Lekshmi V. Nair and Muhammed Sihas K.M.

DIFFUSION OF MASS MEDIA AMONG ADIVASI COMMUNITIES: A STUDY IN WAYANAD, KERALA

Abstract

Recognizing the indispensability of technology and mass media in uplifting and empowering the socially and economically backward sections of society, this paper attempts to trace the history and nature of penetration of mass media among the Adivasis in the Wayanad district of Kerala. While there are numerous studies conducted on the various aspects of Adivasi life in Kerala, few studies have been undertaken to fathom the mass media diffusion among Adivasis in Wayanad. Further along, the paper also touches upon the various factors that hindered the Adivasis from developing at the same pace as the rest of the state's population. The study has particular significance in the present scenario because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has supposedly magnified the prevailing structural inequalities and widened the digital divide in a state renowned for its development model. This paper is based on an ongoing ethnographic study since February 2018 in 3 Adivasi communities in Noolpuzha Panchayath of Wayanad district in Kerala.

Keywords: *Mass Media, Adivasi, Diffusion, Kerala*

Introduction

This article presents an ethnographic analysis of the appropriation of mass media in tribal Kerala, while, in many regions information and knowledge has played a vital role in the empowerment of marginalized groups. Mass media has brought in development in many indigenous communities as long as it is fully integrated into the communities' much broader sustainable livelihoods framework (Gigler et al., 2014: 256). United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues declared at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in the Information Society held in December 2003 in Geneva that "The prerequisite for the inclusion of indigenous peoples, nations and tribes in the Information Society is the provision of adequate infrastructure in States

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for telecommunications, radio, television, the internet and ICT providers, with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples, nations and tribes concerned. This requires access to basic community infrastructures such as electricity and energy sources. It is the desire of indigenous peoples, nations and tribes that the provision of infrastructure and energy is achieved in sustainable ways, and the use of alternative technologies is investigated to ensure the environment is protected. (UNPFII, 2013: 13).

In the classic study, The Passing of the Traditional Society, Daniel Lerner demonstrated a strong correlation between the indices of Mass media and the socio-economic and political development of the nation (Lerner, 1958: 24). Communication enables people to negotiate, develop and act on knowledge and facilitates the formation of public opinion in a democratic system. Social inclusion and participation through access to information and effective communication channels are integral parts of democratic governance and sustainable development for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups (Sapkota, 2013:12). Antonio Gramsci, himself a journalist, recognized the media as the 'most dynamic part' of society's ideological structure. From the Foucaultian perspective of power-knowledge interlinked with the mass media, media has the power to disseminate knowledge and information to individuals (Gramsci, 2000 :123).

Antony Giddens's theories are very much related to mass media and communication- his concepts of the separation of time and space and the 'disembedding social system' are widely used in communication literature. His disembedding model does take into account the enormous capacity that information technologies have to extend relationships in time and space (Giddens, 1990: 23). Giddens argues that communication and changes in the communication system are particularly important to the constitution and development of societies (Giddens, 1991: 24). People can arrive at their understanding of issues, consider and discuss ideas, and engage in public debates through communication. Antony Giddens further elaborates that modernity is inseparable from the mass media: initially, the printed word and then the electronic signal, which brought the possibility of almost instantaneous communication among geographically dispersed populations.

Mass media and development have been important topics of discussion in India. India has generated its own development and media theorists (Bhaumik,1996: 136; Gupta, 1984: 65; Joglekar, 1996: 47; Joseph, 1996:82; Melkota,1983, 1991:308; Rajasundaram, 1981:68; Yadava, 1996:66). Yadava believes that communication is a priority and necessary in order to achieve development (Yadava, 1996: 11). First, they have argued particularly for radio to be used for development in India. Second, they compared to radio and television as a medium for development and argued that radio has enormous potential to enhance and promote development activities in rural India.

For any technology to be successful, it should get diffused into the society and should be used and accepted by the people in society. The most commonly used technology adoption models can be divided into two categories. Individual adoption models, drawing mainly from the psychological and behavioral sciences and organizational adoption models, even though the underlying ideas of both categories are similar. Majority of the technology adoption research, both individual and organizational adoption, has been focusing on the user acceptance models (Oliveira & Martins, 2011: 110-121) which essentially follow a rationale that attitudes and previous experiences set the basis for the intentions to use and to eventually use a technology. While some theories emphasize that the past experiences affect the intentions to use a technology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975: 261), few other models set their time scope to future expectations to be achieved through the adoption or rejection of the technology. Perceived Usefulness is another factor which tells to what extent the subject thinks that using a system or a new technology will help the person to enhance his or her job performance (Davis, 1989: 319-340). A system that requires less effort from the user to learn will also be used more than a system requiring more laborious effort from the user (Venkatesh, 2000: 342-365).

Everett Rogers' in his theory of "diffusion of innovations" aims to explain how new ideas get adopted by a population. An idea, behaviour, or product that is seen as a novel by its audience is referred to as an innovation. According to Everett Rogers (2003:22), five qualities determine the diffusion of a particular innovation. The first criterion is relative advantage - this is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes by a particular group of users, measured in terms that matter to those users, like an economic advantage, social prestige, convenience, or satisfaction. The greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the more rapid its adoption rate is likely. Secondly, compatibility with existing values and practices. This reflects how closely a new idea is thought to align with the needs, values, and experiences of potential adopters. They will not adopt an invention as quickly as they would if it were in line with their values, norms, or habits. The third factor is triability; this is the degree to which an innovation can be experimented with on a limited basis. An innovation that is triable represents less uncertainty to the individual who is considering it. Observable results are the third and most important component. Individuals are more inclined to adopt an innovation if they can quickly see its benefits. Visible outcomes reduce ambiguity and encourage peer discussion of a novel concept because friends and neighbours of an adopter frequently inquire about them (Rogers, 2003: 24).

Everett Rogers believes that a population can be broken down into five different segments based on their propensity to adopt a specific innovation; it includes innovators, early adopters, early majorities, late majorities and

laggards. The adoption process begins with a tiny number of visionary, imaginative innovators. They are often fashion-conscious and love to be seen as leaders: social prestige is one of their biggest drivers. Their natural desire to be trendsetters causes the "take-off" of an innovation. Early adopters tend to be more economically prosperous, well-connected and well-informed and hence more socially respected. Early majorities are pragmatists, comfortable with moderately progressive ideas, but will not act without solid proof of benefits. They are followers who are influenced by mainstream fashions and wary of fads. They want to hear "industry standard" and "endorsed by normal, respectable folks". Neverthless late majority are conservative pragmatists who hate risk and are uncomfortable with new ideas. Practically their only driver is the fear of not fitting in; hence they will follow mainstream fashions and established standards. They are often influenced by the fears and opinions of laggards. Laggards, according to Rogers (2003:301), hold a traditional perspective and are less open to change and innovations than the rest of the population. People in the same category from the social system make up the majority of their interpersonal networks. On top of that, they play no leadership roles. They want to be certain that the innovation is effective before adopting it due to the limited resources and lack of awareness about advances.

However, many studies in rural India have proved that diffusion of mass media in rural India is very slow and people have limited access to mass media (Melkote, 1991:206; Gupta, 1996: 217; Sanjay, 1996: 345; Singh, 1996:146; Yadava, 1996:136) because of cost, the low literacy rate and the difficulties involved in distribution. Even though mass media is considered as a tool of development, its diffusion has been in very slow pace in the initial stage in our country. (Bhaumik,1996:36; Gupta, 1984: 165; Joglekar, 1996: 247; Joseph, 1996:82; Melkota,1983, 1991:308; Rajasundaram, 1981:68; Yadava, 1996:66). Yadava (1996) argues that diffusion of mass media in India is very slow, and hence the benefits of development have only so far reached the upper section of society.

Adivasis of Kerala

The State of Kerala was ranked first among major Indian States in the Human Development Index (HDI) at the three successive period of 1981, 1991 and 2001 (National Human Development Report,2001), even though its per capita income has come down in the recent years. The state stood ahead of its counterparts in terms of services such as health and education. Beneath the macro level, social indicators there are some hard micro realities influencing the Kerala Model (Ramanathaiyer & MacPherson, 2018: 206). Kerala's tribal communities (Scheduled tribes), Dalit (lower caste people), fishermen, cashew workers and coir workers lagged behind others in terms of social development indicators (Kurien, 1995 :70-90). The most important critic towards the Kerala model of development is that it could not make a successful model in

mainstreaming the marginalized sections of the society such as tribes and fishermen in particular. When the main stream of the society enjoyed the living standards of developed nations these communities remained to be deprived. The other factors, which lead to the deprivation of tribes were that the various social and community reform movements which shaped Kerala society progressively only benefitted a few communities and not the tribal communities, the land reform movements exempting the tribal communities who lived in the forests, various development induced displacements which affected the tribal people and the bureaucratic set up where the policies did not reach the adivasis.

The state Kerala is ahead of its counterparts in terms of literacy (93.91 percentage). Literacy rate among the tribes are 67 percent and 32.71 percentage of Kerala's tribal population is illiterate (Census 2011) which was 35 percent in 2001. A three percent growth is too less for a state like Kerala. Literacy mission activities is also worst in tribal areas. According to the study of C K Krishnan(2010:132), poor socio economic conditions are a major factor contributing towards the educational achievement and low aspirations on the part of tribal folk. A slight progress is observed only in the sector of child education among the Kerala tribes. Their primary School inscription rate is increasing by 1.39 percentage every year and the school dropout rate is also coming down from 4.53 percentage to 1.56 percentage during the period 2007 – 2012 **(**Omvedt, 1998:31 -33**).**

Wayanad district of northern Kerala has the largest population of Adivasis in the state. Adivasi communities constitute 18.76 per cent of the people of the Wayanad district and roughly one-third of all the Adivasi communities of the state. The main Adivasi communities of the district are Kurumar, Kuruchyar, Paniyar, Adiyar, Kattunaicker and Oorali. These communities had a historically different relation to land and forest. Kurumar and Kurichyar are traditionally agriculturists, Paniyar and Adiyar are agrarian slaves and bonded labours, Kattunaicker is the hunter and gathers, and Ooralis are artisans (Kjosavik & Shanmugaratam, 2016:7). Paniyar constitutes the largest Adivasi community in Wayanad (45%), followed by Kurumar (20%), Kurichiyar (17%), Kattunaicker (11%), Adiyar and Ooralis constitute the remaining 7 per cent.

Kurumar has settled agriculturists. The main crop cultivated is paddy, and the staple food is rice. They also herd cattle. They are also experts in hunting, which is a part of their culture. Kurumar community is spread over six districts. However, 98.18 per cent of their population is in the Wayanad district. There are 5252 families in the Kurumar community. The population includes 10625 males and 10750 females, registering the total population as 21375. They form 5.01 per cent of the Adivasis in the state.

Paniyar is the numerically largest among the Scheduled Tribes of

Kerala. But they are one of the most backward and poorest among the Scheduled Tribes in the state. The total population of the Paniyar community in the state is 92757, and they constitute 21.77 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes in the state. Paniyar was treated as slaves of their respective landlords and were victims of bonded labour system. Although they have been freed by the enactment of the Abolition of Bonded Labor system since 1976, they still subsist on agriculture labour or other manual work. They migrate seasonally to Coorg and other nearby places in Karnataka for employment (Xaxa, 2014;43.)

Kattunaicker comes under the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) under the Government of India. Kattunaicker is the only community coming under PVTG from the Wayanad district. In India, there are seventy-five communities classified under the list of PVTG by the Dhebar commission (1960-1961) based on four criteria - pre- agricultural system of existence, Stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy and a subsistence level of the economy. Kattunaicker is a community with the largest population among PVTGs in Kerala. Kattunaicker constitutes 4.69 per cent of the total Adivasi population. The total population of Kattunaicker is estimated as 19995, and an overwhelming majority of the population is concentrated in Wayanad (85.27%). The term Kattunaicker is derived from the word Kattu (forest) and Nayicken (lord). Thus Kattunaicker literally means lord of forests. Basically, Kattunaicker is a forest dwellers, and hence their social life and economy are forest-based. Among Adivasi communities, they are found to be the best honey collectors applying different techniques. They are mainly hunters and food gathers with sporadic shifting cultivation around their settlements. They still subsist on non-timber forest produce collection.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology was applied as the conduct of this research requires an immersion in the context with the attempt to understand the way the Adivasis construct, conceptualize and perceive the way mass media has diffused into their lives. Three Adivasi communities selected for the study are Kurumar, Paniyar and Kattunaicker in Wayanad district. These three groups were purposefully selected as they stand in different stages of development. Kurumur were the most advanced group; Paniyar stood in the mid-way of development, and Kattunaicker belonged to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. It was decided to collect data till it reached data saturation is reached. Thus data were collected from thirty Adivasi settlements, which include twelve Paniyar, ten Kurumar and eight Kattunaicker communities. In-depth interview was the primary tool of data collection, supplemented by focused group discussion, oral histories and participant observation. Check list/ Interview guide was the mail tool of data collection. Secondary data sources, internal (within the communities) and external (without the communities), were also gathered. The researcher has collected old photographs of the community and

their family functions and some video records of the different folk fests to know the extent of diffusion of mass media. The researcher also gathered data and information related to Adivasis and the general population from the Panchayath offices and Tribal Extension Office.

From Print to Smartphone and Internet: Tracing History of Mass Media among Adivasis in Wayanad

Print

The print was the first form of mass media in Kerala. Among the three Adivasi communities studied, the Kurumar community had access to print media by the 1970s. They were a landowning community and quite independent in the social and economic sphere. They had access to the traditional forms of learning. The earlier generations of the Kurumar community had recognized the importance of education. They had followed the tradition of inviting *Ashan* - local scholars to their households to teach the basic lessons in Malayalam and Mathematics and the traditional martial arts and rituals. Since Kurumar is one of the prominent agricultural producers in Wayanad, especially in paddy cultivation, it was vital for them to know the language and mathematics to calculate and exchange agricultural products with the traders. This motivated the Kurumar community to acquire literacy. Hence they were already in a privileged position when the print medium was in circulation in the area.

Kurumar community, being one of the most prominent social groups in Wayanad, was well connected with the migrant communities. Migrant communities, predominantly Christian communities, were associated with education and the print medium, and it facilitated the diffusion of newspapers and popular magazines in Wayanad. The association with the migrant communities also helped Kurumar to be the forerunner in education as well. The community recognizing the importance of education, even donated their land to the government for building schools. Such land was donated by the head of the community, known as Kurumar Karanavar (the eldest person). Since they had some connection with the political parties, they demanded schools in their respective regions. They also exploited the various government programmes to their advantage from the initial stage itself. Kurumar sent their children to the Scheduled Tribe Model Residential Schools and wisely used the government benefits such as reservation in schools and employment opportunities. All these factors provided a little edge to the Kurumar community over the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities in the early diffusion of the print medium.

Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities experienced a very different situation altogether. Being a slave community, Paniyar never got a chance to attain an education. So the literacy level of the Paniyar was very minimal. Consequently, it led to the low penetration of print media among Paniyar.

Purchasing newspapers or magazines in individual households was the rarest of the rare phenomenon. This was due to poverty, and many families could not afford it. In some of the Paniyar hamlets, NGOs or political parties donated newspapers to the community hall or some of the houses affiliated with the NGO or political parties. Only a few hamlets had this kind of facility, and newspaper reading was minimal. In 2009, when literacy became widespread in the tribal areas, and primary education became compulsory, the use of newspaper increased, though not widespread.

During the first decade of the 21st century, Wayanad witnessed many Adivasi movements, mainly to save their land. Paniyar were at the forefront of these movements. These movements, in general, and Muthanga Movement in particular, were important turning points in terms of media penetration in Wayanad. Until then, coverage of Adivasi issues in mainstream newspapers was relatively lesser. During the Muthanga movement, when Police opened fire leading to the death of a few Adivasi youths, Adivasi issues became a topic of heated discussion in Kerala. Leaders of the movements also recognized the importance of literacy, and they were eager to know how mainstream newspapers were dealing with their issues. This curiosity stimulated them to read newspapers, and it went on to become a habit amongst a good number of people who were actively engaged in these movements. Even then, the subscription to the newspaper was minimal among Paniyar households. They mainly depended on libraries and tea shops for reading the newspaper. This was mostly because they did not perceive the newspaper as an important part of their lives which they have to purchase with their very little income.

Being a primitive Adivasi group, Kattunaicker has been the least associated with the print media. They were mostly illiterate. Even though they had a language of their own, it was only used for verbal communication, and the written script was not there. They communicated histories, myths and folklore from one generation to the other through oral tradition. A sizeable part of the Adivasi population, especially from the Kattunaicker community, lived deep inside the forest. However, when about half of the geographical area of Noolpuzha Panchayath was declared to be a conservation zone, the government resettled all the people, including those Adivasi communities who lived deep inside the forests, to the periphery. Some of the communities chose surplus land, which the government owned in different places. Communities other than Adivasis were granted a fixed amount of money to buy land and house. The Adivasi communities preferred to live in the forest peripheries since their livelihood was entirely dependent on the forest. Since their forefathers lived in the forest's interiors, they had a minimal association with the outside world. Hence they were least connected with media or the outside world. Among the Kattunaicker communities, newspaper reading is a new habit which started when some of the students from the settlement started attending the Model Residential Schools. The forest department did not grant

permission to construct electric lines through the forest since it would adversely impact the forest animals. Hence many of the households did not have an electricity connection before they resettled to the periphery. This also, in turn, influenced the penetration of mass media devices among the Adivasi communities.

Regular readership of the newspaper and magazine is very low among the Adivasi communities even today. Only 10 per cent of the households have a subscription to newspapers. Sanjay (1996) argues that print media are more used by the rich than the poor (Sanjay, 1996; 33). While discussing the print media's inability to bring development in India, it was argued that the themes and problems discussed are of the city and hence meant for the urban middle classes (Yadava, 1996: 26). Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi and Desabhimani are the prominent Malayalam newspapers subscribed by the Adivasi communities. Kurumar community has more subscribers compared to Paniyar and Kattunaicker. In some of the hamlets, the subscription to newspapers is sponsored by the Panchayath and NGOs. Most of the youngsters stated that they read the newspaper when they went to the village junction. A few shops have a newspaper subscription, and they would read the main headings and sports page. The younger generations prefer magazines, especially those on sports and employment news. Lindahl et al. (1992) discuss various issues relating to media audiences. They emphasize that 'selectivity' is an important concept in the nature of audiences and argued audiences select media content according to their needs (Lindahl et al, 1992:4). Although there is a public library in the village, library membership is minimal in these communities. The community members pointed out that the major reason for less readership of the newspaper is the prevalence of radio, television and social media. These platforms now serve the purpose of reading newspapers.

Radio

Radio was the most popular mass medium among the Adivasis of Wayanad. An important reason for the prevalence of radio across all three Adivasi communities was that it was a relatively cheaper medium that required only a one-time investment. It was available in the local market and was easy to use by all sections of society, even the women and the elderly. Moreover, the radio did not require literacy or any new technical skills. Radio was the first mass medium which exposed the Adivasis to the socio-cultural traditions of the Malayali communities and paved the path for cultural diffusion. Radio dramas/ radio theatres played an important role in accelerating this process.

Radio first appeared in public spaces like the panchayat office, forest office and affluent households. Eventually, it got dispersed to the tea shops and barbershops. Initially, radio was bought as a community device and was kept commonplace. Radio was bought from Batheri, the nearest town to the hamlets. The control over the radio, then rested with the older people. In

some of the hamlets, the radio was kept in *Daivappura (Gods House)* along with the idol of Gods. Ayyappan (62), one Adivasi member, reminisce about the introduction of radio to their hamlet. "I am not sure about the year. I was 12 or 13 years old when my father bought a radio for hamlet. He went to Batheri to buy something. He heard a beautiful song on the radio and immediately got attracted to the device. So he pooled money from his brothers, and together, they bought a black Philips radio. Initially, he used to wait for the song that he heard from Batheri".

All India Radio (AIR) has three levels of broadcasting: the national, the regional and the local. The national stations broadcast programmes that include centrally produced news bulletins in Hindi and English, music, plays, sports and other spoken-word programmes. The regional stations are located in different states of India and serve regional audiences with a similar mix to the national stations but emphasize the regional language. Local radio is a comparatively new concept in the history of broadcasting in India. These radio stations are flexible, area-specific, serve small areas and broadcast in the regional language (Anjaneyulu, 1989: 132; Fisher, 1989: 145). The state channel of AIR was known as Akashvani in Kerala. Akashvani Calicut, Thrissur, Kochi, Alappuzha and Trivandrum were available at Wayanad. News and programmes from Delhi were also available. All the regional programmes had a specific time slot. News, music, educational, agricultural, and health-related programmes for the youth and women were broadcasted. They used to switch between different radio stations. Music and film songs were the most important and exciting programme of all. Nevertheless, the Kurumar community paid more attention to the educational and agricultural content since they were the only landowning community.

The Adivasi communities were not aware of many concepts such as state, country, constitution, law and order system, policies, and government programmes. They learned about all these from the radio. Karuppan (89), from the hamlet observes, "I first heard about the national emergency from the radio. I was not aware of what a national emergency is and how it was before that. I was aware of Indira Gandhi and the Congress party. When the government declared an emergency, I thought some problems were occurring in the country. But it never affected our daily life. I did not have anyone to discuss the political matters in this hamlet. So I used to go to Naicketty, the nearest junction in our village, where people listen to radio and discuss the issues there. In this area, almost everybody supported the Congress party at that time, and nobody had any issues". In general, however, radio was met with enthusiasm, a discourse that "glorified radio's special properties" to unify disparate communities and build a national culture (Hilmes, 1997: 98).

After 1991, India witnessed economic reforms. Market liberalization had become India's economic policy. Radio began to be imported from different countries. By this time, radio had become widespread in Kerala and was

affordable for ordinary people. Paniyar and Kattunaicker also became more connected with the local market and places outside their hamlets. They started working in different sectors apart from those entirely depending on forest or paddy fields. Economic transactions became very typical, and they also started demanding money rather than other basic products. Paniyar also migrated to places like Kodagu and Gundalpetu, rural districts in Karnataka, for work. Baiju recalls the time his father bought a radio from Gundalpetu after working for two months on the Ginger plantation. He had accumulated money to buy a radio, which was his first significant investment. Until then, he never realized the importance of saving a substantial amount of money. The dream of owning a radio stimulated him to migrate to Karnataka. That was the first radio in hamlet.

In the initial years of its penetration, radio broadcast in Malayalam was scarce, and there was a specific time scheduled for it. The listeners used to wait for these programmes after completing all their household chores in advance. Over time, the duration of Malayalam programmes increased- from a few hours to full-time, and different broadcasting stations cropped up in different parts of Kerala. With the launch of the private radio in Kerala in 2007, radio became more entertainment-oriented. Nonetheless, older people preferred Akashvani over private radio channels since they got used to listening to Akashvani programmes.

The dynamics of radio listening now differ according to gender, age and space. Frequency of listening to the radio substantially decreased over the years among the Kurumar and Paniyar communities. Even though many houses possess a radio, it is not functioning now. The presence of other mass media devices in the household could be held responsible for this diminution. However, a small percentage of older people and women still have an inclination towards the radio. They listen to the radio from morning till night. Since older people do not have much work in the household, their primary recreation has been listening to the radio. Members from the older generation complained that if the radio becomes dysfunctional, the family members will not repair it for them. The ethnographic study among Todas also shows that radio is used at different times of the day and in various places in their households, settlements and fields. (Jayaprakash, 2000: 96).

Animal grazing is one significant means of livelihood among the Kattunaicker community. They take the radio along with them while going to the forest with their livestock. Since the Kattunaicker community lived inside the forests for a considerable period of time, radio was the only accessible mass media device and companion in their daily lives. Therefore, they still possess a radio in their household, in contrast to the Kurumar and Paniyar communities, who have become less interested in the radio.

Television

After radio, television is another popular mass medium among the Adivasis of Wayanad. Television was first introduced in Wayanad by economically better-off communities like Christians, Muslims and Nairs. The major reason that prevented the Adivasis communities from buying television was that it cost a considerable amount of money.

Television penetrated Adivasi households in 2000 and rapidly became "the dominant institution in popular culture" (Black, 1994; 64). It transcended age, gender and community differences and soon became the most popular medium. However, it became familiar and widespread only after 2010. In the initial years, possession of television varied based on geographical differences and types of communities. In the initial phase, Kurumar households had more access to television, while it was absent among the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities. But today, more than 60 per cent of the Kurumar households and almost half of the Paniyar and 45 per cent of the Kattunaickers own television. All these communities had few settlements inside the forest, where the diffusion of TV was almost nil until the COVID-19 pandemic spread. However, when the children had to attend online classes, with some of the teachers' initiative, television was sponsored by outside people in these settlements. Among the three communities, Kattunaicker used to live in the most interior of the forest. So their transition was comparatively slower than the other communities. Later, the government started the project of relocating them to the boundaries of the forest. The conventional homes changed to concrete houses, and they had electricity connections. The relocation to the border of the forest and greater association with the other communities and people provided different sources of earning for them. They became more attached to the market than ever before and started to explore different objects. But for quite a long time, the Kattunaicker community was more indulged in the radio than television. One reason was that they never had the practice of sitting in the house for a long time. They would go to the forest when the sun rose and return very late.

The Kurumar first began to watch television from their neighbourhood. Since the Kurumar community was well-connected with their non-tribal neighbourhood and shared somewhat similar social positions, they were welcomed by the latter households who owned a television. However, they could not visit such houses every time because they might have guests or other functions there. The television was always kept in the house's entrance hall so that others could also watch it.

Among the three Adivasi communities, Kurumar were the first to buy a television in their home. They were the only community capable of spending such a considerable amount of money on television back then. Electricity was also a necessity for television to function. During those times, the government

had not started providing electricity free of cost to the Adivasi communities. Most of the Adivasi hamlets were deep inside the forests during those days, and getting an electric line was expensive. Thus, the lack of electricity inevitably led to the absence of television.

Krishnan (46), who hails from the Kurumar community, narrated the history of television in his settlement. "Thomachan, a migrant from Pala, a region in central Kerala, was the first to introduce television in this region. He had a plantation and exporting business. He also owned hectares of paddy fields. Our family used to work for him for years, and we shared a cordial relationship with him. He bought a television 22 years ago. He was aware that all the people from neighbouring houses would come to watch the television. So he created a verandah attached to the front portion of the house and laid coconut leaf mats. All of us used to go to his home after dinner and watch a movie every night. This social gathering improved interaction with members of all age groups within the community and outside. Initially, the tribes used to bring DVD cassettes from the town and later, we started pooling money and buying DVD cassettes of different movies. As time went on, one of our relatives in the neighbourhood bought a television and then we stopped going to Thomachan's house". Between 1983 and 1991, Richard Pace and his colleagues conducted a study of television- viewing in the Amazon town of Gurupá. Based on the popular custom of watching TV at the homes of friends and family members who owned TV sets, Pace (1993:189) concluded that in Gurupá, television viewing would actually have increased "one's social contact with family, neighbours, friends, and even strangers.

In the Paniya hamlet, television was installed in 1998. The Panchayath had provided a television to the hamlet. It was kept in one of the households since they did not have a community hall. People used to watch television together. One educated person, who had completed higher secondary education, was appointed to manage the television. One of the interesting observations was that when television started working in hamlet, some men stopped consuming alcohol at night and started watching television. But after three years, the television stopped working, after which they did not have television for almost five years. When the television became dysfunctional, those men again started consuming alcohol. It was in 2005, television again reached a settlement when a family bought a new television set.

Janaki (42) pointed out that her husband drank alcohol and quarreled with her every night before television was introduced in their hamlet. After television was introduced, he was hooked up to the television and stopped consuming alcohol at night. "We will go to watch the television with our child, who was two years old then. When he stopped consuming alcohol every day, he could save some money and buy some necessary items for our house. Television brought happiness in my life." Pace (1993 :188) observed in the

village he studied, a general "displacement of public activities" brought about by television viewing. The night activities of men in the bar, he wrote, were "significantly curtailed" by routine TV viewing.

In the initial years after introducing television in Wayanad, the Kattunaicker community responded to television less enthusiastically. In addition to the community's geographic isolation, economic backwardness was another reason for the slow diffusion of television. Kattunaicker community was always dependent on the forest for their livelihood. They never had the habit of saving a considerable amount of money. So buying television was not easy for the Kattunaicker.

Bomman (65) from the Kattunaicker community said that his son bought their first television in 2006 after initial resistance. The *Mooppan* of the neighbouring hamlet warned him that the television would destroy their culture and tradition. After the introduction of television in the adjacent hamlet, youngsters had become less interested in the *Daivam Kanal* (a religious function) and other traditional rituals. So he did not want to buy a television in his house. However, his younger son was adamant about purchasing a television before the FIFA world cup 2006. Rogers stated that compatibility, which is the degree to which new technology is perceived as consistent with the existing values, beliefs, experiences, and needs of potential adopters, affects the individual decision to choose the technology (Rogers, 2003: 111).

Earlier, television was seen as a magical object which showed them things which they had never experienced or seen in their life. One of the teachers said that "Kattunaicker students had difficulty in mingling with the general students since they were not capable of speaking Malayalam. It was challenging for me to teach them because they were not aware of many things like trains, ships and aero planes. It was not even in their imagination. I struggled a lot to explain all these objects which existed in our world. Television helped me a lot to overcome this problem. Ever since the television came to their houses, they have started to understand many things. They have also overcome the language barrier to a great extent. The films and other TV programs, which they watch regularly, have helped them overcome this problem. However, a few students are still struggling with the language. Earlier, the Anganwadis near the Adivasi hamlets were responsible for teaching basic language and enabling them to go to schools. But now mass media is doing that work, and it has helped not only the Anganwadi teachers but also the school teachers".

Watching television became one of the main hobbies of most community members. Television replaced evening gatherings and traditional folk songs and dance the night. Since all three Adivasi communities were kin-bounded and community-oriented, these social gatherings played a crucial role in their cooperation and interaction. Television transformed these interactions from

the community level to the family level since the entire family gathered in front of the television for a prolonged time. This transformation also reduced the importance of the chieftain. People no longer gathered at the chieftain's place every night. Their timings were adjusted to watch movies. Barrios (1988) observed a similar pattern in Venezuela, where "television is embedded in such a way in family life that programming regulates much of the family life organization of time (Barrios, 1988: 22). Similarly, Behl observed that the introduction of television in an Indian village "rearranged the use of time" and caused an entirely new category to emerge - "time for viewing TV." "Rearrangement of time," she wrote, "now includes an element of leisure, modelled out from the TV for relaxation and joy, thus shifting the orientation of activity from the outside to the inside of the house" (Behl, 1988: 155).

Today Adivasi communities in Wayanad spend more time in front of the television than any other mass media device. Barrios (1988: 49-79) observed a similar pattern in a tribal setting in Venezuela, where television got embedded in such a way in family life that programming regulates much of the family life. Adivasi communities, especially the Paniyar and Kattunaicker, live in a common settlement, and the distance between different houses is very less. Moreover, most of the inhabitants of a particular settlement would be relatives. This made it furthermore convenient for them to visit the adjacent homes to watch television. The prime time of the television starts at 7 PM, which is watched mostly by women on all days and later by the entire family during weekends.

Kids are interested in cartoon channels, while youngsters are more interested in music and movie channels. Watching news channels is comparatively lesser among the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities, whereas the Kurumar community pays more attention to the news channels. The major reason for these varied interests among communities is that the Kurumar community is more interested in social and political issues. In contrast, Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities have less awareness since they are educationally and socially backwards. In some of the Kurumar households, there is a strict restriction on watching television serials at night. Instead of serials, men prefer watching news bulletins and debates on different Malayalam channels from 8 PM to 10 PM. A small number of the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities, especially those working in the government sector, actively participate in political parties and watch the news bulletins on Asianet, Manorama, and Mathrubhumi news channels. Those affiliated with the communist party prefer watching Kairali News, a channel affiliated with that party. The majority of people prefer to watch regional news channels rather than national or state news channels. Wayanad vision and Malanad news are the prominent local and regional channels in Wayanad. It provides reports from the nearest region, and they could relate better to such news. Both these channels cover many Adivasi topics as well. Nowadays, Adivasi communities

themselves call up these regional news channels to report something that they feel is relevant and demands media attention. Many Adivasi movements, such as Muthanga and Chengara, received attention due to the influence of the mass media and the increased awareness of the community to such issues, in which mass media has the most prominent role.

Mobile Phone

Land phone connections were introduced among the Adivasi communities in the year 1998. A few tribal families, especially from the Kurumar community, owned land phone connection during those days and was considered a status symbol. The land phone provided instant communication, especially when people worked outside the hamlet and communicated health issues. Since Wayanad district did not have a specialty hospital, they mostly depended on the Calicut Medical College for advanced treatments.

Over time, the mobile phone became a widely used mass medium among the Adivasis in Wayanad, mostly among youngsters. The mobile phone was introduced in 2003, and by the year 2008, it had become a common mass medium among the younger generation of the community. Mobile phones were first introduced in the community by college-going students and youngsters who went to work outside. In the initial years of its penetration, they used to own basic mobile phones/ handsets. At that time, the mobile phone was used only for communication purposes. The use of a mobile phone was also limited because the call rates were higher. Mobile phones were not considered imperative by the Adivasi communities since all their relatives lived within their vicinity. Only the Kurumar community had achieved some geographical mobility in the early years of the 21st century. They migrated and started working in different parts of India, especially in the defense sector. They also began to enroll the younger generation in higher educational institutions in different parts of Kerala. When members of the family moved out of the hamlets, they had to take land phone connections and later mobile phone connections to stay connected. It was with the Chinese smartphone revolution in the local markets that the diffusion of smartphones accelerated. The frequency of use of smartphones witnessed massive inflation among the Adivasi communities as well. Since then, the smartphone has become the primary medium of entertainment. They collected movies and music from the mobile shops on their memory card and watched them on their smartphones. It became a normal routine among the youth. They also exchanged these videos with their friends after watching them. Mobile games also became widespread among the Adivasi communities.

Mobile phone penetration among youngsters in Adivasi communities in Wayanad was pervasive and tremendous. It got diffused among the youth of the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities. It was a prominent medium among youngsters who bought them even before electricity or a proper network

connection was available in their hamlet. Neither geographic isolation nor lack of electricity prevented the youngsters from using mobile phones. Youngsters living in the interior forests came to the towns, charged the mobiles and used it. Although living situations and other factors of Indigenous youth differ widely across the world, even those who lack food and clothing may still have their own smartphones (Varzon, 2013:239-55). They also explored and experimented with different, advanced mobile phones which entered the markets from time to time. Mobile phones provided symbolic meaning to their everyday life. Some of them considered it a prestige and status symbol. The smartphone became an inevitable component for them, and they started spending a considerable amount of time and money on smartphones. With time, accessing the internet over mobile phones has become common among Adivasi youth, and along with that, social media also became part of their everyday life. The familiarity that many Indigenous young people have with modern technology was reported in many studies as giving them a sense of fearlessness and control when approaching the use of new platforms (Edmonds et al., 2012: 1-23; Kral, 2010: :3-13). All these developments had a vast impact on Adivasi youth, especially in the Kurumar community, as their progress was akin to the other so-called 'mainstream communities in terms of internet and social media use. During this period, mobile phones also became prevalent among most community members – especially among older women and men. The mobile phone was no longer just an entertainment tool among youngsters but also a communication tool, even among the elders. But the latter group was not very much inclined towards smartphones. They chose basic phones since they would mostly be in the field or the forest for work.

After 2012, Facebook and Orkut became prevalent among youngsters in the Kurumar community, especially among educated youths and college-going ones. They were the first to open Facebook accounts on their mobile phone or college computers with the help of their friends. The government has provided laptops to some students, especially those who have enrolled in professional courses. Kurumar community has availed this benefit more than the Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities since they have more college-enrolled students. Through the college-attending youth, it became popular amongst their friends in hamlet. Role modelling (or peer observation) is the key motivational factor in the adoption and diffusion of technology (Parisot, 1997 ; 5-13. Indigenous young people use social media without any control or input from the non-Indigenous community, which controls the larger, more conventional media forms (Healy, 2013:1-8; Radoll, 2014:11-14; Lumby, 2010:39-68). This also provides a means for the Indigenous young people to seek information for themselves, enabling new forms of agency (Kral, 2011; 14-16).

It was mostly the Kurumar community members who got the opportunity to attend the college, while the Paniyar and Kattunaicker were a comparatively small number in the colleges. Those who had accounts helped

their friends create an account and taught them basics like sending a friend request, uploading photographs, chatting with people, etc. The unique nature of media allows people with low literacy to grasp an intuitive understanding of the technology. Many digital processes can be remembered spatially and incorporate a creative icon-based approach that layers images, sounds, texts and symbols. This is especially important for those sections of Indigenous populations where young people may be below the national literacy standards (Healy, 2013:1-8; Kral, 2010:3-13).

In the initial period, these people were cynical towards uploading their image as a profile picture. Instead, they uploaded photos of their favorite film stars, sportspersons and their favorite Gods. Social networking sites are increasingly used among young Indigenous people for communication and for uploading content, rather than more traditional text-based interactions such as emails (Healy, 2013:1-8; Radoll, 2014; Kral, 2010:3-13). Most of the Facebook users from the community did not display anything that exposed their identity. Some major activities on Facebook were: 1) sharing photos of the forest, forest animals and nature, 2) following their favourite actors and actresses, 3) following the updates of their favourite sports stars, especially football players, 4) sharing photos of the football players, especially those of Lionel Messi and Christiano Ronaldo and 5) following the local news related to the Panchayath. But studies based on long-term ethnographic research among indigenous youth in other developed countries reported a transformation in Indigenous youth who are less 'shamed' than previous generations and more comfortable with having their names or images in the public sphere. From shyness, it has reached a stage when social media allows Indigenous young people to present their Indigenous identity to others, which helps them further define and affirm that identity and provides opportunities for Indigenous young people to 'perform' their Indigenous identities online (Edmonds et al., 2012: 36; Healy, 2013:1-8; Kral, 2010: 3-13; Lumby, 2010:39-68; Karl, 2014:171-89).

WhatsApp and Instagram have now become popular among Adivasi youth in Wayanad. The communities have also created several WhatsApp groups, each serving a different purpose. They especially started to attend the local self-government, health department, and forest department meetings, where the various communities gathered together for a common goal. It created a community feeling among the different Adivasi groups. WhatsApp groups worked as instrumental mediators to coordinate all these communities and convey their concerns to the authorities. Local authorities like ward members, tribal promoters, Asha workers, Anganwadi teachers, civil police officers, forest department officials, etc., would also be part of these common platforms. It provides a virtual public sphere to its different stakeholders. Social media also has the potential to support Indigenous priorities of community and communication, with some Indigenous leaders identifying the mesh of interactions present in social networks as similar to ancient imagery and ancient

communication channels (Pearson et al., 2014). The sharing of information online also provides opportunities for transmitting intergenerational knowledge within and between Indigenous communities, an important aspect of Indigenous culture. In Wayanad, this is used by youngsters involved in the Adivasi movement to communicate information. Social media is seen to "allow for the continuation, expansion, and transformation of various 'traditions', from a traditional language to traditional activism" (Petray, 2014 :923-40).

Conclusion

The transition of the Adivasi communities from print media to electronic media took at least 30 years, but that from electronic media to digital media was very fast and phenomenal. Newspapers and magazines started to penetrate the Adivasi hamlets from the 1970s onwards. But the rate of penetration was negligible. Kurumar, the landowning community, was only capable of subscribing to newspapers and magazines. Radio and Television also took some time to invade the communities, but less than the print media. However, one can witness a rapid diffusion of modern media like mobile phones, the internet and social media among the Adivasi communities. As Rogers cites it was the relative advantage, observable results, the social prestige associated with it and the satisfaction of using mobile phone, internet and social media that led to its rapid adoption when compared to others. The benefits from phones, such as the ability to call, to save time, contact people in distant places has resulted in greater efficiency and increased adoption. There was resistance among a few community members in bringing television and mobile phones to their hamlet as they believed it would destroy their culture. Yet the experiences of the people who have used it, set the basis for the intentions to use and to eventually adopt the technology. It gave symbolic meaning to their everyday life. Some of them considered it a prestige and status symbol. Penetration of computers and laptops remains comparatively lesser among the Adivasi communities due to the economic reasons and the perceived difficulty in using it.

Despite the social, geographic and physical factors that restrict its access, mass media has penetrated the lives of the Adivasis of Wayanad, especially the youth. Youth and the migrant communities are early adopters of mass media technologies. Since the Kurumar community was economically in a better position, they adopted mass media after the diffusion among the early majority. Paniyar and Kattunaicker hold the position of laggards since they were skeptical in the initial diffusion period. However, few households among Paniyar and Kattunaicker communities belong to the late majority. The involvement of many Indigenous young people in social media may be partially due to the medium's multimedia nature, which lends itself to the orally and visually focused cultures of Indigenous communities rather than modern literacy. The study clearly demonstrates a changing world in which

communication and engagement with the outside are considered pertinent and accepted by the Adivasi community. The high utilization of mass media by the Adivasi community could bridge the gap between the Adivasi and the non-Adivasi community. It could contribute to interventions, monitoring and evaluation of different programs.

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