyastha kazhchappadukalude avalokanam - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 14 2012

5. Adimatha keralam - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 21 2011

6. Sahyante Makal - Utharakalam Admin -Dec 19 2011

MUSIC

1. Lingabhedavum Nirvahakathwavum Mappila sahithyathil - Dr. V Hikmathulla- Feb 20 2018

2.Paattum udalum idakalarunna athijeevana kala - Whitney Hooston - Dec 16 2012

3. Shareerangalum Shaareerangalum - A.S Ajithkumar - Dec 13 2011

PERFORMING ARTS

1. Nruthathile Shreepaksham Enthanu? - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 22 2013

BOOK REVIEW

1. Hijab: Adichamarthalinum vimochanathinum appuram - Ummul Fayisa - Dec 23 2013

2. Magribile Muslim Sthree Jeevitham - Utharakalam Admin - Dec 27 2012

Along with the utharakalam.com, a number of other feminist websites and blogs were visited for analysis. A total number of 8 websites/blogs were selected for the analysis during the phase of the study. The common characteristics of feminist sites and blogs are understood as:

- They approach the social issues and respond to them in a subaltern context.
- They pose objection to the existing patriarchal norms which rules the various spheres of social life
- They encourage even a lighter nuance of feminine victory or stories of self - determination from a liberative context
- Encourage and promote discourses on counter public which opposes the dominant gender authority
- Reviews and rejects stereotyping based on gender through popular art forms.
- Websites and blogs discussed a number of issues which was either under- represented or omitted in the mainstream media.

- A series of online campaigns and their reviews were incorporated in websites. Some of the major campaigns were:

    a. Shave your opinion
    b. TIMES - #Me too campaign
    c. Kiss of Love
    d. # Happy to bleed
    e. #With her Etc.
    f. Pink Chhaddi

The campaigns were started and propagated upon a number of themes pertaining womanhood like Gender Equality, Equality for public spaces, Right for own body, Right to wear, Right to have sex, Right to co-live, Right to happily bleed, Right to Travel alone, Right to have occupy public spaces, Right to booze and smoke, Right to enter to sacred places, Right to Express opinion, Right to communicate, Right to work etc.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The very experience of 'digitality' has redefined the communication scape ever before in the history. It is evident from the many new media initiatives and campaigns that the online digital media has the potential to strengthen the voices of the unheard, thus strengthening the very tenets of democracy. Online media boosts discourses, both deliberative and casual, on varied topics and provide space for every user to voice users' opinion irrespective of the social, cultural, economic and political status.

2. Social networking sites, instant messenger services and blogs play crucial role in the modern information sphere and the information processing system. They could well be seen as modern public sphere. The modern public sphere or the digital public sphere has strong bindings on the cyber space and its activities. Such a cyber space is opening up immense possibilities for a resurgent, motivated and proactive public to laud the voices of the subaltern.

3. It is evident from the articles posted and the social media posting that the cyber space can very well accommodate off-beat issues and the issues faced by the subaltern. It can very well raise a counter-public consciousness among the readers and possess the potential to unite them for action.

4. It is also evident from the responses to the posts and articles that there exists huge deficiency in responses both in quantity and quality.

Recommendations

1. Further research can be conducted by taking sample on national basis
2. There are many more social media platforms like twitter, instagram, google Plus etc which are quite popular. The content of these sites can also be studied for analysis

3. Aspects of political economy of online media are hardly discussed in the study. Such aspects could provide deeper insights into the capitalistic indulgence in the making of consent.

4. User engagement is a vital aspect and there are modern tools available now for the analysis of user data.

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PRINCIPAL INVISTIGATOR   **PRINCIPAL**