

MASS MEDIA, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSFORMATION: A STUDY ON KERALA

*Thesis Submitted to the
University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

By

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CERTIFICATE

I, hereby certify that the thesis entitled "**Mass Media, Political Communication and Transformation: A Study on Kerala**" submitted by Nishanth N, is an authentic work carried under my guidance. I also certify that neither any part of the work nor the whole of it has been submitted for a degree here or elsewhere. The Thesis is hereby submitted to the University of Calicut for examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science in the Faculty of Humanities.

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I, Nishanth N., hereby declare that this Ph.D. thesis entitled “Mass Media, Political Communication and Transformation: A Study on Kerala” is based on the original research work carried out by me under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Zacaria T. V., in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. The contents of this thesis have undergone a plagiarism check using iThenticate software at the University of Calicut Central Library, and the similarity index was found to be within the permissible limit. I further declare that no part of this work, either in full or in part, has been published elsewhere and that the thesis is entirely free from AI-generated content.

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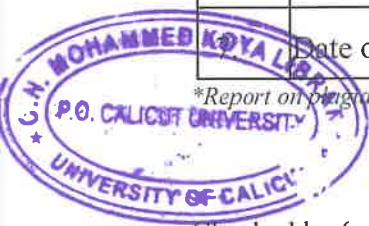
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MASS MEDIA, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSFORMATION: A STUDY ON KERALA

ABSTRACT

The evolution of mass media has profoundly reshaped the landscape of political communication, and Kerala presents a distinctive context for examining this transformation. Known for its high literacy rate, vibrant political culture, and early adoption of new communication technologies, Kerala provides fertile ground to understand how media transitions from print and broadcast to digital platforms have influenced political discourse and participation. This study examines the historical trajectory of media in Kerala, beginning with the emergence of newspapers, which played a crucial role in the public sphere by mobilizing opinion and fostering political consciousness during both the pre- and post-independence periods. The advent of broadcast media, marked by the establishment of All India Radio in the 1950s and the introduction of television in the late 1980s, further expanded the scope of political communication, enabling the dissemination of political messages to a broader audience. With the liberalization of media in the 1990s and the rise of private television channels, political debates became more immediate, visual, and populist, often shaping electoral narratives and influencing public perception.

In the contemporary era, digital and social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have redefined political engagement by enabling participatory communication and alternative discourses. These platforms have democratized information flow, allowing ordinary citizens, activists, and online communities to challenge traditional hierarchies of communication and express dissent, thereby transforming Kerala's public sphere into a more dynamic and contested space. However, this transformation has also introduced challenges such as polarization, misinformation, and the corporatization of digital spaces. By integrating historical analysis with recent developments, this study explores how Kerala's media ecosystem has transitioned from traditional print journalism to an interactive

ബഹുജനമാധ്യമങ്ങളിലെ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ആശയവിനിമയത്തിന്റെ പരിണാമം:
കേരളത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തിയുള്ള പഠനം

സംഗ്രഹം

ബഹുജന മാധ്യമരംഗത്ത് സംഭവിച്ച മാറ്റങ്ങൾ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ആശയവിനിമയത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യതകൾ പുനർനിർവ്വചിച്ചു. ഈ സാധ്യതകൾ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള സവിശേഷ സന്ദർഭം കേരള മുൻനിർത്തിയുള്ള പഠനമാണ്. ഉയർന്ന സാക്ഷരതാനിരക്ക്, ഊർജ്ജസ്വലമായ രാഷ്ട്രീയ സംസ്കാരം, പുതിയ ആശയവിനിമയ സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യകളുടെ പെട്ടെന്നുള്ള സ്വാംശീകരണം എന്നിവ കേരളത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകതകളാണ്. അച്ചടി-പ്രക്ഷേപണരംഗത്തുനിന്ന് ഡിജിറ്റൽ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമുകളിലേക്കുള്ള മാധ്യമപരിവർത്തനം രാഷ്ട്രീയ വ്യവഹാരങ്ങളെയും പങ്കാളിത്തത്തെയും എങ്ങനെ സ്വാധീനിച്ചുവെന്ന് മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കേരളീയ സാഹചര്യം ഉചിതമാണ്. പത്രങ്ങളുടെ ആവിർഭാവത്തോടെ ആരംഭിച്ച കേരളീയ മാധ്യമചരിത്രമാണ് ഈ പഠനത്തിലൂടെ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നത്. സാതത്ര്യത്തിന് മുമ്പും ശേഷവുമുള്ള കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ പൊതുജനസമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അഭിപ്രായസമാഹരണത്തിലും രാഷ്ട്രീയാവബോധം വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുന്നതിലും പത്രങ്ങൾ നിർണായക പങ്കുവഹിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 1950-കളിൽ ഓൾ ഇന്ത്യാ റേഡിയോയുടെയും 1980-കളുടെ അവസാനത്തിൽ ടെലിവിഷന്റെയും വരവോടെയാണ് പ്രക്ഷേപണമാധ്യമങ്ങളുടെ തുടക്കം. പ്രക്ഷേപണമാധ്യമങ്ങളുടെ ആവിർഭാവത്തോടെ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ആശയവിനിമയത്തിന്റെ വ്യാപ്തി വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കാനും വലിയൊരു കൂട്ടം ജനങ്ങളിലേക്ക് രാഷ്ട്രീയ സന്ദേശങ്ങൾ പ്രചരിപ്പിക്കാനും സാധിച്ചു. 1990-കളിലെ മാധ്യമങ്ങളുടെ ഉദാരവൽക്കരണവും സ്വകാര്യ ടെലിവിഷൻ ചാനലുകളുടെ ഉദയവും മൂലം രാഷ്ട്രീയ സംവാദങ്ങൾ അടിയന്തിരസ്വഭാവമുള്ളതും ദൃശ്യപരവും ജനപ്രിയവുമായി മാറി. ഇത് പലപ്പോഴും തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ് ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുകയും പൊതുജനധാരണയെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു.

ഫേസ്ബുക്ക്, എക്സ് (മുമ്പ് ട്വിറ്റർ), വാട്സാപ്പ്, ഇൻസ്റ്റഗ്രാം, യൂട്യൂബ് തുടങ്ങിയ ഡിജിറ്റൽ-സോഷ്യൽ മീഡിയ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമുകൾ പങ്കാളിത്ത ആശയവിനിമയവും ബദൽ സംവാദങ്ങളും സാധ്യമാക്കിക്കൊണ്ടാണ് ഈ കാലത്ത് രാഷ്ട്രീയ ഇടപെടലിനെ പുനർനിർവ്വചിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ പ്ലാറ്റ്ഫോമുകൾ വിവരപ്രവാഹത്തെ ജനാധിപത്യവൽക്കരിക്കുകയും സാധാരണ പൗരർക്കും ആക്ടിവിസ്റ്റുകൾക്കും ഓൺലൈൻ കൂട്ടായ്മകൾക്കും പരമ്പരാഗത ആശയവിനിമയശ്രേണികളെ വെല്ലുവിളിക്കാനും വിയോജിപ്പുകൾ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാനും അവസരമൊരുക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. ഇത് കേരളീയ പൊതുജനസമൂഹത്തെ കൂടുതൽ ചലനാത്മകവും സംവാദപരവുമായ ഇടമാക്കി. എന്നിരുന്നാലും ഈ പരിവർത്തനം ധ്രുവീകരണം, തെറ്റായ വിവരങ്ങളുടെ പ്രചരണം, ഡിജിറ്റൽ ഇടങ്ങളുടെ കോർപ്പറേറ്റൈസേഷനും തുടങ്ങിയ വെല്ലുവിളികൾക്കും ഇടയാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. കേരളത്തിലെ മാധ്യമസാഹചര്യം പത്രമാധ്യമങ്ങളിൽനിന്ന് സംവേദനാത്മക ഡിജിറ്റൽ അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലേക്ക് എങ്ങനെ മാറിയെന്നും ഈ മാറ്റത്തോടൊപ്പമുള്ള ജനാധിപത്യവൽക്കരണ സാധ്യതകളും ധാർമ്മികപ്രതിസന്ധികളും എന്തൊക്കെയാണെന്നും വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുകയാണ് ഈ പഠനം. സമകാല സംഭവവികാസങ്ങളുമായി ചരിത്രവിശകലനം സമന്വയിപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ടാണ് ഇത് സാധ്യമാക്കുന്നത്. ബഹുജന മാധ്യമങ്ങൾക്ക് സംഭവിച്ച പരിവർത്തനം കേരളത്തിലെ രാഷ്ട്രീയ ആശയവിനിമയരീതികളെ മാത്രമല്ല, പൊതുജന പങ്കാളിത്തത്തിന്റെയും രാഷ്ട്രീയാവബോധത്തിന്റെയും സ്വഭാവംതന്നെ പുനർനിർമ്മിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന നിഗമനത്തിലേക്കാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം എത്തിച്ചേരുന്നത്. രാഷ്ട്രീയ ആശയവിനിമയമെന്നത് വിവരങ്ങളുടെ കൈമാറ്റം മാത്രമല്ല, ജനാധിപത്യമൂല്യങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും സാമൂഹികമൂല്യങ്ങളുടെ ക്ഷയത്തെക്കുറിച്ചും പൗരരെ നിരന്തരം ബോധവൽക്കരിക്കുന്നതു കൂടിയാണ്.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	: Aam Aadmi Party
AD	: Anno Domini
AI	: Artificial Intelligence
AICC	: All India Congress Committee
AIR	: All India Radio
AMMA	: Association of Malayalam Movie Artists
AR	: Augmented Reality
BARC	: Broadcast Audience Research Council
BBC	: British Broadcasting Corporation
BCE	: Before Common Era
BJP	: Bharatiya Janata Party
BLM	: Black Lives Matter
BREXIT	: British Exit
BSP	: Bahujan Samaj Party
CCTV	: Closed-Circuit Television
CD	: Compact Disc
CNBC	: Consumer News and Business Channel
CNN	: Cable News Network
COVID-19	: Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPI	: Communist Party of India
CPIM	: Communist Party of India Marxist
DD News	: Doordarshan News
DTH	: Direct-to-Home
E-Paper	: Electronic Newspaper
EU	: European Union
FM	: Frequency Modulation
HuffPost	: Huffington Post
IAC	: India Against Corruption
IAS	: Indian Administrative Service
ICIJ	: International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
INC	: Indian National Congress
IT	: Information Technology
ITV	: Independent Television
IUML	: Indian Union Muslim League

K-DISC	: Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council
K-Rail	: Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited
KFON	: Kerala Fiber Optic Network
KPAC	: Kerala Peoples Arts Club
KPCC	: Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee
KSRTC	: Kerala State Road Transport Corporation
KUWJ	: Kerala Union of Working Journalists
LDF	: Left Democratic Front
MIB	: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
NAMO	: Narendra Modi
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	: National Congress Party
NDTV	: New Delhi Television Limited
NHS	: National Health Service
NPR	: National Public Radio
NSS	: Nair Service Society
NYPD	: New York City Police Department
OWS	: Occupy Wall Street
PCI	: Press Council of India
PWD	: Public Works Department
RSS	: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RTP	: Real-time Transport Protocol
SDPI	: Social Democratic Party of India
SNDP	: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana
TOI	: Times of India
TRAI	: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
TRPs	: Target Rating Points
TV	: Television
U.S.	: United States
UDF	: United Democratic Front
UK	: United Kingdom
VR	: Virtual Reality
WCC	: Women in Cinema Collective
WTO	: World Trade Organization
XR	: Extended Reality

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Media is used as the key agent between the government and the people, its position and role as a mediator that informs, educates and influences the society. Media in Kerala has taken various turns over the years that has redefined political communication and has now redefined the public sphere. This research discussed media and politics in Kerala and how it is involved in changing the political behaviour and communication process in the state through corporate dominated media, new media, and changes in propaganda apparatus. Effective political communication and mass media are indispensable in a democracy. Democracy is a system of government in which the power is vested in the people, which is essential for the progress, justice and peace of a society. It empowers people, values and protects human rights, and treats everyone equally. Conflict is resolved in monarchy at the expense of force but in democracy at the expense of discussion, bargaining and court of law. Besides opening the prospect of reforms and social movements in the society, democracy leads to dignity and equality. Democracy is basically the system of government that focuses on the control of people in the government through their voice. Politics provides the means for decision-making and leadership, but political communication acts as a bridge between citizens and those in power. In a democratic society, political communication is not just speeches or campaigns, it is a vital process that ensures transparency, accountability, inclusion and socialisation.

Political communication is the use of the media by governments to communicate to citizens concerning policies, elections as well as issues of the country. It allows individuals to know and make decisions, share their view and hold leaders in check. Political debates, public statements, campaigns, speeches, writings, and conferences, whether on traditional media or digital platforms (new media), all contribute to the flow of political communication. Through such communication, informed citizens are more likely to vote and engage in critical thinking,

sociopolitical analysis, and meaningful dialogue, which strengthens democratic institutions.

Here, the study analyses the political communication of the mass media. The media is a means of communication, often considered an intermediary between the government and the public. The function or nature of the media is to communicate with society and provide information and news to the public (McQuail, 2010). Political communication as the process involving the creation, dissemination, and exchange of political messages among citizens, media, and political institutions, and discusses its interdisciplinary nature combining media studies, political science, and strategic communication (Graber & Dunaway, 2017). This communication or discourse occurs throughout the political process in the international political system and in national, state, and local political systems. The political communication process mainly includes the content of each message, the development and transmission of messages, and how those messages are received and interpreted. Many members of the public sphere, members of the public sphere, such as elected officials, executives, and public relations officers, can create, shape, and distribute messages that can influence the political process. Political messages can be seen in many forms, mainly through social and online media, television, newspapers, radio, speeches, writing, conferences, interpersonal communication between potential voters and candidates, press releases, and more (McNair, 2017).

The media is often considered a gatekeeper, generally referring to the methods or techniques of communication used by the public to communicate and seek information in different parts of the world. The feature of mass media is to allow anyone to post content in a way that is accessible to the public and can be viewed by an audience around the world. It is a technological discovery which has made the information or news to be available and closer without any delay. The concept of the public sphere is a key factor as far as media and political communication is concerned. This idea was established by a German sociologist and philosopher Habermas. The public sphere means a vital or imaginary community that does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space. According to Habermas, the

public sphere is the nexus between public life and civil society. Where discussion can take place freely and democratically to generate public opinion and attitudes. Public opinion can either support or challenge the state's operations. Any democratic society needs to have a situation where citizens can engage in debates, discuss social issues, and form opinions through the political communication provided by the media. The media give life to political communication discussions by emphasising social progress, governance, and civil rights, thereby strengthening the foundation of public opinion. This situation provides a platform for the public to interact and helps to maintain the concept of the public sphere.

The evolution of media started with printing technology. It transformed into newspapers, then communication progressed to radio, then television, and eventually developed into the internet age or new media. With the arrival of television in the 1950s, political advertisements gained visibility on TV and reached broader audiences within a short time. Compared to other forms of political advertisement, it can reach more people. In earlier times, countries, rulers, or governments were involved in controlling the press and introduced various laws to regulate it. In earlier times, open criticism of the government was not allowed, which meant that the media were not free from governmental control. Kerala newspapers also faced obstacles from the kings, and as a result, many newspapers were banned. The history of Malayalam journalism began with 'Rajyasamacharam' the first newspaper of the state, which was published from Illikkunnu, Thalassery, Kannur district in 1847 - well before the idea of a united Kerala was born. Newspapers played a major role in the social and cultural life of the average Malayali. Rajya Samacharam started in 1847, and 'Deepika', one of the oldest Malayalam newspapers still in circulation—was first published in 1887 in Mannanam, Kottayam district, originally under the name 'Nazrani Deepika'.

Mass media, in its different forms, have influenced human life in the present century. They have primarily provided information and entertainment to people across the world. Print media, having been the leading medium for a considerable time, now faces competition from Television, which is reshaping many social

responses. Apart from providing news and views, radio has also developed a flair for entertainment, thereby gaining wide acceptance. There is also new media, with the internet being its flag bearer. The Internet has made it possible to disseminate information and ideas globally in real-time. The media is a blanket term which encompasses transnational corporations, communication technologies, policy and regulatory frameworks, activities of journalists, gossip columns, television news, blockbuster movies, ads, business magazines, music radio, local papers, social media and Internet (Hushlak, 2018). The media are businesses, yet they are also ascribed to a special function in maintaining the health of society. The media include news media, which function as journalism, and entertainment media, which provide an escape from the pressures of everyday life. The phrase 'the media' ascribes singularity to a diverse range of communication forms.

The onset of the information age has revolutionised the relationship between politics and the media. In the new media environment, shaped by social networks and blogs, the general public is no longer a passive observer but an active participant. Communication between politicians and voters is much more direct through the use of blogs and microblogging tools. The advancement in technology has created citizen journalism, participatory journalism, and street journalism. This trend shows that people are very much involved in information dissemination, analysis and gathering.

The media is a distinct institution in society, distinguished by its particular interests, practices, norms, and values; however, highlighting the distinction of media is not enough to fully understand how integral the media is to a society's meaning-making processes. More broadly, the intrusive and unwelcome interventions of the media do not compromise the operation of politics and public life; on the contrary the media are inextricable constituents of the contexts, the messages and the relations that constitute politics and public life. The strengths and the weaknesses of media contributions to politics and the lives of people will be researched with regard to the perception that media are the pervasive elements of the lives of present-day societies.

Mass media have a powerful influence in shaping political reality, influencing public opinion and laying the foundations of political beliefs. Sometimes referred to as the fourth branch of government in democratic countries, the media plays a crucial role during elections and in times of change. Therefore, politicians and political parties are particularly sensitive towards their media presence and the media coverage of their public appearances. In societies, the media play a vital role, as a communication channel that facilitates the exchange of opinions between those in power and the general public. The media facilitate public discourse, inform the public, represent the public and act as a watchdog of the branches of government. Analysts highlight the role of the media in supporting a true society. As a watchdog in the political world, the media have the task of criticising governments or decision-makers in society.

On the other hand, dependence on powerful structures and financial resources can handicap the media ability to be an effective watchdog in political life. Although in society, governments and political parties do not put direct pressure on the media, competition and free market rules create different restrictions for journalists and their employers. The government may protect information from public disclosure by classifying it as sensitive, classified or secret. The so-called sunshine laws regulate the government's obligation to disclose information about its work and meetings. However, in recent times, the media has been subject to much criticism for disregarding their obligation towards social responsibility. Dangerous business practices in the media field have affected the fabric of the State of Kerala. Initially, the responsibility of the media was to act as an agent for initiating social change through development programs targeting the disadvantaged and marginalised in society. Though the media have at times successfully played the role of a watchdog of the government functionaries and have also aided in participatory communication, much remains to be done. In Kerala, the media has a responsibility that is deeply associated with socio-economic conditions. The media, print, audiovisual, radio or digital formats - must be more accountable to the general public. Professional integrity and ethical standards should be monitored so they are

not sacrificed for sensational practices. The freedom of the press in the country is a blessing for the people.

We remember important events in modern history through media coverage. Every generation has a set of images and words associated with deferring political moments. Political events are communicated to us through the mass media, whereby as societies, we read, share and struggle to come to terms with the events. Meanwhile, the majority of the population also knows that a set of filters exists to influence this correlation between mass media and politics. The mass media in some countries concentrates much on light news, entertainment and at the cost of serious political analysis. Elsewhere, either governmental or publicly-owned, the media is more focused on the necessities of the society as opposed to those of commercialism (Oates, 2008).

Politics is a phenomenon intimately bound up with the process of communicating because being a politician is an intensely social (communicative) occupation by those who organise and regulate social power relationships and make decisions governing the allocation and distribution of scarce social resources. Political communication is a multi-dimensional and multi-form phenomenon encompassing speech, body language, memoranda, media releases. Politics involves a struggle to gain access to certain key social positions. Occupying such positions grants access to a range of resources that can be used to advance one's interests and those of one's constituency. The media also helps politicians gain power. The media became the most important cultural resource during the 20th century because they acted as the central site for impression management and defining social position and status. The media also became important agents for positioning people. Media discourses and struggles over because they legitimate particular hierarchies of positions and the incumbents of such positions (Nimmo & Santer, 1981; Kenski & Jamieson, 2017; Yong Miller, 2003).

Given the importance of media as sites of impression management, they became key 'kingmakers' and legitimate/de-legitimizes in the second half of the 20th century. The evolution of liberalism into a democratic form coincided with the

emergence of mass media technologies, which allowed them to communicate simultaneously with millions, even billions of people. These technologies have created the possibility for politicians to communicate with the people, thus facilitating and building mass democracies. Not surprisingly, the symbolic component of mass democratic politics became enmeshed with the mass media. Consequently, mass media journalists became key players in producing and circulating political symbolism. Journalists specialising in politics have, over time, related to the political system in various ways. Each interaction pattern between journalists and politicians resides in practices and myths that continue to impact today's interface. The characteristics of these practices are important because they set the parameters for how politics is presented to the masses. The ethos of the political ideologies, myths and beliefs and the portrayal of political players is, to a great extent, governed by the nature of media practices and the media self-understanding of its relationship to the political process. Unpacking the media role in the political process is facilitated by examining four themes- the nature of the relationship (institutionalised and informal) between journalists and politicians; how commercial pressures set parameters for journalists, the practices of political journalists; and journalistic beliefs about their role in the political process.

In the absence of mass media, there can be no openness or accountability in the modern-day democracies. However, mass media may prevent and enhance political transparency. Rhetorical and media manipulation allows politicians to pretend to have the political virtues of transparency. Political life becomes more patterned in accordance with the picture of politics on TV. The media has given its input on the political value of openness and democratic accountability that is known as transparency. There are two types of transparency; informational transparency which is knowledge about the actors of the government, the decisions made by the government and state information. The transparency of information can also be achieved by requiring the government to issue statements explaining why it is doing certain things or by obliging the government to publish the information that it gathers. The second form of transparency is participatory transparency and this is the capability to take part in political ruling by being fairly represented or come to the

fore. Accountability transparency is the third form of transparency, representing the capacity to punish those who are the government officials themselves whether under the rule of law or under the opinion of the population, when one breaks the law or does something that goes contrary to the interest of the people (Balkin, 1999).

In this context, the state of Kerala is being analysed because Kerala's politics are different from those of other Indian states and have many specificities. The people of Kerala are highly literate, and there is a vibrant political atmosphere. In Kerala, there are two major political parties which came to power: the United Democratic Front (UDF, headed by the Indian National Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF, headed by the Communist Party of India Marxist. Throughout electoral history, the ministries were swapped between the two leading political fronts. Therefore, the political environment of Kerala is strong and vigilant. The media has its own space in Kerala society, with platforms such as TV, newspapers, radio, and social media, like Facebook and WhatsApp, heavily influenced by the people, the government, and political parties. In Kerala, political parties and religious organisations own many news channels and newspapers. Mass media greatly influences the people, but the news's credibility is being questioned here. Social media, as well as visual media in Kerala, fall into fake news and spread it widely. This type of news led to strikes, violence, and mass mobilisation. Fake political communication damages our public sphere, visions of government and political atmosphere in Kerala. However, the media has played an important role since the very beginning of political life in our society. The technological development in the media helps the government and political parties, and enables the people of Kerala to criticise the government and political parties. Kerala's literacy rate is very high compared to other states of India. Most of the people of Kerala consume newspapers, watch news channels and engage in other media. Additionally, most families in Kerala have at least one mobile phone and an internet connection. In Kerala, many online channels and online media are launched daily. They all have subscribers, so Kerala has a good public sphere or a 'digital public sphere'. Most of them give priority to political news, and political communication is vibrant in Kerala. The political atmosphere has changed, or a new dimension has emerged.

In this research, scrutinise the impact of media in Kerala society and the relationship between media and politics, analyse transformations of media political communication and the crisis or nexus between them, and analyse the commercialisation of media in Kerala society. This study basically covers the political relevance and political communication of the mass media in Kerala. It also discusses the changes that have been taking place in the propaganda setting of media and how the corporate-owned media, which captures and controls the government and political parties or the public sphere of Kerala, will be exposed. The political behaviour of Kerala, or the political process that has shifted because of new media entries, is also discussed/focused on here. The study also includes the relationship between media and politics; under media, the focus will be mainly on newspapers, Television, and social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, etc. Meanwhile, political parties, the government, social/religious pressure groups and the transformational strategies of mass media in political communication also came under the study's purview. In this research, the impact of media in Kerala society was scrutinised, the relationship between media and politics was analysed, and the media's political communication, as well as the crisis or nexus between them, was also examined. Additionally, the commercialisation and sensationalism of media in Kerala society were analysed.

1.1 Review of Literature

Before outlining a research gap, the researcher conducted a critical review of the existing literature, which included a wide range of materials related to the current research. Thus, the results presented in previous studies, including conclusions and methodological considerations, were evaluated. Works at the national and international levels are also taken into account, despite the focal region being Kerala. A broad variety of sources, including books, doctoral theses, journal articles, and online documents, were consulted. The systematic review of the work compiled within the scope of any given subject allowed defining the possible gaps and the opportunity to conduct other research related to the topic that would inform the present study.

Books

India's Newspaper Revolution, written by Robin Jeffrey, Oxford University Press, 2000. This book rationally states how the printing media helped in the formation of modern India. There is no other book in India which explains the transformation or development in newspapers. It is also helpful to understand how the notion of building was created by newspapers, and it also analyses the print media and related capitalism. The role of newspapers in forming a liberal democracy is also discussed very clearly.

Malayala Madhyamam Akavum Puravum 1956-2016 by N. P. Rajendran, The State Institute of Languages in 2017, explains the development of Kerala media between 1956 and 2016. The author deliberately mentions incidents prior to Kerala state formation to illustrate the evolution of the media. The author is trying to explain the development of Kerala media, which he deeply analysed during the period, starting before the formation of the Kerala state, that is, from 1940, to show how the media progressed.

Malayala Achadi Madhyamam: Bhoothavum Varthamanavum by M. Jayaraj, Mathrubhumi Books 2013, documents the history and evolution of print media elaborately. Describing the direction, history, culture and politics of Kerala, the book documents the revolutionary changes in the print media created in the Kerala public sphere/ consciousness. The work also explores the connection between the development of print media and the development of Kerala in public consciousness. It also mentioned the print system, its origin and evolution, editor's newspaper, journals and languages used in it.

Introduction to Media and Politics by Surah Oates, Sage Publications, 2009, this book represents an attempt to get that balance right to inform and elucidate without alienating the reader with too much analysis at once. As a result, this book offers enough analysis to provide the questions and sufficient information about media and politics in their own way. One of the central points in this book is that it is really hard to reach an understanding of the value of what your media offers until you get a good look at what others have in different places. That is why the book

uses the general unseen relationship between democracy and free media.

The Media and Political Process by Eric Louw, Sage Publication, 2010, this book aims to introduce students to some core themes and questions in political communication. The book argues that a core feature of mass democratic politics is 'hype making'. The book argues that demagoguery has become a core feature of twentieth-century Western politics, with politics characterised by a range of demagogic arts geared to steering mass public opinion. The book also describes how contemporary mass audiences increasingly experience 'steered' politics as a set of second-hand media images, projected into their lives by the media.

Key concept in Political Communication by Darren G. Lilleker, Sage Publication 2006, this book gives more importance to the concept of communication. However, in a democracy, political communication is seen as crucial for building a society where the state and its people feel they are connected. Despite the academic study of political communication being a relatively young discipline, the actual practice is as old as politics itself. The idea for this book came from students at Bournemouth University. They were new to politics, yet familiar with many of the terms and ideas, but what they lacked was a textbook that introduced the core concepts of the field of study in their context.

Mass Communication: Concepts and Processes by Narendra Tripathi, Reference Press 2006, the pedagogical feature of this book is designed to support and improve media literacy skills. It lays out the elements of media literacy and the emphasis on media literacy is woven throughout the text. Other media literacy topics include modern methods of mass communication, evaluating news based on anonymous sources and protecting personal privacy on the internet. This book discusses how the influence of talk shows is beneficial or detrimental. This book gives a systematic knowledge of effective public discourse in media education, the systematic study of media and their operation in our political and economic system, as well as their contribution to the development and maintenance of the culture that binds us together.

Mass Communication in India (5th ed.), by Keval J. Kumar (2010) presents a comprehensive overview of India's media landscape, combining historical context with contemporary developments. It is a classic text, as it is virtually comprehensive in its choice of themes, well-organised chapters, and insightful discussions of contemporary issues related to digital communications. However, later versions could definitely benefit from the use of more current information, as well as clearer and more direct writing, in terms of clarity and ease of reading.

Facebook: Navamalayalathinte cyber manifesto, edited by Shaji Jacob (2016), the essays in this book highlight the role of information technology in fostering community consciousness, promoting participation in the democratic process while preserving personal freedom, and shaping the cyber public voice of Malayalam through constructive and creative critical debates. It presents a broad picture of the participatory democratic consciousness possible through Malayalam new media in six sections. This book can also be viewed as a policy document preserved for the future, documenting the history of cultural politics that shaped the social life of Malayalis in the first decades of the twenty-first century. It serves as a blueprint for the role that new media played in shaping a more democratic, secular, and humane cultural sphere. However, the misinformation tendencies brought about by new media have had little impact.

Social Media and Political Communication, by Jeremy Lipschultz (2022), is a book, well-organised interdisciplinary examination of current political life on social networking platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The volume can explain the developments and changes in the political advising strategies because it traces the current phenomena like disinformation and so-called fake news in a historical panorama of the propaganda, persuasion, and political advertising. Lipschultz examines the positive aspects of social media and its destructive potential, illustrating how social media is utilised by political figures, activists, and social movements alike to enhance civic participation and promote social causes. The author uses well-known theories, such as gatekeeping, personal influence and diffusion of innovations, as well as the new ones on the networked political

discourse and thus is able to combine the two fields of study with the technique of social network analysis and long-view of media literacy. Through this, the text arms readers with standards of evaluation and interaction with political contents over the internet. An essential source of information to be used by students and scholars of media studies, political science, and other technical or political subjects, and a practitioner looking forward to gaining an insightful explanation of the dynamic linkage between social media and politics.

ICTs and Development in India: Perspectives on the Rural Network Society by T. T. Sreekumar (2011), it is a classic work on the subject of media, technologies and development in the Global South. The volume offers an intellectually compelling analysis that challenges the axioms of technological empowerment, appealing to researchers in the fields of media studies, development communication, and South Asian politics. Sreekumar redirects the discourse of ICT4D by placing the socio-political intricacies of ICT use in rural India in the foreground and challenges practitioners and policymakers to rejuvenate the voices and agency of the people to whom these technologies are designed to be beneficial.

Thala Thericha Asayangal by P.S. Jayan (2019), is an exploration into the emergence and circulation of contemporary concepts that aim to explain how the contemporary world is interpreted, understood, and reconstructed in language forms. It questions the fluidity of global politics, the volatile meaning and dissemination of new concepts that involve discourse in technological, business, sexual, and lifestyle spheres. By doing so, it describes the cultural context of the information revolution, which is often described as the rise of countries with search engine dominance and mobile phone networks. The same importance is given to pre-revolutionary trajectories that took place before this revolution, and hence do not clearly display the dynamics of the emergent and established methods of communication.

Post Truth Television by T.K Santhosh Kumar (2022), television studies is an area that needs further development in Malayalam. The book 'Post-Truth Television' is a notable example of this. Today's media world is a world where the boundaries between truth and falsehood are often blurred. When different news and

information about the same subject are continuously flowing, people become confused and feel that truth has no value. In such situations, the term 'post-truth' is particularly relevant. This book analyses the worlds of meaning created by the popular medium of television. A work that is suitable for both academic and general reading. However, the book does not provide a clear picture of the damage that the absence of media does to democracy.

Articles / Journals

Political Communications Infrastructure, by Russell Neuman (1996), this article tries to redirect attention to the issue of political communication and how technical development in mass and interpersonal communication may influence how citizens learn about the political world around them, how political support is mobilised for issues and candidates and how citizens signal preference to their representative. This article gives more importance to interpersonal communication in society.

In Communication in Development, by Everett M. Rogers (1974), this article describes what communication is doing and what it could do, in achieving developmental goals. It tries to give mass media communication to the villagers and its role in the village audience, and it also emphasises on the traditional media gap. This article states that the mass media creates an atmosphere for modernisation among the villages. This article reduces the mass media role to achieve a climate for modernisation rather than to provide specific details needed for the adoption of innovations at present.

Mass media: Opportunities and threats, by Leonard R. Sussman (2003) says that the technological development of the communication field increases the human ability to communicate, and fair free use of the mass media is also a threat in society. This article states that the developing nations are imposing restrictions on the mass media or they are controlling and relaxing restrictions on domestic journals. These articles focus only on mass media courage among world countries and its usages and threats.

In Young people, politics and news media: Beyond political socialisation, by David Buckingham (1999), through this article, the author considers the places of new media, especially television news, in young people's political socialisation. In this article a brief sketch of debates about young people's apparent indifference to politics and to news media. This article contains the young people's interpretations of television news. It also focuses on young people's apparent cynicism about politics; it concludes with a call for media education as a crucial dimension of political education and contemporary citizenship.

Testing Concepts about Print, Newspapers, and Politics: Kerala, India, 1800-2009 by Robin Jeffrey (2009), this essay attempts to bring greater subtlety to our understanding of the role that print and newspapers play in the shaping of modern society. The essay begins by focusing on the centrality that Jurgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson gives to print and newspapers and examines the applicability of their ideas to Kerala, India's most newspaper-consuming state, over the past 200 years. The essay suggests that by conceptualising print and newspaper development in three stages, we arrive at a more accurate understanding of the impact of print consumption on societies and their politics. This article discusses only the applicability of newspapers in Kerala, no other traditional media are mentioned here that were available during that period.

Radio, Television, and Society," by Charles A. Siepmann (1950), a critical analysis of the social responsibilities of broadcasting within a democratic society is presented. The volume was published at a time when television was fast gaining pre-eminence and asked questions of friction between commercial considerations and serving the public in a democratic society. Inspired by the current politics and policy discussions on the subject of broadcasting, comparative approaches to broadcasting efforts, as well as historical precedent on the subject matter, Siepmann constructs a case to support a broadcasting system that is more education-centered, culture-enriching and informational citizenry based rather than focusing on the demands of the market. Even though some of the illustrative cases are linked to the media landscape of the mid-twentieth century, some of his concerns, such as

commercialisation, manipulation of audiences, and the administrative powers necessary to regulate them, are still extremely relevant to today's discourse. The text emerges, therefore, as one of the most powerful initial interventions in the study of media as a matter of policy, involving a strong normative conception of the extent to which mass media contribute to democratic society.

In their article The political conditionality of mass media influence: When do parties follow mass media attention?, Green-Pedersen and Stubager (2010) says that the capacity of mass media to influence the respective agendas of political parties is conditioned upon the interests of the political parties. Media attention to an issue generates attention from political parties when the issue is one that political parties have an interest in politicising in the first place. This article did not consider or focused on the private ownership of media and their political bias, and mass media credibility was not mentioned.

Revisiting new media and the cyber public sphere of Kerala by Simi Varghese (2016), is an article that offers a comprehensive theoretical and contextual discussion on the emergence and implications of new media in shaping the cyber public sphere in Kerala. Based on fundamental theories in the study of media, such as technological determinism by McLuhan and social constructionism by Williams, the author situates new media within its wider socio-political dynamics, initiated by globalisation, postmodernism, and the aftermath of the Cold War. The article, therefore, combines critiques of commercialisation, corporatisation, and digital divides by placing in the foreground the interactive, participatory, and democratising capacities of digital spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, which have been addressed by other scholars, such as Castells, Golding, and Sardar. Shifting to the Kerala case, Varghese emphasises the unique relationships between old and new media that give rise to a trajectory between the early, politically oriented press (e.g., Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai) and present-day social media activism. The author is documenting the extent to which online media are magnifying political discussions, community activism, and cultural interventions, citing cases of single bloggers and Facebook pages dedicated to politics. Importantly, the text also

acknowledges the two-fold nature of the Kerala cyber public sphere that is characterised by democratic, secular and subaltern emancipation on the one side and religious or ideological fundamentalism on the other. This article is effective in connecting the worldwide theoretical concepts with the localised case studies and in this way, Kerala is placed as part of the network of the global society. However, the debate about it is full of its examples; however, it might be enriched by some further empirical evidence on audience reception patterns or the quantifiable political effect of such interventions into the digital realm. In conclusion, the article will be helpful to the extent that it enhances the state of knowledge regarding digital democracy, the concept of the public sphere, and the region-specific aspects of regional media cultures in South Asia.

The 2024 Indian Elections: The Strategic Use of Journalism, Social Media, and Internet Governance in a Modi-centric Election by Ralph Schroeder, Neeraj Shetye, and Maknoon Wani (2024), examines how digital media, organisational arrangements in the press sector, and state regulatory systems are mutually constituted and shape the Indian electoral field. The elections, dominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are an illustration of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) 's digital mobilisation, which saw the party utilise Twitter in 2014, WhatsApp in 2019, and YouTube in 2024. At the same time, the BJP has an unparalleled grassroots reach capacity. On the other hand, the free press has been censored due to extreme media concentration, entanglement of the press in business politics and the institutionalised silencing of adverse journalism. Despite these limitations, alternative digital publication sources still exist which provide an alternative to mainstream narratives. The use of technocratic tools, such as the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, further strengthens state control over online content. This occurs in the absence of a unified data-protection law, which can lead to micro-targeting being politically directed, potentially skewing the benefit in favour of the ruling regime. In summary, despite the ongoing competitive elections in India, the media that can cover the news freely with independence, the realm of online discussion, and the privacy of data risk compromising the feasibility of pluralism and democratic accountability due to

systemic pressures.

Social Media Use and Impact on Voters and Candidates in Kerala by Balasundaram et al. (2024), examines the mutual interaction between voter engagement and electoral strategies in the modern political context of Kerala state, using empirical findings from a survey of 1,500 citizens and an analysis of 280 winning members of the 2019 legislative assembly elections. The evidence suggests that social media, particularly Facebook, has become a central tool of political communication. Indicators such as content sharing and gaining followers are more reliable predictors of election success than similar characteristics on other networks, specifically Twitter. Further, they illustrate that the younger voters in Kerala who are characterised by higher rates of digital literacy and access to internet connectivity engage more deeply with the dissemination of political information via an online ecosystem and consequently reduce the dependency on more conventional mediums of communication, i.e., party workers or local influencers. These trends do not follow those identified in other parts of India, but rather seek to align with those observed in digitally advanced environments, such as the United States. The authors highlight the issue of strategically expressing importance within the digital campaigning activities by linking demographic-specific fantasy activity and the electoral performance. The article contributes to modern research on digital political communication by presenting evidence that in Kerala, social media not only helps in the mobilisation of voters, but also in creating and shaping the visibility and competitiveness of the candidates.

Political Communication, Media and Elections: A Case Study of Kerala Chief Minister's Press Meetings in the 2021 Assembly Elections by H. S. Adarsh and Anu Unny (2024), offers a detailed description of the effects of media and political communication on electoral issues in Kerala under the pandemic like COVID-19. Focusing on the electoral success of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) with the chief minister being Pinarayi Vijayan, the authors emphasize the employment of daily press briefings, as a very important strategic tool, to create a sense of credibility amongst the population, maintaining an essence of transparency, and strengthening

the reputation of the government to be able to deal with crisis situations. It is a mixed-method analysis, where the qualitative and quantitative approaches are complementary since the argument of the given study finds its place in the existing theoretical perspectives in the domain of political communication in the frames provided by Chesebro in five frameworks (Machiavellian, iconic, ritualistic, conformational, and dramatistic). Moreover, it utilizes the terms of image-making and agenda-setting, which demonstrates how the media, and especially television, continued to be the core of political messages regardless of the fact that other types of media, particularly social, were gaining popularity. The focus on the television is justified through the evidence of survey results showing in wide coverage of the television in Kerala households and consistent impact on the voter perceptions. The impact of the study lies in proving a certain crisis-period communication strategy and its direct electoral reward that accomplishes the extension of the literature upon political communication in democratic environment. It is theory but applied to a true life case of politics which enriches the knowledge of where leaders can stand on the way of handling emotions in emergencies. The analysis could, however, be improved by a more subtle reference to the body of work on audience reception in an attempt to reflect the entire range in voter interpretation of the media stories.

The above mentioned studies are different from the proposed study because the above studies did not concentrate on new social media and explored a wide range of media possibilities in political communication. In this period, new forms of media communication are introduced, and so fast communication systems are developing day by day. Media clashes occur, and some media roles are also diminishing. All of these incidents affect the politics and political communication of the society, and the public sphere may transform or new versions, like the digital public sphere, have not been identified in these mentioned studies. And the proposed study is more focused on this area and developing the study in the Kerala context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The role of media is pivotal in the world as well as in Kerala society. Kerala's public sphere is highly sensitive and vigilant in nature, due to its high literacy rate,

the influence of political parties, and the media's focus on societal issues, among other factors. The media are pressurising the policies and practices of the government, political parties, etc. They are considered the fourth estate in a state. They perform an intermediate role in society, and the introduction of new social media can involve more people in politics and inform the news lively. The mass media mainly include TV, radio, newspapers and social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, etc. The second half of 2000 witnessed the introduction of new TV channels in Malayalam and radio. In 2006, social media began to surge in Kerala, and after 2010, it became increasingly common in the state. Technological advancement gives popularity to the media, news, and information.

The media often treat the government as an opposition, as they frequently criticise the government's decisions and policies. The media can address the masses easily therefore, the government and political parties always consider them. They cannot avoid the space of media, because the media is always a watchdog or gatekeeper in society. Most of our people treated the media as a primary source of information or news. But the reporting pattern of media or the sources of reporting are susceptible in Kerala. Sometimes their role is hypothetical and biased.

The media is a way for the public to be aware of the government and various political parties, and the mass media can introduce politics in the public sphere in their own manner in Kerala. The media provides a space for society to communicate the relevant issues and incidents that have diplomatic changes in society. However, the media is using this kind of space to push society towards apoliticality instead of politicising it, while also trying to destroy political parties and government institutions with bias. Some of them have failed to fulfil their duty/ commitment towards the Kerala public sphere. Since they always protect their reputation and rating without considering the truth/ objectivity of news while providing information and data. It often triggers a response from political parties, the public sphere, and individuals.

However, in Kerala, investigative journalism is an accepted practice, and its history is evident in the fact that media investigations have led to the resignation of

government officials and ministers, as well as the exposure of numerous corruption and scams to the public. The media plays a significant role in elections, and at the same time, some media outlets discourage governmental practices and political parties. The media has its own specifications, views, propaganda and technological advancement. The basic problem is that the media influences the ‘thinking’ of the common person. In Kerala, it is indeed true that the people of Kerala were predominantly media-based thinkers in the early stages of the introduction of newspapers and TV. However, in this era of media abundance and commercialisation, the accuracy of the information or news and political communication fed to Kerala society by the media is questionable.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the media strategies for political communication
- To discuss the role of mass media in governance.
- To analyse the influence of media in the public sphere of Kerala
- To examine the linkages between media ethics and the political process
- To examine the impact of mass media in shaping present political scenario in Kerala
- To examine the corporate interest in political communication especially in Kerala

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study titled “Mass Media, Political Communication, and Transformations: A Study on Kerala” is rooted in a theoretical framework that integrates key perspectives from media studies and political communication. These theories provide a foundation for analysing the dynamic role of media in shaping Kerala’s political landscape. The study draws on the Public Sphere Theory by Jürgen Habermas, the Media Ecology Theory by Marshall McLuhan, the Propaganda Model outlined by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman. These frameworks offer critical lenses to examine how media influences Kerala’s political landscape, public opinion, and sociopolitical trends. The ‘Public Sphere Theory’ by

Jürgen Habermas emphasizes the role of media in encouraging rational-critical debate among citizens, creating a space for meaningful political discourse. Kerala, with its high literacy rate and vibrant political engagement, exemplifies an active public sphere. However, the study examines how this space is being reshaped by media commercialization and sensationalism, questioning whether media today fosters informed dialogue or fragments the public along ideological and social lines. Marshall McLuhan's 'Media Ecology' Theory highlights how communication technologies shape societal dynamics, asserting that "the medium is the message." This is particularly relevant in Kerala, where the shift from traditional media to digital platforms has transformed political communication. The study explores how this evolution impacts the flow of information, political engagement, and the nature of public discourse. The 'Propaganda Model' by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman critiques the role of the media in perpetuating elite interests. In Kerala, where media houses hold significant influence, the study investigates how ownership patterns, advertising pressures, and political affiliations shape media content, influencing public narratives and electoral outcomes. Together, these theories provide a strong foundation to analyse how media interacts with Kerala's unique sociopolitical context, shedding light on its transformative role in political communication and public engagement.

1.5 Research Methodology

The matter at the heart of the given problem focuses on the issues of media between the government, politics, and the public sphere in the state of Kerala. The study is framed to investigate the relation between politics or other aspects of society and the media. The research primarily aimed at introducing the media and public sphere as well as the political communication of Kerala. The research contains qualitative procedures. This study is descriptive in nature and thus the methodology involves utilising both professional and academic knowledge of its history as well as its analysis. This could be both primary and secondary as sources of data because the media, the public sphere, politics and the government are all closely bound to each other and in the process of varied forms/characters. Primary

data takes into account the records of the events and incidents related to the field of politics, governance, the documents, and the other official data of the media centres, the media experts, the government officials, politicians, and the people who are working in these categories are performing. Information has been gathered in an unstructured interview manner by mentioning information obtained at different sources. These sources of data may include the Opinions of the media Experts, the media Scholars, the media professionals, the individuals who are associated with the media, the critics, Politicians and Government officials. Finally other than the above secondary data also used the books, journals/articles, thesis, and internet sources. The media consists of social media, the government and the politicians who transmit information by using this, and the coverage of this information in voice and picture to the eyes of the people in mass. Thus, many videos and documentaries also would like to gather heritage, media news reporting, clipping, photos, paper cutting and stories, news channels debates, YouTube discussions and online media will also be used in this research. The media in Kerala are multilateral, and therefore, the information communicated is political. Political communication is multifaceted; therefore, some case studies also fall under this study. The research examined the objectivity of news content, particularly in the context of politics, and compiled responses from media critics through an investigation.

1.6 Rational and Scope of the Study

In the modern period, the media and its significance in politics are inevitable. The availability and broadcast of different media have increased massively in the last decade therefore, people can easily access the information and news. The proposed study will examine the political relevance of media in Kerala society and provide an understanding of the changes that have been taking place in the propaganda settings of media, as well as how corporate-owned media capture and influence the government, political parties, and the public sphere. It includes various thinkers from Kerala and activists who engage in the fields of media and politics, as well as media critics, which will be helpful for understanding how the media and politics, or political communications, influence the individual or the public sphere of

Kerala. Then the hegemonic interpretations or influence of media on politics and in society are also covered here. There has been a shift in political process and behaviour in Kerala politics with the arrival of new media in our public sphere. In the newly transformed media environment, both the for/against could be taken by the mass media and put to the public opinion. The emergence of fake news in the new political environment is also a primary focus of this study. This thesis will primarily utilise the media, including newspapers, Television, and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, to examine the current impact of media on politics. The thesis will explore the relationship between media and politics in Kerala society. Finally, by connecting the themes of politics, media, and public sphere transformation, this study offers an advanced understanding of the interplay between political communication and mass media within Kerala's socio-political context.

1.7 Research Questions

How do the media mobilise people for political actions in Kerala?

Does mass media influence governance?

How do political communications shape political ethics?

Can mass media have major influence in the public sphere in Kerala?

Does media diversity have any impact in Kerala political communication/ governmental policies?

1.8 Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter provides a background explanation of the study's scope, objectives, and importance. It includes the research questions and reasons why the relationship between mass media, political communication, and ethics is researched in the context of Kerala. The chapter also addresses the methodological approach, theoretical framework, review of the literature, and the relevance of the topic in the current fast-changing media environment.

Chapter 2: Mass media and political communication: a conceptual analysis. The chapter explores major concepts and definitions related to mass media and political communication. It studies theoretical approaches, such as agenda-setting, framing, communication, and shaping of the public sphere, in the context of providing insight into how media shapes political communication. It discusses political communication through media as a means in democratic processes, with a focus on shaping public opinion and citizen interaction.

Chapter 3: Mass Media and Political Process. In this chapter, the emphasis is placed on the interaction between the mass media and the work of political systems. The chapter discusses the role of media as a means of transmitting political messages, conducting electoral campaigns and advocating policies. It also examines the role played by political players in the media creation of stories and the influence of the news coverage on decision-making policies and governance in both the nation and the various nations.

Chapter 4: Mass media & public sphere: the experience from Kerala. Kerala is treated in this chapter as a case study, where high literacy, vibrant press, and an active citizenry are taken as examples. It examines the way mass media were constituted and how they contribute to the public sphere in the state, fostering debate and political engagement. It also takes into account the division of the sphere of society into political, caste, and religious components; it also pays attention to the contribution of the media, social reforms and interests to the discourse of democracy. Consequently, it takes its origins in early newspapers.

Chapter 5: Social Media and Political Communication in Kerala: Emerging Trends and Transformations. In this chapter, presents information on the usage of social media as a means to transform political communication in Kerala, addressing the live streamings, hashtag campaigns, political memes, and the discussions facilitated by influencers. It emphasises that the access barrier to political expression has been reduced with the help of digital tools, and that there are issues of misinformation, polarisation, and online abuse.

Chapter 6: Mass Media News, Sensationalism and Ethical Concerns in the

context of Political Communication. This chapter discusses the changing world of media, especially the rising of sensationalism in covering political news. Ethical issues including possible invasion of privacy, lack of adequate verification of facts and reports made with political interference are taken into account. In the discussion, the strong controversies and criticisms in the media landscape of Kerala are reflected with a particular emphasis on effective analysis of news that enhances the political communication process and contributes to the wellbeing of democracy.

Chapter 7: Findings, Recommendations And Conclusion. In the last chapter, a summary of the study's main findings is provided, which will be connected back to the study objectives. It maps trends in political communication and media ethics, and provides recommendations on how media practices can be made more media-ethical, how media ethics can be enhanced, and on integrating a more informed and inclusive public sphere. Another ending of the chapter is a contemplation on the consequences of policy, journalism, and democratic governance in Kerala.

CHAPTER 2

MASS MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

Mass media and political communication were critical aspects in modern democratic societies due to their significant dependence on creating the necessary influence of mass opinion, facilitating debate on politics, and the effective running of democratic processes. A conceptual understanding of this relationship would include the influence of the interaction between political actors, mass media and the people and the implication of different communication processes like agenda setting, framing, and priming on the decision making and perception on the political level. The role mass media plays in the process of communication, in the shaping of the popular opinion and political communication is not only being increased, but has become a trademark of the industry of politics nowadays. According to it, political communication cannot be separated from the media that conveys the messages; the media have stopped being channels, and they are now the main actors in the political process (McNair, 2018). By examining the important ideas, models, and concepts that support this dynamic connection, this chapter seeks to give a conceptual study of the link between political communication and the mass media. This chapter looks at the basic ideas in an effort to clarify the intricate relationship between politics and the media.

The word media, derived from the Latin word ‘medium’, which means intervening agency or a method of expressing something or a way of expressing something, is not just a term but a key to understanding our past and present. It is used as a singular and plural form and refers to all means of communication. When examining the evolution of media, we can classify the periods into Pre-industrial, Industrial, electronic, and new/ Information age, each playing a crucial role in

shaping our current media landscape and this evolution is shaping and transforming political communication in our society.

The concept of political communication has taken different meanings built on the discipline of scholars and according to the context of its use. Essentially, political communication is considered to be the transfer and interchange of information, ideas and messages that have a direction in political processes and opinion. According to Denton and Woodward (1998), political communication is all about how the leadership of a country, the media and the citizens interact and filter the messages that produce political consequences. The political realm plays a central role in relation to the various actors associated with society in this definition. McNair (2011) has a wider definition of political communication, that is, purposeful communication about politics. This puts an accent on intentionality, underlining the fact that the aim is to inform, persuade, or mobilise audiences on politically related issues. In the same light, Graber and Smith (2005) define it as the dispersion, exchange, and interpretation of information that is deemed relevant in governance and power and makes it central to the elements of democracy. On a more pragmatic end of the spectrum, political communication is conceptualised by Swanson and Nimmo (1990) as the endeavour of political players to use the channels and symbols of communication strategically when attaining their objectives. This definition lays more focus on persuasion, framing and media influence, hence bringing political communication in line with the mechanisms of modern-time political campaigns. Collectively, these approaches show the idea that political communication is not a simple relay of political facts, but a complicated process that incorporates the element of strategic purpose, the involvement of several stakeholders, and outside socio-political settings. Political communication has more or less been an indispensable mechanism by which politics is practised and perceived, whether in the context of an exchange, an act of purpose, or a strategic pursuit.

Mass media occupies a central position in the influence of political communication, as it is the main direction to address political messages formation, delivery and reception. Political communication, in a broad sense, is the

communication or flow of information, ideas, and full-fledged political messages circulated between the political agents, media, and citizens. According to McNair (2011), political communication has been defined as intentional communication concerning politics, which can shape opinion, policy and political behaviour. Equally, Denton and Woodward (1990) consider it as the mechanism whereby the leadership of a given nation, media, and general population share and mould information which has political implications.

The medium is both the stage and the performer of political communication by mass media, including newspapers, radio, television and recently digital media. Norris (2000) stated that mass media is not only used to feed citizens with information, but it also allows shaping of political discourse, it is used to determine the issues that require general concern, and it also offers general debate arenas. Political communication evolved with the arrival of television in the 20th century to reach the mass population using visual and emotional connections with the population, and the digital revolution has only made access to political information even easier. Mass media influences the way political problems are viewed and addressed through news reporting, political advertisements, opinion commentaries, and debates in the political arena. It also opens a way to persuasion, mobilisation and accountability. Nevertheless, according to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), the effect of mass media may serve as a two-edged sword, since, on one hand, it helps democracy grow, and, in the end, it either produces or polarises the air that the media creates. In that sense, the presences of political communication and mass media are closely connected to the functioning of contemporary democracy.

2.2 Pr-industrial

Ancient political communication employed communication techniques that were essentially distinct from modern ones, especially in the period preceding the Before Common Era (BCE). Political communication was mostly oral and dependent on personal relationships. In the past, political communication took place in the following ways.

Verbal Customs: In ancient times, verbal communication in politics was done in an oral manner. Politicians, monarchs, and leaders expressed their ideas via speeches, announcements, and speaking their words. Effective speeches by such orators were influential in persuading the masses (Ong, 1982). This aspect of specialisation on words and language emphasises the importance of utilising rhetoric in political discourse.

Public Gatherings: Public meetings and assemblies were vital for political discourse in ancient societies. People gathered in designated spaces to hear speeches, engage in debates, and observe decisions made by their leaders (Finley, 1973). Such gatherings provided a platform for communal participation and the exchange of ideas.

Messengers: Messages between emperors, city-states, and rulers were often delivered by messengers who travelled long distances. These couriers carried either written communications or orally conveyed updates and judgments, facilitating political and diplomatic communication across regions (Nissen, Damerow, & Englund, 1993).

Monuments and Textual Records: Leaders and rulers often commemorated important historical events and left political messages on buildings and inscriptions. Important laws, treaties and other achievements were inscribed on stone pillars or walls, which had a very long life and were therefore the symbols of authority and rulership (Goody, 1986; Ancient History Encyclopedia, 2011).

Symbols and Emblems: Symbols and emblems were a major part of ancient political communication. Seals, insignias, and other forms of representations served the purpose of Power, Loyalty, or certain political ideologies, thereby sending messages to different people successfully (Keane, 1991; Finley, 1973).

The Presence of Written Records on Clay or Papyrus Tables: There was oral communication, and alongside it were written forms of records on clay or papyrus (Papyrus, made from the papyrus plant, was a crucial material in ancient Egypt and served as the primary medium for writing). These records were employed in

documenting the important laws, decrees, and diplomatic messages and they reflected the early applications of writing in the government (Nissen, Damerow, & Englund, 1993; Goody, 1986).

Civic Ceremonies and Rituals: Civic rituals and ceremonies were needed to convey and reinforce the communal identities and the political ideals. Through such ceremonies, communities were able to be included collectively in political life, which further helped create a collective purpose and conscious togetherness (Finley, 1973; Ong, 1982).

Political communication in pre-industrial societies was firmly representative of oral cultures and person-to-person communication and exhibited the neighbourhood-focused aspect of governance. Forms of public speech, rallies and the use of messengers encouraged the persuasion-based approach to communication, whereas symbols, statues, and the first traces of written accounts on clay or papyrus gave long-lasting methods of documentation and communication of political messages. Civic ceremonies and rituals also supported the political ideals and group identity. These techniques demonstrate how brilliant ancient societies were with regard to cultivating political discourse and government even with the lack of any modern forms of communication at their disposal, having to use their creativity, symbolism, and people to connect the gaps and to support the power.

2.3 Industrial Age

"The late 18th century saw the start of the Industrial Age, which revolutionised social behaviour and communication technologies. Communication in civilisations was drastically altered with the advent of steam power, mechanisation, and new inventions like the printing press, telephone, and telegraph, which increased the speed and scope of information sharing (McLuhan, 1962; Gleick, 2011; Nye, 1997)." People used the power of steam to develop machine tools, establish iron production and the manufacturing of various products, including books through the printing press. Examples: telegraph, a system for transmitting messages from a distance along a wire, especially one creating signals by making and breaking an electrical connection.

Telephone: Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone in 1876-1877, a system that converts acoustic vibrations to electrical signals to transmit sound over distance (Casson, 2003), and the printing press, which allowed for the rapid sharing of large amounts of information (Eisenstein, 1980), were pivotal developments in transforming communication during the Industrial Age."

The Telegraph: Invented by Samuel Morse in the 1830s, was one of the first technologies that enabled nearly instantaneous communication over long distances; before its invention, the time it took to send a message depended on the speed of horses or ships. For instance, it took 45 days to send a message from New York to San Francisco by ship, and over 20 days to send a message by overland stagecoach from St. Louis to San Francisco. The famous Pony Express took 11 days from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California (Engineering and Technology History Wiki, n.d., retrieved November 16, 2024, para. 2). The telegraph made communication faster and more dependable by enabling the transmission of messages as electrical signals along wires, in contrast to previous methods that required the physical transportation of messages (Standage, 1998). This invention had a big impact on social, political, and economic life. Businesses might coordinate operations across great distances, speeding up trade and commerce, while governments could more effectively relay instructions and military strategies. Slower, more localised interactions gave way to a more integrated global network in societal communication patterns. People across different parts of the world could now exchange ideas and information almost instantly, dramatically reducing the time it once took for messages to travel (Gleick, 2011; Crowley & Heyer, 2011).

Printing Press: The printing press is a technology invented in the 15th century by Johannes Gutenberg, but it gained traction mostly in the Industrial Age because it started getting more mechanised and efficient. The mass production of books, newspapers and pamphlets with the help of the printing press opened the way of spreading the information in a quantity never seen before (Eisenstein, 1980). The Industrial Age brought about a great revolution in the communication arena, because newspapers became the source of information to the people. More developments of

printing tools like steam press allowed printing and otherwise publication of newspapers in large quantities at relatively lower prices, thus making information available to more people than could be reached before (Briggs & Burke, 2009; Smith, 1978). Such democratisation of information was significant in the formation of public opinion and creating a sense of being a part of the same social group, which was addressed by Habermas (1962/1989) in his writings on the public sphere.

With the changing nature of societies, where societies moved towards a more face-to-face communication to a more mass-mediated communication, newspapers acted as an influential channel of distributing ideologies of political facets and questioning of governments (Schudson, 1978). Such transition boosted the discourse among people and created a more connected and informed society in that it revealed the transformative power of mass media in the Industrial Age (McQuail, 2010). Industrialised societies became urbanised, resulting in emerging forms of social interaction. More printed materials were made available, corresponding to more individuals having access to news, literature, and information that influenced culture and intellectual trends (Eisenstein, 1980). The means of public exposure through debates, lectures, and discussions became widespread practices when it came to exchanging ideas, leading to a more informed and interested citizenry. Such interactions were no longer limited to local communities and could occur in bigger cities where there were facilities of communication, such as newspapers and telegraphs, that made it possible to engage in political and social activities more widely.

2.4 Electronic Age

The Electronic Age has widely changed the way human beings communicate, and this was realised in the mid-20th century. Some examples of revolutionary products developed during this era include transistor radios, television, early computers, and all these products were inspired by the year 1947 when the transistor was invented by John Bardeen, Walter Brattain, and William Shockley. Such breakthroughs changed the mode of communication in a fundamental way, which was faster, more efficient, and available to people all over the world (Riordan

& Hoddeson, 1997). The Electronic Age that started to develop in the middle of the 20th century became a revolutionary stage in human communication. This period saw the rise of new technologies revolutionising a number of products, including lights and telephones, including transistor radios, TVs, and the first computers, following the invention of the transistor, which took place in 1947 by John Bardeen, Walter Brattain and William Shockley. Such breakthroughs changed the mode of communication in a fundamental way, which was faster, more efficient, and available to people all over the world (Riordan & Hoddeson, 1997).

The Role of Transistor Technology; The development of contemporary electronics was significantly influenced by the invention of the transistor. Bulky vacuum tubes were replaced with transistors, which allowed electrical devices to become more efficient and smaller. Transistor radios were developed as a result of this invention and rose to great popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. Transistor radios democratized access to news, music, and entertainment by enabling individuals to listen to broadcasts while on the go (Braun & Macdonald, 1982). These gadgets, which gave millions of listeners real-time updates, had an especially big impact during important world events. Transistor radios allowed people to listen to broadcasts on the go, democratizing access to news, music, and entertainment (Braun & Macdonald, 1982). These devices were particularly influential during significant global events, providing real-time updates to millions of listeners.

Transistors served as the basis for electronic circuits that drove early computers in addition to radios. The information era was made possible by these computers, which transformed data processing and storage. Early computers revolutionised governments, businesses, and educational institutions by automating difficult processes, laying the groundwork for contemporary digital communication (Ceruzzi, 2003).

Television: In the Electronic Age, television took the lead as the most utilised medium of communication since it offered superior visual and sound media that was unrivalled. Television was initially shown successfully by John Logie Baird in 1926 in London. In 1927, in the United States, Philo Farnsworth invented the fully

electronic television system (Burns, 1998). Colour boosted the experience enormously since early television broadcasts were in black and white. Television took the world by storm in the 1960s as it became a household staple across the globe, such that it dominated opinion, politics and society (Lotz, 2007). Television presented news and entertainment in an immediate sense and an influential perception of society. In the seventies, the coverage of such historic events as the Civil Rights Movement and the landing of the moon in 1969 was shown live, uniting the world (Spigel, 1992). With the understanding of the influence that television could bring about a shift in the opinion of people, political campaigning, propaganda and advertising by governments and businesses were conducted through television (Boddy, 1993).

Significant advancements were witnessed in long distance communication in the Electronic Age. Transistor radios were revolutionary in the field of sound transmission since they had access to radio waves to reach a mass number of people. These mobile technologies cut across social fault lines, so information was accessible to the urban and the rural community (Hilmes, 1997). Similarly, television programming fostered the spirit of international unity with a sense of crossing national boundaries. Due to international television coverage of such events as the Olympic Games and global political conferences, people were capable of witnessing history as it happened (Briggs & Burke, 2010). Such trends created the basis of international communication and cross-cultural interaction.

Early Computers: The next important phenomenon in the Electronic Age was the new invention of computers. Transistors enabled the use of these machines to handle data at speeds never heard of. Early computers made it possible to have complex communication networks, scientific research and corporate automation of processes (Campbell-Kelly & Aspray, 2004). When computers were introduced in the communication infrastructures, the transmission and storage of information changed totally. It is important to note that in addition to institutions of learning accepting these technologies in order to facilitate research and education, governments and companies used them to speed up their activities (Dyson, 2012). Furthermore, these

technologies were of great importance when it came to political and social movements. As an example, the Civil Rights Movement was covered by the press, in particular, television, showing injustices that brought people together in their intentions to make this change. This proved the influence of electronic media in forming the consciousness of society and moving society forward (Schudson, 1995). The Electronic Age changed communication in such a way that sharing of more information could be done fast, efficiently and in a more extensive manner. Along with the shift in the way people associated, innovations, such as the transistor, transistor radios, televisions, and pre-computers, modified the cultural norms, societal organisations, and global interactions as well. The Electronic Age can be considered a decisive step in the history of communication technologies, as it laid the background for the Digital Age.

2.5 New/Information Age and Technological Advancements

The Information Age is a significant period in the history of humanity as the introduction of the internet made communication processes quicker and created the concept of social networks. The development of microelectronics and the development of personal computers, mobile devices, and wearable technologies influenced this period quite considerably (Castells, 2010). Moreover, the process of digitisation by encoding voice, images, sound, and data has transformed the method of creating, distributing, and consuming information, which has radically transformed the equation of communication (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Consequently, there is increased technological progress representing the Information Age, which energises all spheres of life, including work and play, and, therefore, makes the world interconnected and data-driven (Fuchs, 2017).

Social Media Dominance: The use of social media has proven to be the ideal method of political communication (Golzard & Miguel, 2016). With the help of the Internet, politicians and political parties use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp to reach people directly with some messages, promote them, and derive support (Chadwick, 2017). The platforms now form a crucial component of political campaigns and advocacy to the extent that they promote real-time communications

and outreach functions (Tufekci, 2017). The emergence of such platforms can demonstrate the change of traditional communication to the sphere of digital technologies, where people can discuss politics and take political actions worldwide. This change denotes the change between the old public sphere and the electronic public sphere, where being online is taking over the mediation of the public conversation and interaction (Habermas, 2006; Dahlgren, 2005).

Smartphones and Media Consumption: The emergence of mobile technologies and the popularity of smartphones, in particular, have radically transformed media consumption in society. There is a mobile adaptation of streaming services, and also social media applications and news applications that allow people ready access to information in the palm of their hands (Van Dijck, 2013). This availability has changed the usage of media and enabled the dedicated use of mobile technology in life. The smartphones have already found their way into the world of politics since they enable access to digital activism, instant updates, and engagement with a wide range of media content. In this case, this was a change of the regular and the digital public sphere. The emergence of mobile gadgets, particularly smartphones, has drastically changed the consumption pattern of which media is used in society. The ability to instantly attain information through the mobile-friendly streaming service, social media apps, and news apps has brought information within people, at the touch of a finger (Maheshwari, 2021).

Digital Journalism: News reporting as online-based news sites, blogs, and multimedia content emerge, conventional journalism has shifted to a digital space. The use of social media by journalists is quite prevalent as a method of interacting with the audience as well as getting information in real time. Television News and programs are broadcast on video sharing services like YouTube. Many news companies publish video content to reach out to visual viewers. The creation and use of media might have transformed due to the emergence of new technological practices that have to do with AR, VR, and XR development. Such innovations might liven up the experience of storytelling. The introduction of portable laptops, tablets, Internet Explorer, smartphones, wearable technologies such as

smartwatches, recording devices, etc, and Google (1998) by American scientists Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who were PhD scholars at Stanford University in California, are among other avenues of new media.

2.6 Types of Media

Media can be divided into several types based on how they communicate and the technology they use. Print media includes newspapers, magazines, and journals that provide detailed news and analysis. Broadcast media, such as radio and television, reach a large audience through audio-visual content and are effective for mass communication. Digital media refers to internet-based platforms like websites, blogs, and social media, which enable interactive and instant information sharing. Outdoor media, including posters, billboards, and public displays, are mainly used for advertising and raising public awareness. Together, these types of media shape public opinion and influence social and political life.

2.6.1 Print Media

Print media can be seen as traditional media of communication, as it is distributed physically in the form of paper or other materials and is printed. It has been a long time since the medium used to pass information through the ages. Digital media does not demand any form of literacy, as it only demands the device or the computer to be able to access the information contained in it. Print media, on the other hand, demands literacy because the people have to be savvy to interpret the words printed and written. It has slower production cycles too because editing and updating of materials take a long time and release of the different editions is made periodically, at times daily, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or otherwise (McLuhan, 1962). Moreover, print media cannot be accessible on a 24-hour basis; it is only periodical, hence not very immediate. Although such disadvantages have characterised print media, albeit at a slower pace in comparison to the modern digital platforms, it has played a pivotal role in information dissemination. Examples of print media are magazines, books and newspapers (Williams, 2010).

- **Newspapers:** are periodicals that are usually printed on newsprint and offer news, information, and feature items.
- **Magazines:** Periodical publications with a broad coverage of subjects and frequently featuring advertisements, pictures, and articles. Which targeted specific interest groups.
- **Books:** Long-form writings, frequently with an instructional, narrative, or informational purpose. to impart knowledge, amuse, or offer an in-depth analysis of a subject.

2.6.2 Broadcasting Media/Electronic Media

The broadcast media has a cycle of creation, transmission and reception of content. Television, radio, and online streaming are all differentiated by diverse ways of production- scripted programs, live shows, musical programming, and on-demand video. The flexibility and personalisation of participation in the audience have been increased with the increasing role of online streaming. Best practices have to be observed to effectively utilise broadcast media. These are the knowledge of the target audience, consistent branding, the use of multiple platforms, the development of stimulating content, smart time scheduling, correct call-to-action and periodic review and improvement of the performance. New media has promoted a fast-paced society and the broadcast media has maintained its position as a strong tool of mass communication. Through the integration of its traditional strengths and new possibilities of interaction, it has the power to influence the behaviour of a consumer, change the way people perceive certain issues, and connect with others over cross-national and cross-cultural distances.

Television: A combination of audio and visual media that delivers information via cable or broadcast networks. This includes news programs, reality shows, documentaries, sports events, and commercials. Viewers from a wide range of demographic backgrounds and interests make up the audience.

Radio: A type of audio media that uses radio waves to broadcast information such as music, news, talk shows, interviews, and commercials. Here, there is a variety of

audience segments with varying tastes in news, conversation styles, and music genres.

2.6.3 New media/Digital media

The advent of the internet set the stage for the advent of new or digital media, which drastically changed how communication, information and entertainment are created, disseminated and bandied about (Jenkins, 2006). Digital media refers to content delivered through digital technologies, such as internet-based movies, blogs, podcasts, and webpages, as well as interactive multimedia (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2019). The move towards media has converted our manner of accessing and distributing information significantly, delivering engaging experiences that cannot be compared to the traditional print or broadcast media (Castells, 2013).

Digital media, which include social media, are of particular concern and concern topics, platforms that support user-centred, social interactions with a focus (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social networks and platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become central to the way humans can interact, share and combine. Additionally, video-sharing sites such as YouTube, electronic books and newspapers, as well as numerous programs on mobile phones and tablets, can also illustrate how different digital media have become (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Digital media blossoming has also altered the process of information sharing and consumption During election cycles, digital media has played a pivotal role in organizing rallies, mobilizing voters, and spreading political messages. (Global Media Journal, 2024). It is changing the nature of discourse in our age of technology, when the physical location is replaced with the possibilities of discourse online with greater distances and dynamic participation and exchange (citing Habermas (1989)). These developments herald the inclusive nature of the channels of communication. Creating places to interact and connect (referring to Jenkins (2006), Castells (2013)).

2.6.4 Mass Media

Mass media is the way messages can be sent to the audience by using the print, audiovisual, or electronic media. An alternative definition of the term, the mass media could be construed as those lines of communication that are communicated to a great number of people and normally through the means of technology (Dominick, 2012). These are the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet (McQuail & Deuze, 2020). Mass media is a significant tool which will help people to influence the moral values of society, to form public opinion, and to disseminate information (McLuhan, 1964). Moreover, it is also an effective form of entertainment and education for the people.

Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 15th century, which was associated with a comparable revolution in mass media. It allowed books, newspapers and pamphlets to be printed in large quantities and changed the method of information being available to masses of people (Eisenstein, 1980). During the 19th century, industrialisation as well as urbanisation contributed to the growing levels of literacy, and this was the reason why there was a subsequent growth in the consumption of newspapers and magazines (Starr, 2004). Concurrently, the technologies that suggested the creation of the modern global communications chain were the telephone and the telegraph, which enabled users to rapidly share their information across long distances (Standage, 1998).

The introduction of radio and television in the 20th century brought about a total revolution in the context of mass media because it made audiovisual information and content accessible to thousands of users. The channels were very instrumental in both advertising, news delivery, and entertainment (Gomery & Hockley, 2006). The appearance of the Internet in the late 20th century and the diffusion of digital technology in the 21st century altered the form and the range of mass media. The Internet enabled instant communication of information to any part of the world, and the digital devices helped make it convenient to produce and exchange multimedia content with the use of websites, social media, and streaming, etc. (Castells, 2010; Jenkins, 2006).

The concept of media as a democratic institution is the notion that they serve as the watchdog or the fourth estate, watching over the actions of political authorities and exploring the type of abuse of political power (Curran, 1991). The origin of the concept of a fourth estate can be associated with the doctrine of division of powers that evolved during the eighteenth century being the attempt to restrain the absolute state which exercised all of the power at that time. Some even claim that the information role of the media is less significant than the control role of the media as it guards the citizens against the interference with individual freedom by the state (Kelly & Donway, 1990). Perhaps, the primary connection between governments, political parties, candidates, etc., and voters is realised through the mass media since direct access between people and their representatives is minimal in relation to the number of the audience contacted and the issues addressed. Nevertheless, the media do not only transmit the information that politicians desire to convey to voters. They also contribute to the development of the political messages (Media Nigeria, 2018). Although in most cases the media are not the direct source of these messages, they wield a great influence on the content that is put in the media or rather what is not put, and thus they are the determinants of the political debate agenda (Entman, 1993).

The inclinations of the media to engage in the formation of alliances with certain parties or the endorsement of certain ideologies depend on the constellations in the political communication system. The majority of media during the old regime were closely aligned to specific political actors: they were either the propaganda tools of the ruling regime or government or they were media used by opposition forces in clandestine ways. To retain such relationships beyond transition may offer the media a clear editorial path and even financial independence. But as audience expectations change, such a strategy is not a risk-free choice with biased media likely to be viewed as less authoritative than objective ones.

The problem is that the needs of local communities or individual problems are not discussed in most cases due to the focus of the mass media on appealing to a large number of people. Consequently, there are numerous significant local activities

that get forgotten since they do not have the interest of many people (McChesney, 2008). Mass is typically used to mean a huge and undifferentiated audience, and this is the conventional interpretation of critics of mass culture and mass society. They claimed that mass communication was making modern social life a mass communication culture, thus compelling people to be amused instead of critically thinking (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The concept of the silent audience under the previous broadcast model is however brought into question by the digital media which has made interactivity a reality as well as promotion of active response as opposed to mere surface reading (Jenkins, 2006). The knowledge of mass media will result in increased appreciation of the populations and cultures. Such usefulness and strength is what endears media studies (McQuail, 2010). Since the 1950s, the cinema, radio, and TV have been defined as critical in the making of political power among the highly industrialised nations (Curran & Seaton, 2018). Moreover, studies indicate that it is experiencing an increasing concentration of media ownership. There are only a few companies that dominate the majority of media out there creating some arguments regarding the lack of diversity and representation (Bagdikian, 2004).

2.6.5 Outdoor Media Political Campaigns

Digital outdoor media, particularly digital billboards, is an active component in media campaigns. They can be characterised by a great level of visibility, flexibility, and a potential reach to a specific audience. The billboards placed in locations with heavy traffic are especially helpful in promoting campaigns. Digital billboards provide a chance to convey different messages continuously and without limits even on the fly, and reach certain demographic groups. These dynamic characteristics enable campaigns to react properly in light of the new support and the efficiency of their respective advertising. This saves recurrent transaction costs and assists in accessing more people using digital media. In contemporary politics, digital billboards form an essential means of shaping the opinion of the population (Whistler Billboards, 2024; Political Marketer, 2024).

At protests, rallies, sit-ins, and other mass gatherings, it is possible to convey the messages to participants and the audience by means of placards. In India, the most common form of the outwardly oriented form of political communication is public speaking /conference. Political parties and leaders set direct contact with the people by becoming the frontlines in different spaces. When coupled together, these various media are very crucial in political campaigns as they serve a diverse range of purposes in outdoor advertising or in political communication (Borz & De Francesco, 2024).

2.6.6 The Global Media

In the 21st century, the world political situation and the global society were heavily influenced by the global media. Global media is the concept that has become the outcome of contemporary technologies and international communication networks utilisation (Tussu, 2006). Nonetheless, critics have expressed alarm about the commercialisation of the global media. Although global media might enhance democracy and freedom of speech, they are geared towards commercial interests that usually outweigh the other factors that affect the common good. Consequently, national broadcasters have to go to town in the international markets (Harman & McChesney, 1997). The emergence of global markets has also given way to an increase in cultural media products through the global media system. The fear is the homogeneity of culture with the trend of the so-called Americanisation of the global and local cultures. This is deemed to matter in ensuring the cultural diversity continues (Appadurai, 1996). Global media provides a great challenge to sustaining this diversity. The other way to show the tremendous power of the media of the world is the way in which global events are affecting the opinions of people. Other events that had significant influence in the world occurred because of global media through the collapse of communism, as well as the Kosovo war and the September 11 attacks (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). These types of incidents demonstrate how world media structures influence political representation and popular opinion (Chomsky, 2002).

2.7 Communication

The field of study known as communication dates back to civilisations and has foundations in ancient civilisations through the course of rhetoric, philosophy and social organisation. Early scholars such as Aristotle (384 to 322 BCE) began systematically studying communication and, in particular, the study of rhetoric and persuasion, around which he wrote in *Rhetoric*. Aristotle was writing about how messages could be structured in order to influence the audience and dealt with nagging aspects such as speaker, message, and audience components that formed the base of the future theories of communication. Aristotle entertained the view that the role of the speaker in the arena of public speaking was pivotal, and the speaker had the responsibility to be conscious of examining the audience. Along with employing nonverbal communication, his words and the selection of persuasion means are significant in his speech since sometimes all the body language, his voice, and eye contact are important (Aristotle, 2007).

This expansion of communication technology has transformed human society drastically, changing the system of in-person interaction and symbolic communication with the creation of complex digital networks and mobile phone users around the globe. The original human communication was based on oral traditions and visual communication by using cave paintings as a source of conveying the stories and knowledge. With the development of the civilisations, the appearance of new forms of writing systems such as Sumerian cuneiform in 3400 BCE helped people to freeze the piece of knowledge and to transfer it in the future, and worked as the basis of organised communication (Innis, 1950). One of the most significant turning points was established by Johannes Gutenberg when he invented the printing press in the 15th century. As books became mass-produced, print democratised the information, increased literacy levels and disseminated new ways of thinking that undermined religious and political establishments, hence provoked social and intellectual movements like the Renaissance and the Reformation (Eisenstein, 1980). The 19th and 20th centuries then came with the era of electronic communication that started with dramatic beginnings in the telegraph, but later on, it

encompassed the telephone and the radio. Such developments made it possible to enable immediate communications without having to be in physical proximity and transformed social life, commerce, and politics (Carey, 1989).

This form of communication took a more advanced turn in modern times especially towards the early 20th century, which brought with it the emergence of mass media. Formal communication studies are often traced to such scholars as Harold Lasswell, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver. The model which is identified with Lasswell (1948) is Who says what in what channel to whom with what effect, which addresses the structure and effects of messages. Shannon and Weaver (1949) made the use of a mathematical model which defined communication between two people as the exchange between a sender, a message, a channel, a receiver, and noise which could be present in the message: necessary to know about information transmission. The above early frames provided the basis of communication as a discipline of knowledge, with a combination of the views of sociology, psychology, linguistics and engineering disciplines to study human interrelationships and exchange of information.

The digital revolution in the late 20th century saw the invention of the internet, a decentralised and networked structure where a large population and people had interpersonal communication and mass communication across the globe. The internet provided the convenience of information and connection like never before, where it became a part of almost every activity of life, including business and learning (Castells, 2010). The subsequent social media also changed communication by promoting audience engagement by having participatory, user-created content, and interactive networks. The horizontal structure of social media enables users to consume and produce information which provides a dynamic communication environment where information is socially contextualised (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The evolution of communication technology has redefined society in terms of the economy, politics and culture. Communication at distance and scale has increased the availability of information to the general population, shaped the opinion of the masses and led to cultural exchange. The shift today toward the use of

digital and networked communication, away from more traditional forms, has been an illustration of how communication technology has continued to affect social interactions and interconnectedness across the globe (McLuhan, 1964).

2.8 Communication: Karl Deutsch's Perspective

Karl Deutsch (1963) explores the issue of communication in his book titled *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*, in which he criticises the tendency to focus on the issue of communication. His work has been fundamental to the realisation of how communication works through the social system, political theory, and diplomacy. It has helped to give valuable knowledge on the impacts of communication in relationships, not only within societies but also between societies. Communication guru Karl Deutsch has formulated a broad theory of communication which cuts across all academic disciplines and establishes the importance of communication. The theory expounded by him is centred on how the transmission, processing, and interpretation of messages in such systems take place and emphasises the use of communication as an instrument of control as well as a source of social integration. He considered societies and organisations to be dynamic structures which need to communicate effectively to achieve stability, adaptation and coordination among the members of the organisations. Communication in this aspect plays the role of the nerves within the system as it allows any people and groups of people to know each other, receive information and keep each other updated. Deutsch theorised that the reason why social systems could not exist without communication was that without it, they would not be able to perform effectively (Deutsch, 1963).

One of the most important aspects of the theory of communication, as presented by Deutsch, is the significance of feedback, which may be interpreted as a positive or negative indication which contributes to the regulation and adjustment of behaviour in the system. Compliments tend to give positive reinforcement to specific attitudes whereas negative feedback plays the role of correction or inhibition. This reciprocated feedback process embodies communication as a rather continuous dynamic process, where the feedback mechanisms occur to help keep the

social systems in balance as they remain flexible to fluctuations in the surrounding environment. The result of an equal interplay of negative and positive feedback is that social systems are able to develop in the course of time and manifest stability as well as responsiveness to change (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Deutsch similarly explored the roles of communication as a control source and instrument in the social and political system and how this tool helps authorities control and influence the behaviour of the population, opinion-building, and understanding of social life. One of the major things that we must acknowledge is its importance as a determinant of the actions of the people. In a more complex society, where individuals tend to have no direct personal connections, communication acts as a social integrative tool, through which it is possible to coordinate actions and align the activities of disparate groups. Such an integrative role is particularly important at the political level, where clear communication may solidify a stable environment, provide order, and also encourage unity among people (Deutsch, 1963; McNair, 2011).

Deutsch, in his theory, identified the innovative aspect of the use of technology in communication and its significant influences on the social and political systems. He premised that emergent communication technologies were threatening to transform these systems because the speed and range of the messages were being increased. Information exchange has been promoted extensively by the invention of mass media including television and radio and then more recently the internet and digital platforms. In turn, this fast change in communication transformed the landscape of political interaction, providing people with greater access to contribute to the discourse of the general community, as well as reforming the relationship between countries by enabling them to transfer information in real-time and at a global scale (Castells, 2013).

The earliest definition of the term in the English language can be categorised as transferring the ideas, information and the attitude from one to another. However, subsequent communication later came to imply a communication line or channel between one place to another. So much has been added to this form of

communication, that is to canals, railways, steamships, cars and aircraft since the industrial revolution, that it often seems that when we speak of communications, we speak of these means of travel and transportation. But another great way of modern advancement and invention. Steam printing, electric telegraph, photography, wireless, film, television, are something like the computer with which in a brand-new day the book was printed, a brand-new means of conveying ideas, information, and attitudes person to person, or we call them too communications. The word therefore has other meanings that are used in common life, and misconceptions tend to exist between them (Williams, 1962). Interaction between two systems or organisms through signal recognition by one another with the purpose of communication. Communication was a master discipline that had huge vogue during the mid to late twentieth century. By now, being an element of most of humanity and a considerable amount of non-human activity, it appeared only logical that the academic field which was named after it had ambitions of a similar type. Thus, the study of approaches to communication has started to inherit part of the role played by philosophy in explaining humanity to itself and connecting it with the non-human environment (John Hartley, 2011).

2.9 New Trends in Communication Development

The current trends in communication technologies have constituted significant changes in how information and communication are shared, most notably in directing the high end of digital innovation.

New Technologies: These innovations open up huge prospects in terms of information distribution in the form of the Internet and mobile telecommunications. This significantly simplifies networking, the multiplication of voices in reflection, and the overcoming of the gap between new and old ones (McChesney, 2000). The capabilities of the Internet, coupled with the chatter effect of the radio, present strong possibilities of advancing knowledge-based societies on the digital-based and satellite-based platforms. Such inventions as Smartphones, laptops, smart TVs, and even social media platforms which have entirely transformed how people share and consume information.

Media Liberalisation: The liberalisation and deregulation of the media, particularly in the 21st century, have made significant differences to the media environment, particularly in India (Thussu, 2006). This has changed the print and broadcast industries to be no longer state-owned monopolists but creative, democratic, and dynamic. Massive changes have also been experienced in the broadcast media, where local audiences have the attraction of the privately owned radio and television stations, and also include community-based radio and television stations (Herman & McChesney, 1997). A complex media landscape has been brought about by the introduction of satellite television and digital radio which has brought about newer levels to the media experience.

Consumerism: Liberalisation has encouraged the prevalence of media freedom and has also propagated the consumer-oriented, industry-focused, advertising-based media process. Such infrastructure exposes people living in the city and the countryside to the impact of consumer culture (Chakravartty & Roy, 2013).

Media and War: There is significant involvement of media activities in the conflicts that occur in the neighbourhoods and the resulting awareness. Nevertheless, nationalistic, sensationalistic, and fabricated reporting tend to escalate conflicts and raise bitter feelings and hatreds among communities (Galtung, 1998). The various experiences have utilised the media as a tool for propagating peaceful consciousness and fostering discussion (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

2.10 Cybernetics Theory

Specifically, cybernetics, named after the Greek word *Kybernetes* (governor, statesman), is the trans-disciplinary field of study that deals with systems, control, communication and feedback phenomena in both living and artificially constructed systems. The word cybernetics was coined in the mid-20th century by Norbert Wiener, who developed it out of practice in studying the processes of self-regulation of systems (biological, mechanical, social, etc.) in order to stay steadfast or to accomplish a goal via feedback interactions. When applied in a communication context in mass media, and to political communication, cybernetics gives a framework within which it is possible to understand the extent to which information

washes between the media, the audiences, and political players and this becomes a feedback loop that determines how the society acts, the opinion held, and may importantly determine policy formations. We should consider some means of reading cybernetics with references to mass media and political communication, as we expect to hear what critical scholars claim (Wiener, 1961).

2.10.1 Media and Political Systems: A Cybernetic Approach

The theory of feedback loops, developed in the science of cybernetics, gives a significant vantage point on the role of media and the workings of political systems. The processes of feedback loops are those in which the outputs of a system are returned to and affect the output of the very same system. Remarkably, Wiener (1948) observed that systems depend on a process called feedback to make them consistent and stable. The theory may also be observed in the functionalities involving the reaction of the participants to the social media and the political policies.

2.10.2 Feedback Loops in Media Influence

Feedback loops are observed in the form of technologies and combined responses in the media. The media accounts and the form in which it is written or discussed are dependent on how citizens choose to react to circumstances either through social media, protests, or even voting. This is the idea of the global village that belonged to McLuhan (1964). The sharing of events in the rest of the world makes them the centre of attention, followed by their subsequent response by those in representative positions, leading to a process of instant feedback. Political systems, just like the rest of these systems, are also a complex feedback system. Political policies and ideas are affected by public opinion, election outcomes, and protests. As was mentioned by Wissner (1948), transparency and stability require feedback. An example would be that of the viable systems model developed by Stafford Beer (1979). It is argued through this model that political institutions exist in a state of viability with regard to the feedback they get from the mass media and the opinion of the people and act accordingly.

The cybernetic concept of homeostasis is related to the political process of maintaining a state of equilibrium in the social state. Such efforts are aimed at ensuring equality through rules, legal systems, and civic action. These processes of feedback make systems capable of growth, change, and the importance of change. These tantric characteristics in shaping media and political systems help explain social change and media strategies. Understanding feedback processes helps us understand the changing nature of media influence and political existence.

2.10.3 Information Theory and Media Content Transmission

Information theory of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver forms one of the core components of cybernetics. The theory is the one which examines the process of encoding, delivering and intercepting messages. In political communication, the theory illustrates how the messages like politics, news, and propaganda are produced, given, and transferred to an audience in a manner that is reachable by the audience in the presence of a repetition of the global message (biased or cluttered media). The communication model created by Claude Shannon highlights the regulations in the back-and-forth circuitry between a recipient and a sender. The analogy here is drawn to the fact that the design of political messages is created to cause the response of the population and the beginning of the new communication cycles (Shannon & Weaver, 1949).

2.10.4 Control and self-regulation in governance

Cybernetics had observed how vital control processes were to political regimes. Karl Deutsch (1963), a systems theorist, suggested that political systems may examine information such as public opinion, economic indicators, etc., in their policy-making processes via a form of information feedback to control policy choices. Deutsch contends that good governance entails much processing of information to be able to keep up with the demands of society. Politicians find ways of adapting their policy programs with these signals when a need is created in society and the system controls itself. This is one of the means of preventing injustices and failures of the system. Cybernetics also found its way into the theory of the public sphere by Jurgen Habermas. According to Habermas (1989), free

discussion and response correspond to the characteristics of a democratic society. Communication space is also that feedback, which helps citizens transmit their demands to the constitutional establishments and react to them.

2.10.5 Stability and Adaptation through Information Flow

With regards to cybernetics, a political system must have control of information flow in order to be able to achieve a state of stability. Protests and media criticism are a form of negative responses to failures that act as warnings to governments that a crisis is coming and that governments should implement changes in policies and communication tactics to regain order. There is positive feedback, such as support rates in the society, which favours the current policies. This type of feedback loop is to the benefit of the system to enable it to adapt and stay functional as Norbert Wiener (1948) observed in that such a system struggles against change.

Cybernetics is described in the model of the way journalism and political systems are in the form of adaptive systems that run on a continuous feedback loop. Communication has dynamically interrelated media organisations, the audiences and the political structures. Self-regulation and feedback cycles assist the political messages to help accommodate the mood of the people, stabilise and allow change. It is this perception of the ideas of response, control, and adaptation that form the core of cybernetics. Political systems represent themselves as adaptive and self-regulating systems; they receive feedback in the form of civil opinion and make adjustments to policies in the process. Other scholars like Norbert Wiener, Karl Deutsch, and Stafford Beer have shown the applicability of theories of cybernetics to governing and how they contributed in establishing the significance of communication, response, and control in sustaining political systems.

2.11 Political Communication

Political communication refers to how leaders, through the use of language and symbols, accomplish desired or undesired influence on the political thinking, feelings or actions of the individual, or on the attainment of subsequent events that pertain to the political policy of the country, state or community (Richard M.

Perloff, 2014). The current media users are exposed to politically relevant decentralised, interacting and horizontally networked communication on a daily basis. They are exposed to communications that the social context has moulded in a networked setting that is Media fractured and geared towards micro-segmentation. Political campaigns, social media, and other message creators select the perfect content, presentation, and means of distribution conforming to social and psychological profiles of users (Young & Miller, 2023). Political parties are also political communicators who communicate in an effort to win and maintain power or influence decision making and the opinion of the people through political campaigns and election campaigns. Political parties and politicians are interested in communicating with the electorate or the people whom they rule. Political parties, pressure groups and interest groups will apply political communication tactics to help shape the decisions made and the opinion of masses though in most cases at their specific interest.

To some extent, the political communication must be about the circulation of political messages among and between those factors identified in the model. Indeed, for rush, political communication is the transmission of politically relevant information from one part of the political system to another. M. C Nair offers political communication by stressing that political communication stresses two levels of communication. Firstly, Political communication is the intended, explicit and implicit communication of messages with political content between members of a political system. But political communication is also the communication, intended and unintended, of messages with a political and social system that contribute to the transmission and circulation of political and social values, beliefs and ideas. Secondly, political communication plays a role in the more general process of political socialisation, the construction and maintenance of political culture and political behaviour.

Books on political communication must always start by conceding the fact that the term has been historically notoriously hard to pin down with any precision at all as both parts of the phrase can be defined themselves using definitions that are

more or less broad. An example is given by Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward who define one of the forms of political communication as being mere conversation regarding what is to be done with the resources belonging to public (revenues), whose hand is to have the official authority (who should have the authority to make legal, legislative and executive decisions) and what the state should reward and punish. According to Denton and Woodward, political communication can be defined as an intention of the senders of any form of communication to affect the political world. What really matters in making communication sound political is not where a message comes from, but instead, the content and intent of a message (McNair, 2011). A different definition proposed by David L. Swanson and Dan Nimmo claims that the strategic application of communication to shape the knowledge, beliefs, and actions concerning the political issues of people constitutes the definition of political (Daily Trojan, 2022).

Emphasising the purposefulness of political communication, which, under McNair, here is merely purposeful communication concerning politics. These include: All communications made by politicians and other political players in order to attain certain goals, communications these parties make to them by non-politicians, including voters and newspaper columnists, communications about them and their activities, including being incorporated in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics. Altogether, everything in the political discourse falls under our definition. When meant by political communication therefore, that is the same as Graber when taking into account not just a verbal or written statement, but also such visual modes of signification as dress, make-up, hairstyle, and logo design, i.e. all those modes of communication which might be said to include a whole political image or identity (McNair, 2011).

As we observe and hear words of our political leaders we are used to these dramatic art works. We look at the style of dress when we watch parliamentary debates or on a television interview or when we listen to the latest policy announcements; we also listen to the manner of their speech and recognise that we are familiar with the dour rectitude of an Opposition leader, the uncertainty and

indecision of a government minister, the self-confidence of a minister. That is, instead, natural: the practice of human communication is performative and embodied. When someone speaks to us, we do not just decode the content of the speech; we put interpretation into what they are saying on a verbal level, their looks, their actions. The significance of political image in political communication in the modern context is, however, the point of great consternation. There is a fear that nowadays, political style is nearly as vital as political content and political success is based more on media handling than policy expertise (Geoffrey & Craig, 2007).

Political leaders and public figures, always conscious of their performative power, have always cultivated 'images' for political consumption. The importance of political images has, however, burgeoned in the age of television. The particular communicative contexts of television, with its audiovisual presence of represented subjects, has lent personal features a significance they did not previously hold. The greater importance of image and style in contemporary politics is partly due to changes in the media, but it is also due to the changing political environment. The history of 20th-century politics is littered with famous stories about the successful employment of political image as well as salutary tales about political failure due to an inability to use the media to convey an appropriate image or persona in order to convince the public. Much has been written about Joseph Goebbels' use of the media in Nazi Germany to stylise the image of the party and to construct a stylised aesthetics for Hitler's political performances (Geoffrey & Craig, 2007).

Political communication is the internal process of transmission of messages, ideas, and news within a society, and a wide range of actions and processes can be classified as political communication. Some of the communication avenues involved organising speeches, debates, political advertising, social media, news coverage, public relations and grassroots mobilising. Political communication establishes how to influence policy making, call out the electorate, build the opinion of the people, and enforce democratic systems to take place. Assuming that political communication systems at the turn of the millennium were undergoing these changes on a scale of a lifetime, further changes have accelerated and increased

since then, altering the media environment, as well as political communication (Blumler, 2016). This definition of political communication according to Graber and Smith (2005) places a lot of broadness in the definition of political communication as the communication processes can have any influence on politics. This is not just formal messages which are communicated between political actors, but also the less formal, incidental messages that can influence political attitudes, behaviours or result in policy outcomes. Political communication to them refers to the physical or psychological construction, transmission, receipt, and processing of unorganised messages that may affect politics considerably, either directly or indirectly. The senders and the receivers of the messages can be politicians, journalists, members of interest groups, and unorganised citizens who are basically private (Soukup, 2014)

2.11.1 Strategies of Political Communication

Political communication is the range of approaches in communication that is applied to transfer information, to impact the opinions of people and to advocate political objectives. A combination of approaches, which changes according to demographics, political situations, and goals of the communication plan are always successful.

Segmentation of the audience: This is aimed at defining and reaching certain people in certain categories like age, gender, caste, region and interests. Creating content that is going to relate to the needs and concerns of individual groups of people makes communication more applicable to both the leaders and the media (Iyengar & McGrady, 2007; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948).

Emotional Appeal: Appealing to people based on emotions that arouse people, whether fear, anger, empathy and hope can be a great way of making people respond to it. The personal stories allow political leaders and the media to humanise their message and feel trusted and connected. Campaign initiatives of fictional accounts can significantly alter voting and attitudes of voters (Brader, 2006; Marcus et al., 2000).

Political Participation: Political participation can take many forms, including serving as political party activists, gaining membership, and maintaining leadership. The political participation of individuals in a family can attract other family members to political activities and spread communication (Dalton, 2014; Verba et al., 1995).

Digital Strategies: Smart strategies include the usage of digital channels or social media, mobile platforms, and websites to reach a huge audience and instant communication promotion. Through the usage of these tools, media outlets find an opportunity to spread political news and opinions and promote participation and engagement of the population (Boulianne, 2019; Chadwick, 2013).

Political Communication Campaigns: In communication, campaigns can be defined as promotional messages in the public interest disseminated through mass media channels to the target audience (Atkin 1981). The concept of a campaign may well be defined by political campaigns. Consumers (target people), for example, rarely see advertising campaigns as campaigns, instead, they experience an advertising campaign simply as individual advertisements. Election campaigns may be either for candidates, for political office or for issue referenda. The election campaign helps in reinforcing and mobilising the options of the electorate. The election campaign mainly uses banners, posters, pamphlets, hoardings, wall writings, badges and newer forms such as jingles, slogans, parodies and even videos (Kiran Prasad, 2003).

Political image and Performance: Strategic features of the political image and performance have risen in the current political communication. In order to impress people, politicians and political parties are turning more to media-savvy descriptions. The given trend, focused on the power of the appearance, personal branding, and performative behaviours, is not merely an outline of the shift of focus but a calculated effort of promoting relatability and trust on the part of constituents. As opposed to the times in the past when the policy content and ideologies took the centre stage, the current political campaigns are sometimes characterised by the established images of leaders. This transition correlates with the theories of image

politics that point to the fact that the visual and emotional components of the political persona of a politician have an overwhelming influence on the voter behaviour (Bennett & Entman, 2000). As a result, political leaders nowadays resort to multiple tactics, including individual outreach through social media, overt displays of humanitarianism, and the carefully staged events in an attempt to become more likable and develop an attractive image in the minds of the electorate.

Media has now become an essential means through which politicians are able to create a certain perception about themselves and the way they are performing in the industry. Using social media, television, and live streaming, politicians can now remain in constant presence and be involved in what scholars refer to as performative politics (Street, 2011). This change indicates that politicians are no longer studied on the basis of their policy holdings, but rather, their image of being more relatable and accessible as well. Media platforms help politicians to interact with their citizens in a way that makes them seem particularly sensitive to their issues by fulfilling people's needs of immediacy and intimacy (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018). The problem is, however, that such attention paid to performance needs to be considered in the context of accountability because when it comes to the desire to create a kind of a marketable image, the substance-related discussion inevitably takes a back seat to the presentations of such accounts.

According to these trends, media studies scholars have emphasised that the truthfulness of political messages can be threatened, and this has enormous implications in political communication. In cases involving politicians, they are viewed as acting out in front of the camera instead of taking a serious approach to matters (Chadwick, 2017). This transition has sparked controversies on media ethics and the obligation of news agencies to make the coverage as balanced as possible between the image and serious political issues. With the prevalence of image politics in the political arena, the question raised is whether it distracts in any way from the efforts put towards meaningful interaction with policies or is just an adjustment in dealing with political communication to fit a policy of images in the media sphere (Scammell, 2014). There are other forms of political participation besides electoral

activity in a democracy, viz., communicating, protesting, and contacting in order to participate (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Moreover, it is claimed that indeed, any form of political participation is regarded as a multi-dimensional phenomenon and not a unitary one which is made of several phases including voting, campaigning, cooperative activities, and citizen-initiated contacts (Banerjee, 2014).

2.11.1.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The idea, which was originally explicitly formulated in a 1972 research by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw, contends that the public agenda is greatly influenced by the media's decision-making over which stories to cover and how prominently to display them. According to Ghorparde, "agenda setting theory is a relational concept that specifies a transfer of silence from agenda primers (media) to adopters (consumers)" . Research on agenda setting has demonstrated a link between public silence and matters that the media considers essential. In simpler terms, agenda setting claims that what the media deems important will eventually be reflected in what people perceive as important. The notion of agenda setting relies on the transfer of issues from the media to the public (Tripathi, 2006).

Empirical Support for the Agenda-Setting Idea: When this was written, both writers were associate professors in the School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. McCombs and Shaw have been hailed as the pioneers of the research on agenda setting by many scholars. Although a couple of other claimants exist to the same honour, none have played so significant a role in the growth and continued vibrancy of the contemporary agenda-setting research (Graber, 1990).

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw carried out a groundbreaking study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1968 to look at the connection between popular opinion and media coverage. They selected Chapel Hill because it is a typical American community with a diverse population and range of political views. The researchers examined news reports from regional newspapers, radio stations, and television networks related to the presidential election in order to determine the subjects that were most commonly discussed. They divided these subjects into

themes, including civil rights, foreign policy, and law and order. McCombs and Shaw polled Chapel Hill voters concurrently to find out which issues were most important to them in the election. They requested that respondents prioritise the issues. The public's agenda, or the subjects that respondents thought were significant, was then contrasted with the media's agenda, or the subjects that were reported on a regular basis.

The research determined that there exists a close connection between media coverage and the attitudes of people. The citizens also took the issues that grabbed the most publicity in the media as being the most significant. An example is when the respondents tended to rate law and order among the top issues when it was highly reported in the paper. This correlation held even when individual political affiliations and demography were adjusted. The Chapel Hill study revealed that through setting of the agenda, the media plays a large role in influencing the opinion of the people. Those topics which are positively featured on the headlines and those that are given no coverage define how the populace perceives the significance of a topic. This research was revolutionary and led to the development of the Agenda-Setting Theory that has proven to be applicable and correct under different circumstances in many environments, making it one of the most important concepts in political science and communication (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

2.11.1.2 Political Coverage: Horse-race coverage

Horse-race coverage is political reporting that focuses on the horse-race aspects of politics, i.e., who is leading in the polls, who is gaining, and who is falling back. This type of coverage can be likened to a horse race, the drama and excitement of the runners takes priority over the substance of the topics of discussion by the media. In the horse race coverage, the policy positions of political candidates, their leadership skills as well as their vision towards the country is often subdued by their polling statistics, fund raising efforts, and achievements in the debates. Compared to their leadership qualities or stands on policy, such a kind of coverage results in a feedback loop, where the media overlook candidates perceived as losers, and focus on those perceived as winners. Consequently, coverage of horse races may result in

political reportage that prioritises flair over content and lacks depth (Patterson, 1993).

US Presidential Elections: Instead of looking at policy positions on Donald Trump with respect to issues such as trade and healthcare, the media paid extensive attention to his inflammatory statements and his activity on Twitter during the 2016 US Presidential Election. Brexit: Media focus during the 2016 Brexit referendum was more on the polls and the politicking of various forces as opposed to the potential political and economic costs of quitting the EU. French Presidential Elections French presidential candidates have a constant focus on media coverage of the personal development of one of the candidates, Emmanuel Macron, as a young leader and potential winner of the election, and too little coverage of his policy on issues such as labour reform and integration into the EU. Indian General Elections: coverage of the attacks on the opposition and the campaign rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi were reported in the media as highly opposed to the agricultural and educational plans of his government during the 2019 Indian General Elections. Australian Federal Elections: The media in the 2019 Australian Federal Election focused more on the political competition between the opposition leader Bill Shorten and the Prime Minister Scott Morrison than on the stance of each of the political leaders on issues like economic growth and climate change. The media emphasised the competitive nature of politics over the content of policy issues in each of these instances, resulting in a narrative that is more focused on who is winning or losing than on the consequences of their policies. The media emphasised the competitive nature of politics over the content of policy issues in each of these instances, resulting in a narrative that is more focused on who is winning or losing than on the consequences of their policies. Thomas E. Patterson's recent writings, like "A Tale of Two Elections: CBS and Fox News' Portrayal of the 2020 Presidential Campaign" and "News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters" also go into great detail about horse race reporting and how it affects politics and voters (Patterson 2016,2020).

2.11.1.3 Issue-based journalism

Issue-based journalism is a political reporting that ventures into the policies, opinions and interests of political players and delves into the topic itself. Such an approach attaches a lot of importance to the surrounding context and adequate analysis, which provides the viewers with a comprehensive understanding of the issues. An example of issue-based coverage examines the values, beliefs, and interests that drive political decision-making, rather than horse-racing coverage, which focuses on the competitive aspects of the political arena. Covering issues assists viewers understand what could be the consequences of different policy choices and trade offs by going into the details of the policy debates. Through this type of coverage, voters are able to evaluate political candidates based on their stands on critical policy issues and are able to make reasoned discussions about issues that touch them directly (Dalton, 1998).

Climate Change discussions: News organisations such as The New York Times and The Guardian covered the discussions in great detail at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, delving into the stances of the various nations on financing, technology transfer, and carbon reductions. (Dalton, 1998; Schunemann, 2016). US-Iran Nuclear Deal: In 2015, news organisations such as The Washington Post and National Public Radio (NPR), an American non-profit media organisation that acts as a national syndicator to a network of more than 1,000 public radio stations in the US, covered the nuclear deal in great detail, exploring into its technical details as well as its political implications for the area and possible effects on global security. (Golkar, 2017; Semati, 2017). EU Migration strategy: News organisations such as The Economist and Politico have covered the EU's migration strategy issue-by-issue, dissecting various methods of border control, processing asylum seekers, and integration plans. (Krzyzanowski & Ledin, 2017). Diplomacy between North Korea and the US: News organisations such as CNN and BBC News covered the 2018–2019 summit between North Korea and the US in great detail, focusing on topics such as security assurances, sanctions easing, and denuclearisation. (Lee, 2019; Kim, 2020). WTO Trade Disputes: News organisations such as Financial Times and

Bloomberg have covered trade disputes between nations issue-by-issue, looking at the specifics of trade agreements, the financial effects of tariffs and subsidies, and the political complexities surrounding trade policy (Yang, 2018, Zhang, 2019).

2.11.1.4 Framing

Framing is a term which characterises the manner in which the media helps draw their perceptions among viewers regarding issues and instances relating to politics. The framing effects can influence the way political issues are perceived and evaluated rather strikingly. (Entman, 1993).

Political Elites Framing the Issues: Through effective structuring of their messages in a way that attracts the desired target, political elites (legislators, policy makers as well as those in their frats) manage to craft the discourse of the political issues, events and ideas (Entman, 1993). As an example, during the campaign to be president of the United States in 2020, the campaign team of Donald Trump framed his economic policies as such that put America first, meaning job creation and protectionism. Similarly, the staff of Joe Biden emphasised his ideas on climate change as Building Back Better, focusing on the need to create more jobs and make infrastructure sustainable. Compelling language and repetitive frames are methods of framing used by political elites to influence the opinions of the masses and fulfil their objective. As an example, the research proved that Americans endorse Trump's trade policy more when his narrative of America First is reported by the press. Similarly, as illustrated by Biden, the platform of Build Back Better has been linked to an increase in the awareness and support of people on emphasising action. (Lee, 2020).

To ensure effective communication of their message, the political elites focus on specific aspects to promote the purpose and compress complex topics into understandable pieces (Entman, 1993). They select frames very profusely that can shed light on their goals, ideas they heavily invest in, and the taste of their target audience; they often do so by pointing to already established stories of the culture or by evoking feelings (utilising al., 1997). Next, elites develop compelling discourse through the use of metaphors, rhetorical strategies, and recognisable words in order

to attract more people to their frames (Lakoff, 2004). Finally, to make their frames more familiar and digestible to their listeners, they embark on the repetition of their frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The Affordable Care Act has been found to gain popularity thanks to the frequent use of the slogan by President Obama that healthcare is not a privilege but a right (Gollust et al., 2017).

Public opinion is influenced: The framing messages influence the public perception, attitudes, and opinions on political topics, policies or candidates. In one such study, conducted by Iyengar and Simon, it was identified that media coverage can change how a particular issue is perceived by the masses even in cases where the issue is actually more important than others. (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). The frames developed by the media can influence the way people perceive political issues as well as political actors by focusing attention on specific portions of such matters and minimising the impact of others (Nelson et al., 1997). As the study conducted by Lee (2020) showed, the influence of the way that Trump is presented in the media regarding the tax reform strategy was evident, and some framing resulted in the strengthening of the support, whereas the other ones added to the diminishing of the support.

Feedback Loop: There can be a feedback loop established between political elites framing strategies and the responses and opinions of the masses (Nelson et al., 1997). The narratives by the political elites might be altered by the popular mood, news coverage, and narratives of their competitors. To illustrate, the healthcare approach of the team of Joe Biden, who participated in the 2020 US presidential campaign, became more progressive than moderate in response to the opinion of the people and the media. Instead, intelligence comes into consideration (Druckman & Chong, 2007).

Media Framings Strengthen or Compete: Media organisations and journalists greatly influence political discourse by supplementing, modifying or contradicting the original structures put in place by the political organisation. The process can significantly shape the conceptions of society upon political matters and their opinion (Patterson, 1993). Illustratively, the media reporting on the Brexit debate in Britain showed that media frames have the potential to accept, change or dispute original frames. Leading news agency The BBC also framed the Brexit debate as an

either-or situation in which economic safety or sovereignty had to be achieved, whereas The Guardian emphasised the potential downsides of Brexit, such as loss of jobs, uncertain economic future, and the resulting uncertainty influenced the way people perceived the situation and contributed to a serious debate regarding the Brexit impact (Prasad, 2020; Jones, 2020). Similarly, media reports on the dispute on climate change in Australia have demonstrated how frames used by the media are able to alter opinion of the population. Whereas part of the news media outlets, such as Sky News, have brought forth the issue of climate change as a controversial process with dubious science, others like The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian have presented it as a pressing issue that requires instant attention. These competing frames have made the topic of climate change become more divisive in the discourse (van der Linden et al., 2020; Schwartz, 2020).

2.12 The Concept of the Public Sphere

During the French Revolution, democracy spread gradually throughout Europe and America. The concept of "people" replaces "king" as the source of legitimate authority, and the people themselves take the role of the subjects. The public sphere's principal proponent is Jürgen Habermas; he pointed out the public sphere and media in his writings of *'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere'* published in 1962. According to Habermas, the public sphere as a virtual or imaginary community where everyone has access to a universe of shared knowledge and content since we live in a "public sphere," which refers to a social setting where people can freely discuss and identify issues facing society and, as a result, have an impact on political decision-making. This space contributes to the democratic nature of our society. He added that anyone can contribute to the public sphere in whatever way they see fit and that it is an open forum where we can voice our opinions and question the authority figures in our society and government. He also believes in post-truth democracy, which allows anyone to put forward anything and eliminates the distinction between real and fabricated data.

Habermas, on the other hand, in his analysis traced the origin of the public sphere in the 18th century, with the rise of the bourgeoisie and subsequent access to new, different forums of discussion like coffee houses, salons, and the press. He states that such meeting places enabled a kind of discourse in front of the people that

was crucial to the emergence of democracy. But Habermas equally mentions the structural transformation of said public sphere, especially in the 20th century, with the development of mass media, consumer culture and corporate interests taking centre stage in the process of discussion, thus resulting in what he terms the re-feudalisation of the public sphere. The consequence of this shift is the passivity of the community and a lack of interest in critical discussion, which is overshadowed by the interests of mighty organisations (Habermas, 1989).

Writing in the wake of the English Civil War, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes saw the "public" as a mass with unstoppable passions, a war of all against all, which could only be kept in order by a strong authority. In the well-known front piece of his work "Leviathan," Hobbes' public is represented as a body with the king as the head (Hobbes, 1651). A few decades later John Locke, an English Philosopher argued that the people judged the virtue of our actions by three standards: the 'divine law' the 'civil law' and the 'law of opinion,' how we think about what is right and wrong is dictated by each. But Locke argued that the last law of public opinion exerted the most pressure on us in other words, we care what other people think (Locke, 1689).

The primary source of information on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the public sphere could be found in the works of his political philosophy that addressed the matter between individual and society. One of the most significant contributions that he made to society is found in his writings of *The Social Contract* and *The Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*. Rousseau emphasised the importance of the general will and how the will of people as a whole makes up the real sovereignty. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau argues that living in a political society of people who exercise direct democracy is a more acceptable form of seeking freedom rather than having a solitary existence. He believes that the origin of legitimate political power is the social contract-the point where individuals meet in an attempt to form a society that will act in the best interests of the population as a whole. Contrary to individualism and selfishness, the definition of the public sphere offered by Rousseau is connected with his belief in direct democracy, civil participation and the will of the people (Rousseau, 1762).

In this influential book entitled *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville explores the impact of equality and democracy on society and draws particular concern to the fact that often perceptions and views of the general population limit some people in their ideas and deeds. He argues that it is a powerful pressure of the opinion of the masses which affects what people think and often makes them conform, in democratic societies where the social conditions are equal. This environment, according to Tocqueville, produces stable opinion due to the fact that opinions that oppose the social pressure are suppressed and thus homogeneity is produced (Tocqueville, 1835).

2.12.1 Ideal and actual public sphere

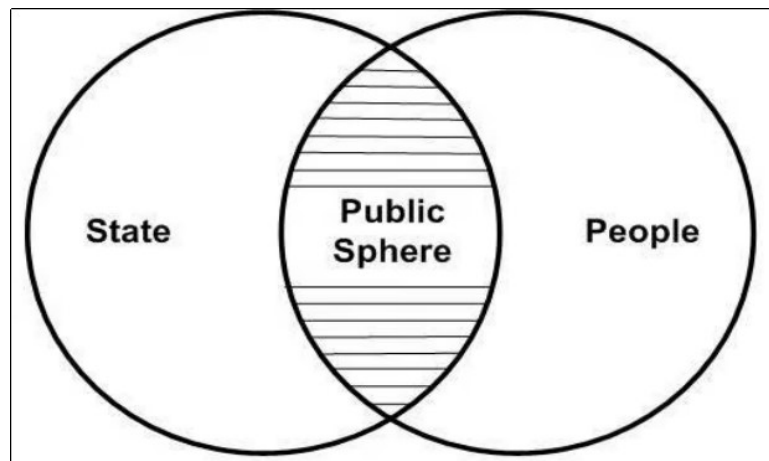
According to the theory of communicative action formulated by Jurgen Habermas, effective communication in the sphere of the public realm is based on the four validity claims that have to be fulfilled in order to make the particular dialogue considered rational and legitimate. Truth, sincerity, legitimacy, and comprehensibility are the validity statements on which meaningful speech is based. This statement, the truth (Objective World) is about the correctness of the statements made in a dialogue. Participants are required to provide comments that should be supported by logic or factual data. The truth-board promises that performers can check the reality of the claims of facts that are being made and that negotiations rest on an objective reality. To illustrate, when an individual speaks on issues concerning environmental standards, they are expected to buttress their allegations by giving figures on researches or scientific data to confirm their allegations on the effect on the environment. Claim two employs the notion of Sincerity (Subjective World) this claim corresponds to the notion of sincere intention and faithful expression of the speaker and his/her feelings or inner beliefs. Participants should be truthful and confident in their intentions and emotions so that trust could be built and honest communication promoted. Sincerity makes sure that the communication is not false or unscrupulous. Using the example of a politician, he has to mean what he says i.e. he has to be truthful about what he believes in instead of speaking to get people to like him or to gain power. The third claim is named legitimacy (justifiability). Such a claim may be based on the morality or the appropriateness of the statements as

norms within a given social setting. It proposes that the behaviours or norms that are going to be encouraged can be tolerated considering the moral standards that prevail in the community and the developed laws, as well. Such a statement will ensure that the discussion is acceptable in relation to societal norms and values promoting respect to each other and social unity. The fourth claim is intelligibility (Linguistic World) which states that when discussing policies the participants should consider the extent to which such policies satisfy legal and ethical standards of the society. This statement will ensure that all the participants of the conversation can speak the language used and that communication is clear. To make conversation meaningful, it should be understandable such that all the participants can contribute to the conversation. In talking to the general population concerning issues, policymakers should also not be too technical when using jargon because this would limit the discussion to a circumscribed circle. A democratic society should have the potential to achieve all this by operating with open, participatory, and consensus-seeking public dialogue that is rational and critical, and this is only possible by ensuring these four claims of validity. This perfect speech situation as proposed by Habermas is the one in which all the four claims of validity entailed in speech act could be justified (Habermas, 1984).

This is just ideal and the question arises whether this can be termed as a public sphere? However, the former belongs to the criticism of the real situation and it is the representation of the real public sphere. And without the ideal, where do we get a picture of reality? Hence the concept of an ideal public sphere is only ideal and needs to be occupied critically by something that is actual or a real public sphere. These validity claims are crucial in successful communicative action as they provide a groundwork in judging and rating the quality of the arguments and interactions. It should be noted though that such validity claims can be debated or pointed out in communication in real life. Since validity may be affected by power dynamics, cultural differences, and varying perceptions, there is a chance that validity can receive a diverse reception and can be assessed differently. Habermas seeks to provide a situation in which participants do not feel coerced to participate in a communicative action that can be more natural and rational in sharing ideas.

Figure 2.1

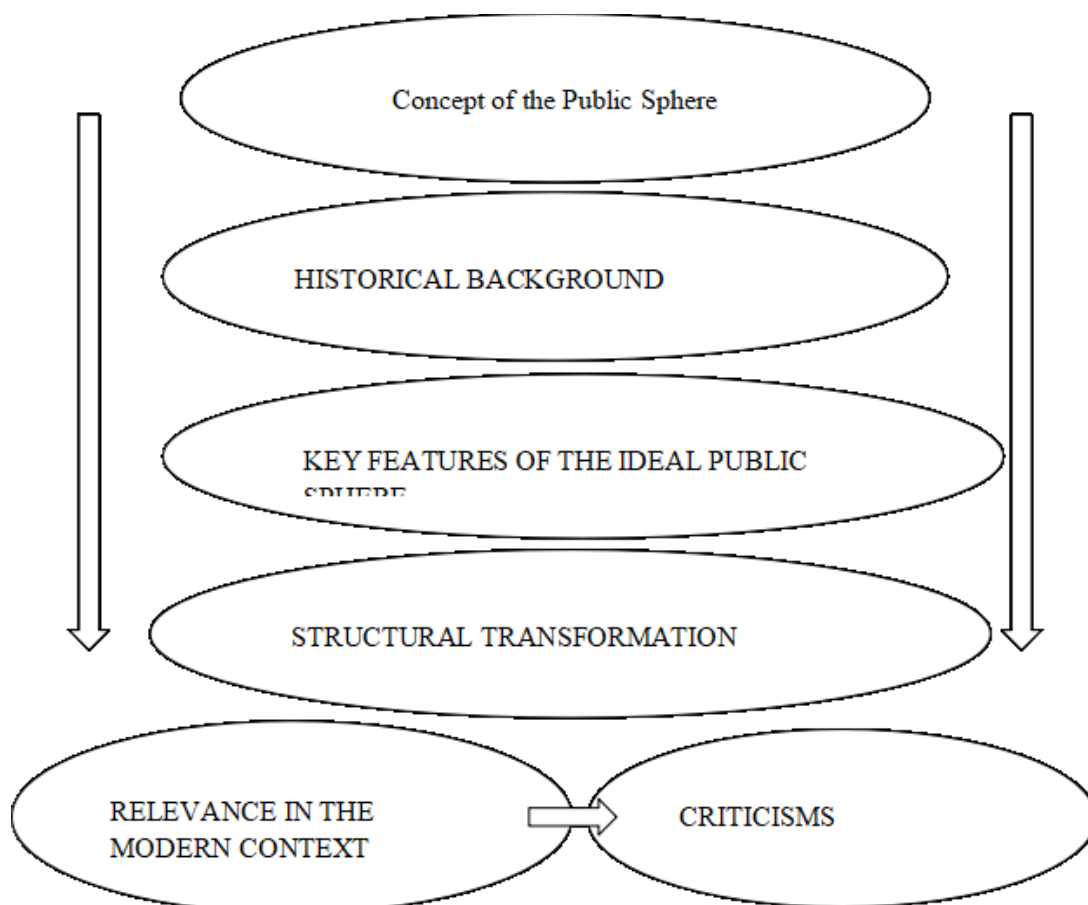
Model of Jurgen Habermas Public Sphere Theory



Sources: *Compiled by Researcher from different sources*

Figure 2.2

Nature of Public Sphere based of Habermas Concept



Sources: *Compiled by Researcher from different sources*

2.13 Public Sphere in Political Communication

The conception of the public sphere is social and democratic. It refers to a physical or online space in which individuals gather together in order to talk freely and discover challenges affecting the society, share ideas and make a difference in political action.

Encourages Public Discussion and Deliberation: Peter Dahlgren, in his work, examines how the importance of public spheres, especially in the digital era, promotes the dissemination of various alternative voices and enables citizens to engage in discussions related to issues of public interest. Dahlgren underscores the role of such involvement in making such an impact as curbing the majority of the population to its realities, thereby secularising the discourse of the people and making the discussion relevant to the needs of a broader scope of society by providing the voice and input of a blend of diverse experiences and views. Critical discourse cultivated in these arenas of the public can influence the formation of the opinion of the people, which in turn can come to influence the political decisions and actions by aligning them with the societal values and interests (Dahlgren, 2005).

Promote transparency and accountability: The arenas that the public has access to are the crucial arenas to enhance accountability and openness in the systems of governance. This is because the public sphere enables citizens to ask questions and query the actions of any institution and authority in the society since it enhances free communication and exchange of information among the citizens. This constant transparency goes a long way in ensuring that chances of corruption and abuse of power are very minimal by keeping decision-making procedures open to the public. Knowledgeable citizens who are engaged in discussions on governance issues are able to ensure they make requests when it comes to the rationale behind decisions made and in a sense make decision makers act in a transparent and accountable way.

The existence of the active public sphere produces an echo in the form of actions of those in power being routinely scrutinised and criticised by society. This may induce a form of responsibility on the part of the officials working in the field of government since they know that their actions are observed and even discussed

with criticism by others. By doing so, the role of the public sphere as a watchdog helps to uphold the integrity of the democratic institutions through keeping the exercise of power in line with the rules of justice and fairness. The public sphere can be instrumental towards the realisation of the democratic principles of transparency and accountability by making information available and also through the engagement of people (Schudson, 1997).

Encourages Democratic Involvement: Democracy is a flourishing process that thrives on involvement of the citizens and the spheres of its action are immense with the always prevailing government or centralised sphere of influence where the citizens live and enjoy their freedom to a great extent. The public sphere has the capacity to promote participatory culture by opening up a free platform whereby people can come and air out their opinions and participate in debates on societal matters, hence making civic participation easily accessible and appreciated. It can be said that this participation may be of many forms, including attending forums in the streets, town hall gatherings, social media discussions or any other efforts that involve civic engagements. These varied modes of participation guarantee that citizens can find a variety of options to have an effect on public policy and participate in the democratic process of decision-making. The inclusivity of the sphere of the public therefore argues in favour of the democratic stipulation that the government must be a representation of the populace's will and interests (Putnam, 2000; Dahlgren, 2005).

Encourages Critical Thought: The unrestricted flow of ideas and opinions in the open actually helps stimulate critical thinking as it enables individuals to evaluate the facts, disagree with preconceived notions and synthesise well-formed opinions. Although Hannah Arendt was much less interested in the theory of communication compared to the theory of action, the notion of realising enlarged thinking, through considering multiple perspectives and developing more sophisticated alternatives to thinking about problems, perhaps comes the closest to a theory of communication (Hannah Arendt, 1958). Critical thinking is an informative aspect of democratic citizenship since it empowers citizens to hold those in power accountable and make

informed decisions. Citizens are able to get past distorted or superficial data and have a much more complete understanding of complex issues by engaging multiple viewpoints and notions (Habermas, 1989). Citizens are able to participate in the democratic processes, and this process promotes critical thinking of the public domain.

Boosts Voices from the Marginalised groups: The importance of the public sphere where the marginalised voices can be empowered is the key element to promoting social justice and equality. The use of the term public sphere as a counter-public may be understood as enabling marginalised groups a chance to challenge the prevalent ideologies and the propagation of alternative ideas (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). It can be seen in the work of different scholars, such as Habermas (1989), who also stresses the necessity of the all-inclusive address in the discourse as the means of enhancing democratic legitimacy. Public sphere refers to the essential or fictional community that does not exist in a specific physical space. As per Habermas, the public sphere can be defined as the interconnection between the civil society and the life of the citizenry. Where debate can be held openly and through democratic processes to formulate opinions and attitudes of people, they may enhance the functioning of the state or question it through the support of public opinion. The public sphere, or at least the public sphere concerning the media, can be considered as a communicative infrastructure in one way. That enables the formulation of information and ideas, and the discussion of matters of communal interest.

Habermas locate the emergence of the public sphere in parts of 18th century Europe. Prior to this, he argues, the structure of social life in feudal times did not allow for any clear distinction between the public and the private, between the state and society. He put forward the bourgeois public sphere. The transformation of the public sphere is a continuous expansion that includes more and more participants, and the early bourgeois public sphere was a narrow segment of the European population. (Habermas, 1962) In the 18th century, many groups were excluded from the public sphere (bourgeois public sphere). But it declined its character in the 20th century to be accessible to all, which means an ideal public sphere. However, the

barriers were replaced by other structural challenges to the construction of Habermas ideal public sphere. He refers to these changes as the 'refeudalization' of power, which he attributes to the growth of the cultural industries and the evolution of large private interests.

He observes that principles of the public sphere are, in fact, in decline. As the public is no longer made out of individuals, but of organisations that institutionally exert their influence on the public sphere and debate. This has led to a mixing of the private and public spheres and weakening of bonds between members of the public. The changing structure and role of media have also contributed to the decline of the public sphere, as media is viewed as one of the organisations that now has a significant impact on discourse within the public sphere.

2.14 Marshall McLuhan about Media

2.14.1 Medium is the Message

According to McLuhan (1964), the medium used to transmit information has a big impact on how the message is seen and received. Instead of concentrating only on content, McLuhan thought that each medium's unique qualities such as print, radio, and television shape society by influencing how people engage with and understand information. For instance, independent of the particular shows that were broadcast, the advent of television had an impact on politics, education, and family interactions. In order to understand how various media platforms, including print, television, and social media, influence not only the content but also the essence of political communication and public participation in politics, it is necessary to apply McLuhan's theory that To this study, I apply the concept of the Medium is the Message (McLuhan, 1964). The manner in which political information is delivered in respective media determines how the masses relate to political issues. For example, print media is more detailed, slower to analyse, allowing readers to digest challenging ideas as opposed to the use of TV summarising information in the form of soundbites and imagery, which is easier to digest but potentially more shallow. The presence makes social media easily engaging, and the interactivity often leads to the creation of echo chambers, as well as dispersed conversation.

Using the features of the medium, one could know how the replacement of the traditional media (like a newspaper and television) and the digital media (like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) has changed the way political campaigns have been presented, how the leaders have altered their communication with the population, and how people have become a part of political discussions. As an illustration, digital platforms allow politicians to communicate with people directly and in the raw without being exposed to the criticism of traditional journalism and shape the perception of authenticity and timeliness in the mind of the audience. It is within the capacity of different media outlets to sustain the practices under democracy, or weaken the same. Although social media can make the creation process more democratic, it also makes information more challenging to trust. The same process can centralise information control by media corporations on the platforms of television and newspapers. The insights of McLuhan assist in considering how political power is possibly influenced by the projection of the medium itself in ways that influence democracy besides the message it projects politically.

The work on media theory that has been done by Marshall McLuhan has transformed our worldview on matters relating to communication technology and how they have impacted on the civilisation of humans. In his influential books, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) and *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), McLuhan also gave key concepts that have informed modern studies of media and continue to do so. These ideas include his concept of the hot and cool media, the global village and also the extensions of man as media. All these concepts provide some insight into what media is like, how people access it and the long-reaching implications of technological impact on human perception and interaction.

2.14.2 Hot and Cool Media

On the basis of the amount of audience participation, McLuhan divided media into hot and cool media. The types of media deemed to be "hot" would include print and film media which are high-definition whose content is dense and does not need much engagement with the audience. The reason is that the

information contained in these forms of media is saturated with data and complete images; hence, the audience just passes through the information without necessarily filling in loopholes and interpreting clues. An example is a book or a movie, and each has a clear, concise story that allows the viewer or reader to bring very little to the statement. The hot media, as McLuhan (1964) asserted, are the high intensity and high definitive looking media and present information in a linear and focused manner that can be easily used by the individual.

Conversely, cool media, including television and telephones, offer low-definition media, which requires greater participation of the audience. In contrast to heavy information found in hot media, cool media contain less information and the viewers or listeners feel a need to provide additional information by completing gaps and making their own interpretations. As an example, the viewers were required to consciously create the characteristics of the early TV images due to its low screen-resolution. Since the viewers are involved in a collective process of interpretation when it comes to receiving insufficient information, such involvement creates a form of interaction that can be described as more collective than individual. According to McLuhan, such an explanation explains how different media influence social and psychological processes. In accordance with the differentiation that McLuhan introduced, further thinkers have explored the implications of varying the extent to which the audience is engaged with media, inaugurating into the social impact of a media format (Meyrowitz, 1985; Fiske, 1992).

2.14.3 Global Village

The concept of the global village was first postulated by McLuhan in his epic book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962). Instead, he envisioned a globalised world where electronic media, such as radio and television, would break down geographical boundaries and bring people together by creating a sense of commonality; this is because of the shared experience. McLuhan argues that with the spread of electronic media, this will create a communal consciousness where the alienated unit will be introduced into a global village. This concept is particularly useful in the social media and internet age, where couples can connect instantly on

digital platforms and share information easily across national borders, language and cultural boundaries. The global village predetermined the cultural phenomenon of globalisation because it allowed individuals around the world to observe events in some way via media, thus contributing to the establishment of a common international identity. The vision of such a society in which the communication technologies generate collective experiences is revealed by the role which social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have played in the context of connecting the activists and publishing news across the whole globe in the context of the Arab Spring in the year 2011 (Tufekci, 2017). As interconnectedness facilitates unity, many researchers have noted that this has posed challenges, given that a global media network might lead to cultural clashes and divides, giving rise to a new source of social tension, as argued by McLuhan.

2.14.4 Extension of Man

The theory described by McLuhan as extensions of man explains the human senses and abilities being boosted by different media. He proposed that every media will magnify or extend some functions of human beings. An example of this is that the print media broadens the vision of people and their ability to produce thoughts on their own since they get to consume detailed material in confidentiality, and it enhances their analysis and reflection abilities individually. Conversely, electronic media such as radio and television increase the communal feelings and due to this, people are directly linked together in real time because electronic media dislocates the central nervous system (McLuhan, 1964).

Media as extensions to human faculties have led to many debates concerning the impacts of technology on human interactions and thinking (Chaix, 2022). Researchers continue to study the impact of these extensions on cognition, behaviour, and the brain in the context of increasing contact of digital media on the modern way of life (Carr, 2010). The mental effects of the extensive coverage of digital media have been a cause of concern since studies have shown that the excessive use of cell phones and social networking has the potential to reduce attention span and alter traditional modes of person-to-person communication

(Turkle, 2011). The concepts developed by McLuhan of hot vs. cool media, the global village and media as an extension of human capacities persist to have influence in the subject of media studies and other policy areas. His observation continues to contribute towards the explication of the social and psychological effects that media yields on individuals and communities. While the hot and the cool media provide an answer to comprehending the way people take part in the life of society, the global village concept conveys the general global impact of modern communication. Man as an extension of the media, considering media to be extensions of human abilities is indicative of the possibility of media to greatly influence the relationship as well as perception among man and other people. It is a fact that becomes more and more obvious in the modern digital age.

2.15 Naom Chomsky about media

Noam Chomsky is a famous linguist, philosopher and political activist who is also known for his critical thoughts on linguistics, global capitalism, mass media and the foreign policy of America. Chomsky gives an influential critique of media influence on public opinion in support of the interests of the elite power structures in his book *Manufacturing Consent* in 1988, which he co-authored with Edward S. Herman. In the propaganda model put across in this book, Chomsky has clearly shown that the media is not a watchdog but more a gagging machine taking the sides of the strong (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; Bennett, 2003).

2.15.1 The Propaganda Model

According to the propaganda model, media content is shaped by powerful structural forces, which have modified the true presentation of news and shifted its importance to elite perspectives. This model differs from the traditional meaning of propaganda because it emphasises not only government control in general but also the filters established by power relations. These filters control public opinion and induce the public to adopt opinions favourable to the forces (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; McChesney, 2000). The five filters of the propaganda model are given below.

Ownership: The media is owned by a few large corporations. The owners of these corporations are usually connected to the dominant economic and political elites. Media content is easily filtered in favour of elites to protect their interests (Bagtikian, 2004; Chomsky & Herrmann, 1988).

Publications: Media outlets, relying on their financial resources, are motivated to produce content that attracts advertisers. Such financial resources prevent them from considering the less favourable aspects of certain issues, as this may lead to advertisers being in trouble (Chomsky & Herrmann, 1988; Curran & Seaton, 2010).

Source: Media outlets obtain information from limited, reliable sources, such as government agencies, corporate spokespeople, and think tanks. These sources may be credible, but they often support particular viewpoints, and media reviews and their general existence are biased in favour of elite interests (Chomsky & Herrmann, 1988; Tuchman, 1978).

Flak: If the content produced is biased against the elites, it can lead to a significant backlash. Flak is usually legal action, complaints, or financial pressure. These backlashes prevent the media from providing any kind of substantive solutions (Chomsky & Herrmann, 1988; Saler, 1992).

Defence ideology (fear): Although this filter originally existed as a view against the dominant ideology of communism, it has since evolved into a broader fear-mongering movement that includes fear-mongering topics, such as terrorism and xenophobia. These are seen as parameters for intimidating the public and thus intended to gain support from the powerful citizenry (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; Lule, 2001).

The combination of these filters creates a media structure that supports the interests of powerful elites and controls the scope of public discourse. The media, through agenda-setting and framing, serves a function of influencing the public to adopt unbiased opinions (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; McChesney, 2000). Chomsky's analysis states that the very notion of a free and independent press is being questioned in democratic societies. This means that the task of producing

news is becoming an ideological institution rather than an independent one, a tool for advancing the interests of a few well-off corporations (Bennett, 2003).

2.16 Theoretical Analysis of Mass Media and Political Communication

Political communication has changed significantly in the 21st century as the Internet and technological discovery have spread across the world. These have transformed the manner in which political information is utilised and propagated to online sources that were until recently traditional. Historically, political communication mostly occurred in physical sites like the forums, shops and salons. But in modern times these traditional ways have been altered due to the effects of digital media and opened up the prospect of blind parallel discourse. A major aspect in any political system has always been communication between the governing bodies of that society and its citizens. Political communication is often crucial in fostering a relationship between a state and its people in democracies (Tham & Sanuddin, 2014). This association does not take the form of a top-down diffusion of ideas alone, but a way of influencing the stimulation of response and involvement in society. The media also takes on this role, providing a connection between the state and its citizens.

Public Sphere & Media: Essentially, the idea of the public sphere of Jurgen Habermas, they say, can be applied in interpreting political communication. The thesis by Habermas is an argument that emerges in the book by Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). The statement by Habermas holds that the public sphere is a fictional space where citizens participate in the discussions held in the public realm and critically share opinions about political, cultural and social problems. This space provokes scientific controversy and inspires citizens to build views and form political policy. The text by Habermas on the origin of this form of a public sphere in the 18th century in Europe proposes that the rational debate or scientific debate started when forums like coffee houses and printed newspapers had already emerged. Nevertheless, the expansion of electronic media and consumer culture, including the public space, has altered the terms of the public discourse. It is also the case that Habermas does worry about the

commercialisation of media that is undermining the possibilities of the populist as Habermas would conceive of that via the process of lifeworld colonisation. The other prolific theorist has provided a deeper reflection on the aspect of the transformative power of media in Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan (1964) claims that it is not only the content, nor the ideas it carries, but the medium itself that produces the perceptions of human beings, as well as the social change, with his memorable words: "The medium is the message." His concept is that society has changed radically because of technological innovations like the printing press, radio, and television. He brings out the concept of a global village where there are no more media relations delineated by geography or even culture.

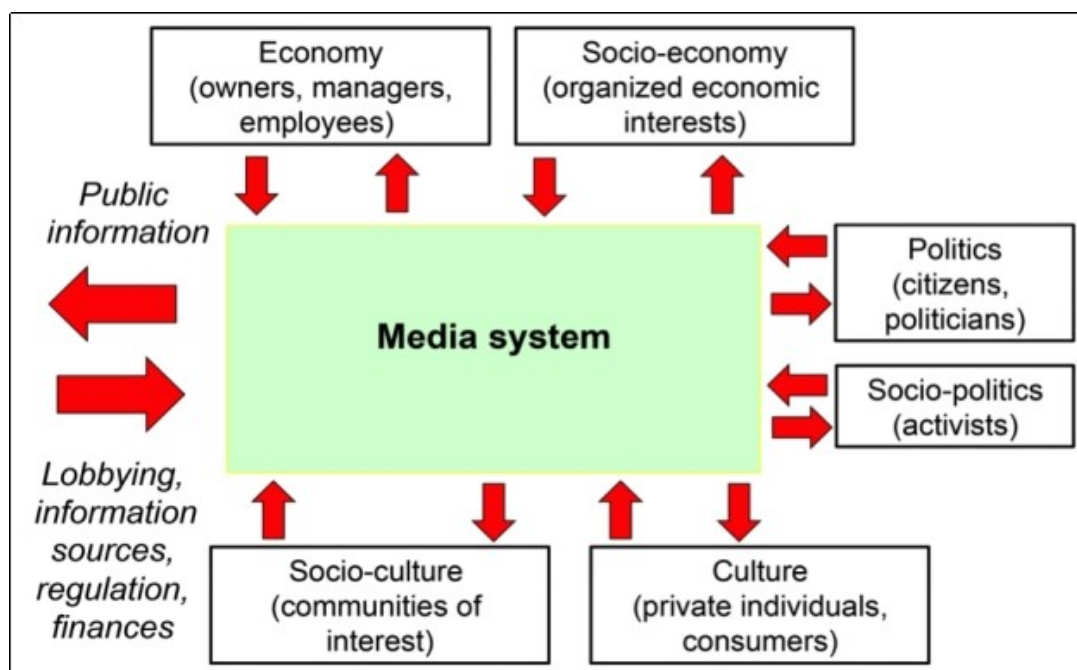
In the current digital era, the use of the Internet has even enhanced this relationship leading to the formation of an electronic nervous system which facilitates the global village. McLuhan, although not considered to be a technological determinist, provides theories that indicate the strength of individuals and social change. The evolution of media has some origins to various periods. First, there was an era when oral communication was the only dominant form of communication, which relied on face-to-face communication. Then came the Scribal period, where writing and reading prevailed and then the Gutenberg period where the printing press changed communication. All the phases disseminated information differently and linked individuals. Mass communication became a possibility with the electronic age, the emergence of the radio and television, as well as the invention of the public forum. The Internet is a new phenomenon of the modern age that has changed not only the quantity, but also the quality of communication. People now have a fast way of obtaining and circulating information, which makes communities stronger and revives the direction of political communication (McLuhan, 1964).

Media Content and Effects: McLuhan once stated that media is not more important in its content but in the outcomes it produces. As another example, the benefit of an electric bulb does not merely lie in giving light, but in making possible the activities that light demands. Likewise, the effect of the media on the cognition and action of society is especially topical in democratic societies, with media content affecting the

opinions of society and political involvement. Habermas also reacts to the transformation in the time in terms of factual operations of the public sphere which frequently leads to partial decadence. He speaks in favour of the necessity to develop a social situation, which made possible the rational and critical discussion of the problems of society. This is necessary in any working democracy (Craig, 1992).

Figure 2.3

The Media System in Modern State



Source: Adapted from Fuchs, C. (2014). Social media and the public sphere.

2.17 Conclusion

The important role of the mass media in shaping political communication can be noted. From Habermas's public sphere to McLuhan's global village, the media have not only been a forum for discussion but also an agent of social change. However, challenges such as commercialization, manipulation, and concentration of media ownership pose major threats to its democratic potential. Societies are moving forward with the complexities of digital communication, but promoting inclusive, rational debate remains essential to maintaining a vibrant democracy. People should come to public spaces, but people can come together with good debates, agreement

and disagreement. There should be places where people can gather freely and fearlessly. Such places remind us of the duty of the citizen and freedom. This kind of public space is essential for politics and democracy. This kind of public space is the strength of political communication and the places that protect democracy. These kinds of public spaces used to exist in England and our country's culture. Masses come to the centre of the mass media domain as democracy emerges and sovereignty emerges, the mass characteristic becomes important. The characteristics of the mass people is that it exists not as a single final opinion but as a space for the debate of differing opinions.

Mcluhan explains the history or transformation of people or society through the development of communication. What kind of political transformation people undergo in today's internet age is being examined here. In this context, Noam Chomsky's concept of 'Manufacturing consent' is of great relevance. As the question of the ownership of media, governmental, political parties, religious groups influence still persist, the extent to which free and fair media activity is possible and how the above mentioned nexus transform politics or political communication and the society will be examined. The existence and significance of the public sphere political communication in Kerala, a consumer state with high literacy and population density is explored in the study. And we can say a society is a 'media-based society', if we say 'media-based society' we can understand it based on how much time spent with the media. In such a way, we can check how much the people of Kerala are living in a mediated society. And understand how they receive and reject the political communication that comes through it. Then here we can examine how fast political communication disseminates in the geographically small and densely populated state of Kerala. The study critically examines how long the fake news coming through the mass media is in Kerala and how far the people and political parties are accepting the truth exposed through the mass media and leading the Kerala society to progress.

CHAPTER 3

MASS MEDIA AND POLITICAL PROCESS

3.1 Introduction

The mass media, namely electronic print and digital media, is a very vital player in mediating the relationship between the public and government. It is crucial for public opinion, for political debate and for a place to argue. The relationship between the political process and mass media is deep and multi-dimensional and includes the way of framing political issues, the kind of information that informs this framing, and the shape of the public will to which it all leads. The impact of the media on politics is significant and diverse. It does a number of important responsibilities, some of which include informing the masses, setting up the national policy, watching over the government and involvement in giving the political domain a platform to communicate and talk about. In politics the media is a powerful instrument owing to the potential it holds and the role that it plays in creating narratives.

As it shapes public opinion, influences political behaviour, and serves as a channel for information between the public and the government, the mass media is critical to the political process. The mass media has a complex function in forming public opinion, affecting political results, and disseminating information in the political process. Its effects might be both beneficial and harmful, depending on how prejudice, disinformation, and polarisation are handled. Positive effects include encouraging informed citizens, educating the general public, and giving opportunities for political parties or the government to defend their policies and strengthen their support and accountability. Navigating the modern political scene requires an understanding of the dynamics of media impact. The influence of mass media on the political system as a whole, as well as on political subsystems like the legislature, the executive branch, organised lobbyists, and protest organisations, in particular, are examined in this chapter. There are countless examples of contacts

with the media that have significantly altered the composition and operations of political institutions and organisations. The scope and character of these developments present extraordinarily thought-provoking issues regarding the place of journalism, privately held professions, and private media companies in general in the democratic process.

Joseph T. Klapper summarised pre-1960 theories and research about media effects. The main conclusion reached in his book, *the classic* work on media effects, is that the mass media function among and through multiple and intertwined mediating factors and influences. Most of the time, the media reinforces existing conditions rather than producing new ones. Their impact, therefore, is limited. Walter Lippmann discusses the media's presumed and real role in educating the public. He points out the stark differences between the democratic theory's role for the media and its actual capabilities. The news is not always true. It is a small fragment of reality taken out of the larger context that gives it meaning. Research on how news affects public opinion couldn't be comprehensive without incorporating some of this contemporary philosopher's insight. (Graber, 1990).

Through cultural, economic, communication, and social transformations throughout history, the political process has undergone substantial alteration. Gaining insight into the historical evolution of political systems and procedures helps one understand modern government and political behaviour. The world is ever changing and the same can be witnessed in the history of the political process as the world seeks an efficient government (Diamond, 1997). All the past eras had their toll on the political thought and its model since the prehistoric times of tribalism up to the modern-day and age of digital democracy (Huntington, 1991). Gaining an understanding of this historical development can help one better understand current political issues and the continuous efforts to build societies that are more inclusive, democratic, and just (Dahl, 1989). The lessons learned from history continue to be crucial in directing future developments as political systems continue to change (Fukuyama, 2011).

3.2 Social Structures and Power Relations of Ancient Societies

Tribal System: The first political structures were kin-based and tribal, with chiefs or elders usually holding positions of authority (Service, 1971). Survival and unity were the primary considerations when decisions were made, either by agreement or by the ruling power (Fried, 1967). The groundwork for subsequent, more structured forms of governance was laid by these early systems, which focused on group leadership and decision-making (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Significant advancements in social development were made with the transition from kin-based societies to more intricate political organisations (Morgan, 1877).

City-states and empires: Complex political systems emerged in ancient civilisations, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. City-states like Athens and empires like Rome developed innovative political structures that combined elements of democracy and republicanism. Athens is often regarded as one of the earliest examples of direct democracy, where citizens actively participated in governance. Institutions such as the Assembly and the Council of 500 were mainly part of this system because they promoted broad public participation (Hansen, 1991; Ober, 2008). The Roman Republic, on the other hand, had a mixed form of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy. Some of the factors were the Senate, the Assembly, and the Consuls, which collectively established a constitution that directed later republican regimes (Lintott, 1999; Cornell, 1995). These governance models from Athens and Rome laid the foundations for later political thought and systems (Flower, 2004).

3.3 Social Structures and Power Relations of Medieval

Feudal system: Feudalism emerged as the central political system in Europe during the Middle Ages. Feudalism was distinguished by a decentralised form of government in which local lords controlled a large portion of their territory and often restricted the power of the monarch (Bloch, 1961). This hierarchical structure, which was founded on land ownership and vassalage (feudal responsibility), had a significant impact on how modern state systems evolved later (Reynolds, 1994). The emergence of centralised kingdoms by the late Middle Ages laid the groundwork for

the contemporary nation-state by concentrating power. Good examples are the kingdoms of France, England and Spain (Tilly, 1990). An important step that facilitated the emergence of constitutional rule in England was the issue of the Magna Carta of 1215, which established legal principles and limited the authority of the ruler (Holt, 1992).

3.4 The Renaissance and Enlightenment Periods

The way people looked at politics, society, and the wider world was altered radically in the period of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. These periods undermined the wisdom of mediaeval Europe and prepared the way to the modern systems of government with its emphasis on reason, individualism and the scientific enquiry. The strict hierarchies and divine-right authority that had characterised mediaeval politics were called into question during the Renaissance (14th–17th century). It was a period of rediscovery, a resurgence of old Greek and Roman concepts that inspired fresh perspectives on human potential and political organisation. . The focus shifted from unquestioning allegiance to monarchs or religious authorities to a belief in human reason and experience as guiding forces for society. As Quentin Skinner points out in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978), the Renaissance redefined political authority by drawing on classical ideas of civic virtue and citizenship. It wasn't just about ruling from the top anymore; the Renaissance planted the seeds for a political philosophy that valued the role of everyday individuals in shaping their communities (Skinner, 1978).

It was this kind of focus and emphasis on humanism and secularism which led people to feel a sense of empowerment. It made the world of ideas and discussions, a world open to discussion and retrieval, and where the governance could not be just decreed by God anymore. Thinkers and artists of the Renaissance, like Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli, were at the forefront of this intellectual awakening, combining creativity and political thought to imagine societies governed by logic and fairness, rather than blind tradition.

The Enlightenment, which followed in the 17th and 18th centuries, built on these Renaissance ideas and took them even further. It was an era of reason—a time

when philosophers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau reimagined the nature of government and power. They asked bold questions: What gives rulers the right to govern? What role do ordinary people play in the creation of laws?. Locke criticized the medieval concept of a king with divine right to rule, and held in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) that the government should guard the natural rights of people: life, liberty and property. The thoughts themselves were a direct opposition to the feudalist regimes of the yesteryears, in which things were controlled by some people.

The social contract theory became one of the most revolutionary concepts of the Enlightenment. Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* (1651) that strong, centralised authority was needed to prevent chaos, while Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* (1762), envisioned a society where the will of the people guided governance. According to Charles Tilly (*Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 1990), these intellectual transformations were accompanied by the decline of feudalism and the emergence of centre-based states in Europe. Such thoughts not only transformed Europe but also helped spur revolutions in America and France, demonstrating that political systems can be created by and on behalf of the people. These, in turn, were statements of revolutionary ideals, such as the emergence of parliamentary forms that occurred during this period, especially in Britain. The 1688 Glorious Revolution that changed the power relationship between the king and the parliament exhibited the use of Enlightenment ideas to practice politics on the ground. This transition, according to historian J. G. A. Pocock, means, as he observes in his work, *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), that the start of constitutional rule had transpired, the end of absolute rule, and the emergence of governance based on accountability and consent.

The influence of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance extended beyond Europe. Concepts of democracy, natural rights, and government spread throughout the Americas, Africa, and Asia as a result of colonisation, impacting countries much beyond Europe. For example, India's parliamentary democracy, as outlined in B. R.

Ambedkar's writings were deeply influenced by British constitutional principles, themselves products of Enlightenment thought (Guha, 2007).

The rigid structures of medieval politics were dismantled and replaced with systems that valued reason, individual rights, and collective decision-making. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment remind us that change comes from ideas—and that those ideas can reshape the world. The legacy of these transitional periods can still be seen today in everything from democratic elections to constitutional law.

3.5 Modern Political System

Democratic and Civilised Society: The United States and a federal republic founded on democratic ideals were established as a result of the 'American Revolution' (1775-1783). Bill of Rights and the USA. The origin of the Constitution was a huge precedent of the contemporary democratic state. The American Revolution stimulated thoughts about freedom, equality, and the rule of men themselves, which became an example to other peoples, striving to obtain independence and establish democracy all over the world afterwards.

The fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the republic otherwise translated to a major difference in French and European politics since the French Revolution made a tremendous change between 1789 and 1799. It emitted the ideas of civic rights, the will of the people and the sovereignty of the law. The French Revolution had an impact on movements and political ideas throughout Europe, helping republican ideas proliferate and absolute monarchy fade.

Significant social and economic changes brought forth by the 'Industrial Revolution' prompted political reforms to meet new issues. These included the creation of welfare states, labour rights, and the extension of the right to vote. As industrialised nations developed, so did political engagement and the emergence of political parties that reflected a range of social and economic concerns.

3.6 Development of Indian Political and Social Thought

Political and social conceptions in Europe and abroad were significantly altered by the revolutionary periods of the Renaissance and Enlightenment (Burke, 2000). These revolutions, which traced their origin to the West and diffused across the world, greatly influenced the intellectual, political and social scenario of India (Chandra, 1999). Political leaders, thinkers and Indian reformers modified these terms and applied them to overcome the distinct issues of colonial rule, social reformation and nation-building.

The 19th-century social reform movements in India demonstrate the influence of Enlightenment reason and Renaissance humanism. These principles were adopted by reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy in order to oppose repressive customs and advance reason and individual dignity. Roy was in line with Renaissance humanism, which placed an emphasis on moral advancement and human potential, as evidenced by his attempts to abolish Sati and his support for women's education. Sumit Sarkar (1983) emphasises in *Modern India* how reformers such as Roy envisioned a progressive society by fusing Indian customs with Enlightenment ideas. Roy's founding of the Brahmo Samaj also echoed the Renaissance focus on questioning traditional authority, particularly religious orthodoxy, in favour of reason and ethical living.

Raja Rammohan Roy's Media Initiatives: 'Sambad Kaumudi' was a weekly publication in Bengali, which began in December 1821. This weekly aimed to promote renaissance and social reforms in Indian society. It criticised sati and encouraged widow remarriage. The *Calcutta Journal*, edited by James Silk Buckingham, largely covered this new Indian initiative to inspire. 'Mirat-ul-Akbar' was a weekly publication in Persian (the official language of the Mughal Empire at that time) published every Friday, and it started in 1821 by Raja Rammohan Roy. It covered national and international issues. This weekly was closed in protest against the Press Regulation Act of 1823, which banned free speech (Natarajan, 1955). *Brahminical Magazine* was a monthly publication in English to counter the missionaries' propaganda. Twelve issues of this magazine appeared. Later, Roy

started a regular periodical in English and Bengali titled *Brahmin Sevadhi*. *Sambadkaumudi* and *Miratul Akhbar* mark Raja Rammohan Roy's efforts at media reform. He used print media for social and political preaching, paving the way for journalism and renaissance in India. Through the above journals, Rammohan tried to counter the accusations of the missionaries on the one hand and to form public opinion in favour of social reforms on the other. These publications marked the real beginning of journalism in India as they were addressed to Indians in their own languages (Mallick, 2021; Sen, 2012).

The drafting of the Indian Constitution after independence stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Enlightenment ideals in India. B. R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution (National Herald India, 2024), incorporated concepts of equality, liberty, and fraternity, which were core principles of the French Revolution and Enlightenment thought. Ambedkar's writings, including *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936), critique social hierarchies and advocate for a rational, equitable social order, reflecting Enlightenment values. The parliamentary democracy established under the Constitution also drew from British constitutional models, themselves products of Enlightenment philosophy. Granville Austin's *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (1966) discusses how these principles were adapted to India's diverse and stratified society.

Ideas from the Renaissance and Enlightenment found their way into Indian intellectual discourse through the advent of English education during British rule. Institutions from the colonial era introduced Western philosophical writings to Indian elites, inspiring a generation of political leaders and reformers who adapted these concepts to the Indian context. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's advocacy for widow remarriage and education reform, for instance, reflected Enlightenment rationality and a commitment to social justice. Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989) examines how colonial education facilitated this intellectual awakening.

3.7 The Political System of the 20th and 21st Centuries

The political systems of the 20th and 21st centuries have been deeply shaped by global events such as the two World Wars and the Cold War, which altered power structures and international relations. Upon the end of World War II, the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers became the start of the Cold War, a time of great geopolitical tension that occurred over many decades. The conflict was not only a military and ideological standoff between communism and democracy but also led to the rise of new political ideologies and the establishment of international institutions aimed at maintaining global peace, such as the United Nations (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Moreover, the aftermath of the World Wars and the Cold War set the stage for decolonization, particularly in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, where numerous new nation-states were established, fundamentally shifting the balance of global power (The Collector, 2021).

In the second half of the 20th century, democratization swept over Eastern Europe and Africa, Latin America and some regions of Asia. The frequent occurrence of these political transitions as a result of a social justice purpose towards the cause of human rights and economic changes of arrangements was expected to give hope towards a more inclusive governance. Nonetheless, these democratization processes did not run smoothly. Emergence of authoritarian regimes in most regions in the world accompanied with the existence of non-democratic regimes has highlighted the challenges of global governance in the ever-connected world. The fight to have democracy has still been mixed up with the struggle to have economic development, social justice and human rights (Huntington, 1991).

The fast-changing technology and the globalization process have led to further changes in political communication and the government in addition to the involvement of the people. The development of digital media and social sites has provided an additional dimension to political participation as it has become possible to converse in a real sense and mobilize the world. Nevertheless, the above technological advancements have resulted in considerable issues, such as the problem of misinformation, hacking, and the necessity of new legal systems that

could help cope with the emergence of these new realities (Acquia, 2020). The impacts of globalization, on the other hand, have been quite extensive as it has enabled arms-length distribution of knowledge and technology and also affected governance apparatus across the sectors globally, especially in emerging economies (IMF, 2018). Although the effects of these technological advances provide a new avenue of political participation, they bring in the need to further look into the aspect of control of online platforms and maintenance of political purity in the dynamic world.

The advent of digital media, social media, and information technology has significantly transformed political processes, introducing new avenues for engagement and participation. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become central to political discourse, enabling real-time communication and mobilization. Yet such developments have also presented problems such as the spread of misinformation, cyberattacks and the requirement to have strong legal frameworks to cope with changes in the digital setting. The fast spread of information on digital platforms has not only made it easy to engage in politics but also cast false information, forming the choice of the masses and outcomes in the elections. Just to take an example, a radicalizing effort on social media is evident when fake news is used after disseminating information at the electoral time as it has been proved that, especially in weak democratic states and countries, the use of social media has led to radicalization (TNSR, 2021). Computer security has become an issue of concern, attacks have been used against political groups, exposing them to confidential information and setting sides against faith in democratic proceedings. The increased magnitude and sophistication of this type of attack is why there is a need to establish comprehensive legal environments which protect against cyberattacks and preserve the integrity of political landscapes (GeeksforGeeks, 2024). To address these issues, different states have already developed legal solutions to disinformation and improve cybersecurity. As an example, the United Kingdom has issued legislation to combat the engagement in the dissemination of misinformation in order to be able to hold people accountable for the propagation of such disinformation (GDI Lab, 2024). Likewise, the U.S. is coming up with ways to

deal with cybersecurity threat levels by stressing the role of global collaboration and establishing digital policies aimed at protecting the system of democracy in this country (U.S. Department of State, 2021). These trends emphasize adaptation in particular legal systems governing the dynamic nature of what digital media and technology have been in the political world.

3.8 Brief History of Mass Media and Political Communication Formulation

Politics and political communication have been significantly impacted by the development of mass media. Every stage of media growth, from print newspapers to digital platforms, has brought forth new dynamics in the distribution, consumption, and influence of political information.

3.8.1 The era of Print Media

Newspapers and pamphlets, the first mass media formats, were essential for political communication. They served as the main channel for informing the public about political concepts, ideas, and discussions. Political movements and revolutionary ideals were able to proliferate because of these publications. In the American Revolution, tracts were also important; one well-known example, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, was instrumental in bringing the people over to the side of the revolution. The newspapers grew and rose to power with time, consequently creating an informed and insinuated public. This growth could be enabled due to the development of both printing technology and the growth of literacy. The development of printing technology and higher literacy rates also gave rise to magazines and periodical publications, which offered detailed coverage of political commentary and analyses. These journals welcomed investigative journalism, editorials and political argument. These shaped the political thoughts and opinions of the masses. The appearance of such mainstream magazines in the US in the 19 th and the 20 th century as the *Atlantic* and *Harper Weekly* represented the increasing role of print media in political communications.

3.8.2 Era of Broadcast Media

Radio was instrumental in transforming communications in politics because it made the political leader and the masses communicate directly and in real-time. Radio made it possible for people to hear news, discussions, and political speeches in their homes. A notable example of the use of radio in direct and personal communication with the audience to produce a sense of immediacy is the so-called Fireside Chats with Franklin D. Roosevelt. Radio turned out to be a must-have tool for propaganda and political activity, especially during wars. It enhanced the coverage and the speed of political communication in a large way. Television: Television also revolutionised political communication by using a visual dimension and enhancing the effect and availability of political leaders and events. An example is the Kennedy-Nixon debates in 1960, which were aired and introduced the importance of good looks and stature in politics. For many people, television news has become their main source of political knowledge. The emergence of 24-hour international news channels—such as CNN in the 1980s and the BBC in 1995—increased media influence in politics by offering constant coverage of political concerns and occurrences.

3.8.3 Era of Digital Media

The Internet and online media transformed and changed the face of political communication quite drastically. The internet also allows more activity and participation through a democratised process of creation and consumption of political content. New avenues of political discourse and action were thrown open by social media, along with blogs and online news sources. The speed and the range of online media made it easier to spread political information around the globe and provided real-time reporting. The land of political media has diversified and created a multiplicity of sources and interests with the introduction of independent and alternative press.

Politicians and the public can now communicate directly thanks to social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms have grown to be powerful forces in political communication. Political

campaigns have changed as a result of social media, which has made viral content, microtargeting, and grassroots mobilisation possible. It has also brought up new difficulties, like echo chambers and the dissemination of false information. Use of social media in political campaigns as illustrated by the use of social media in the campaigns of Donald Trump in 2016 and Barack Obama in 2008 has demonstrated the potentiality of the tool to influence a political narrative as well as voter behaviour.

Political communication has been subjected to the risk of its reliability and credibility due to misinformation and fake news that have sprouted within the current digital era. The misinformation is capable of distorting the public opinion and damaging democracies. Fake news is being dealt with by way of fact-checking campaigns and work on digital literacy. Advances in data analysis technology allow political messaging to be narrowed to specific voter groups to a greater degree. Political campaigns use data-driven strategies, target the individual supporters and personalise the campaigning messages. However, the issues of data ethics and privacy still exist.

The emergence of citizen journalism has enabled people to participate in political reporting and discourse. Although citizen journalists have the ability to report from the ground and hold authorities accountable, they also have difficulties maintaining their reputation and upholding journalistic standards. The emergence of citizen journalism has enabled people to participate in political reporting and discourse. Although citizen journalists have the ability to report from the ground and hold authorities accountable, they also have difficulties maintaining their reputation and upholding journalistic standards.

3.9 Traditional Media and New Media Difference in Political Realm

It is essential to understand the differences between new and conventional media in order to comprehend how they both fulfil varying roles in politics. The so-called traditional media refers to the established mass communication channels, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, that were used before the Internet. It is a one-way communication, which means that one gives a lot of

information to the masses and does not require an immediate response or reaction to this information. The content of traditional media is typically controlled and curated by professional journalists and editors, who ensure a certain level of accuracy and quality in the media. Traditional media sources frequently have greater authority and credibility because of their thorough fact-checking and editorial monitoring. Disseminating information, however, is delayed since traditional media's creation and distribution processes are slower than those of new media.

By deciding which topics to emphasise and how to display them, conventional media has a big say in determining the political agenda. As gatekeepers, editors and journalists select whatever information is published or aired. Traditional media shapes public opinion and voter behaviour through news coverage, editorials, and political commentary. Political campaigns often utilize traditional media for advertisements to reach a broad audience. Bruce McNair's "An Introduction to Political Communication" (6th ed.) is a great resource for a thorough understanding of the function of traditional media in political communication.

On the other hand, new media are digital communication channels that have emerged due to the advent of the internet, including blogs, websites, social media platforms, and online news. The characteristic feature of new media is interactive communication, which enables users to comment, share, remark, and create content. A wider variety of voices and viewpoints are produced as a result of the democratising content creation. With modern media, information may spread rapidly and effectively to a worldwide audience. In the realm of digital media, algorithms often dictate content visibility, prioritising popularity and engagement over veracity.

Through social media campaigns and online activity, new media is particularly successful at energising and mobilising voters, especially those in younger generations. Social media allows politicians to interact with the people directly without going through the gatekeepers of traditional media. As an alternative, new media can polarise political life because it creates an echo chamber, with users being shown only the content that supports their viewpoints. New media makes it possible to receive real-time updates on political events, and thus respond

and discuss them in a short period. The interaction of traditional and new media in the political sphere is examined in Andrew Chadwick's book "The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power" (2nd ed.).

Comparatively speaking, new media is more democratic yet subject to misinformation and editorial oversight, whereas conventional media retains editorial control and greater credibility. Traditional media can reach a diverse demographic that may not be as digitally connected, but it often has a slower dissemination process than new media, which excels in speed and instantaneous worldwide audience reach. When it comes to audience involvement, traditional media is more passive, while new media encourages greater degrees of public engagement and connection. Both media are highly effective in shaping public opinion; however, due to the interactivity of the new media and the fact that it is highly user-generated, featuring an immediate feedback system, it is more dynamic and participatory in nature. Such differences emphasise the complementary and even hostile nature of the functioning of both the traditional and new media in the political arena, through which they shape the perception and the conveying of the information by people.

3.10 Functions of Media in Political Process

Within the political process, the media have become important in the flow of information. The media builds democracy and empowers citizens by providing news, commentaries, and a platform on which citizens can have their say. To ensure the media can become a more reliable and effective way of providing accurate political information, the problems of disinformation, partiality, and information floods should be taken care of. The positive impact of media on the democratic process is likely to be upheld so long as media ethics and media literacy are promoted as the context of the media environment evolves.

3.10.1 Information Dissemination

Information dissemination is one of the principal functions of the mass media as a part of the political process. The media enhances accountability, it enlightens the functioning of democracy and enables individual citizens to make

informed decisions due to the delivery of appropriate and precise information at the appropriate moment. This part looks at the complicated role of the media in the age of information and its impact on the political structure. This section examines the media's complex function in the information age and how it affects the political system. The media keeps the public informed about political topics, events, and developments by reporting on them. Coverage of legislative activities, political campaigns, elections, and international affairs is all included in this. In addition to reporting on political events and policy, the media often offers analysis and interpretation of them. Commentaries, editorials, and expert viewpoints help the public understand the nuances and implications of political events.

3.10.2 Improving Civic Education and Political Awareness

The media play a crucial role in informing the public about their rights, obligations, and how political institutions function. An informed electorate is a result of reading articles and programmes that provide information about governmental structures, civic responsibilities, and the political process. The media educates the public about significant social, political, and economic issues by drawing attention to particular issues. This can address topics related to social justice, healthcare, education, the environment, and other issues.

3.10.3 Encouraging Involvement in Politics

Information disseminated by the media is sufficient to motivate citizens and increase turnout during elections. Voter education programs, candidate profiles, and election campaign reports help voters make informed decisions at the polls. For example the short film was published national voters day on 'My Vote My Duty' by Election Commission India in collaboration with Rajkumar Hirani with the theme of Value of one vote in which many popular celebrities were included, all the news platforms disseminated the video (Election Commission of India, 2024). Talk programmes, internet forums, and social media conversations are just a few of the venues that the media offers for public participation. These forums give people the chance to voice their opinions, participate in political discussions, and hold elected officials responsible.

3.10.4 Accountability and Transparency

The media uses investigative journalism to expose wrongdoing, abuse of authority, and corruption in governmental institutions. To advance accountability and openness in governance, this function is crucial. Ongoing reporting and examination of political activities ensure that elected officials and other public servants are held accountable or scrutinised for their decisions and policies. Public pressure and demands for accountability and reform can result from media exposure.

3.11 Mass Communication Theories Influencing Public Perception

A variety of ideas and models that describe how information is widely distributed and how it affects audiences are included in mass communication theories. Understanding audience behaviour, media dynamics, and the impacts of mass communication in many situations depends on these theories. The complex processes of message development, diffusion, and reception are explained by these theories, which range from conventional media forms like television mass communication to contemporary platforms like social media mass communication. Everyone working in the media, journalism, advertising, public relations, and allied industries needs them.

Framing and Priming: By framing political issues in particular ways and encouraging the public to prioritise certain viewpoints above others, the media shapes public perception of these issues. Public opinion and views are shaped by the language employed, the news articles chosen, and the attention paid to specific aspects.

Agenda Setting: The media shapes public opinion by deciding which topics to emphasise. This indicates that the public and decision-makers frequently view the issues garnering the greatest media attention as being the most crucial.

Uses and Gratifications Theory: The Uses and Gratifications Theory explores how individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs, emphasising the audience's agency in media consumption. Proposed by Blumler and Katz (1974), the theory contrasts with earlier views of passive audiences by highlighting how users

consciously choose media to fulfil needs like information, personal identity, integration, social interaction, and entertainment. For instance, a person might watch the news to stay informed, engage with social media to maintain relationships or play games to relax. This approach highlights that media effects depend on users' motivations and their engagement with content.

Spiral of Silence: According to the Spiral of Silence Theory, which was put forth by Noelle-Neumann in 1974, people are afraid of being alone and are, hence, less likely to voice their ideas if they believe they belong to a minority. By reinforcing prevailing ideas, this process produces a "spiral" in which opposing viewpoints are progressively muted. The media greatly influences Public opinion impressions, which frequently reinforces prevailing narratives. For instance, those who believe their opinions are unpopular may choose not to participate in debates during political campaigns, thereby strengthening the apparent majority position.

Priming: Media studies' Priming Theory contends that people's perceptions and reactions to new information are influenced by their exposure to media content. The theory focuses on media priming a certain idea or concept in the mind that is easily accessible in the memory of an individual. For example, news that provides heavy coverage of crime is likely to condition its viewers to prioritise security issues at the top of the political agenda or exaggerate crime levels. Priming operates subtly, shaping public opinion by framing what aspects of an issue are considered important (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Hypodermic Needle Theory: suggests that media exerts a direct, immediate, and powerful influence on audiences, likening it to an injection of ideas or messages into passive recipients. Originating in the 1920s and 1930s, the theory assumes a linear communication model where audiences uncritically accept media messages, resulting in uniform effects. Earlier, there was propaganda during World War I, and there was also the mass panic after the 1938 radio broadcast of Orson Welles's War of the Worlds. This theory has been criticised for simplifying human cognition and failing to incorporate individual differences in the interpretation process (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). As an illustration, a small town broadcasts a dramatic news

story about a health disaster. Panicked and terrified, the community accepts the story without questioning its veracity. This demonstrates the Hypodermic Needle Theory, according to which a uniform audience reaction is the outcome of uncritical media material receipt.

Watchdog Concept of the Media: The role of watchdog played by the media team in the political process is an important element of the political process that serves as a channel of accountability and openness. By assessing the behaviour of government workers, politicians, and institutions, the media plays the role of a guardian of the social good. This section focuses on the multiple aspects of media watchdog roles and their implications on politics and government.

Fourth Estate Concept of the Media: The idea of the press as a fourth estate, distinct from the government, was first proposed by British philosopher and politician Edmund Burke. The clergy, the first estate, the nobility, the second estate and the commoners, the third estate, are the three traditional estates of the realm. Fourth Estate The fourth estate is a term used to link the media to its extremely important role in curbing government authority and accountability in a community that practices democracy. Since it is an unofficial but crucial arm of government, through the media, it balances the government, the legislature and the court arm of government, supplying the citizens with the necessary information to make sound judgments. It promotes the role of the media to inquire into, report and comment on the activities of the government, misdoings of business houses and social atrocities, and thus stop misuse of authority and corruption. The fourth estate role makes the civil society accountable because of free expression, debate in the society, and sharing of information, which enhances a good democracy (Schudson, 2003). In the generation of digital media, this has been supplemented by the effects of social media, which has revolutionised news transmission, even though it has also had some issues of misinformation (Zaller, 2003).

3.12 Information Dissemination Obstacles in Media

Disinformation and Fake News: Disinformation and fake news seriously interfere with the media's capacity to disseminate accurate information. Misinformation can

influence politics, mislead the people and even put democracy at stake. Media Bias and Objectivity: Dependability and objectivity of disseminated information can be negatively affected by bias in the media. The way political events and topics are portrayed can be influenced by media ownership, political affiliations, and financial interests.

Information Overload: People may find it difficult to distinguish between relevant and reliable information due to the abundance of information that is readily available. The electorate may become disinterested and indifferent as a result.

Media Independence: The independence of the media is essential to the watchdog role it plays in democratic societies. An independent press is crucial for educating the public, keeping authorities accountable, and fostering constructive public dialogue (McChesney, 2008; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). But political influence and government censorship can make it more challenging for media outlets to carry out this vital role. In many authoritarian regimes, governments use censorship, coercion, and legal restrictions like defamation and national security laws to silence independent media and suppress critical reporting (Chomsky, 2002). Further, concentration in media ownership whereby a small number of influential companies monopolise a larger part of the media environment may restrict diversity and independence of the press (Bagdikian, 2004). Such ownership concentration in the media causes reduced outlooks being voiced and insufficient criticism of those who have the authority (Curran & Seaton, 2018). Lastly, due to reduced advertising income, adverse competition from digital media and some other factors, independent media organisations are struggling to stay afloat and remain independent (Mensing, 2011). Nevertheless, bearing current challenges, the free and independent press is one of the principal pillars of democracy, and the issue of media ownership practices and government influence should always be focused on (Baron, 2006).

3.13 Contemporary Challenges at the Media–Politics Nexus

The media and political nexus take the issue of biased reporting, media owners' concentration, flow of false information and fake news very seriously. Spreading false information has been a growing concern, especially on online web

spaces. As noted, social media algorithms have the ability to amplify fake news, which can result in a false understanding of political concerns (Zimdars et al., 2017). Problems emerging due to the development of digital media include the effect that artificial intelligence and algorithms are having on political content. According to Pariser (2011), algorithms can also produce filter bubbles, and through them, people get subjected to the bulk of the content that supports what they already know about a particular issue, and this influences their political views. Furthermore, since regulation can occasionally make bias worse rather than better, it is still debatable whether or not it is necessary to govern the media in order to preserve impartiality and independence. New issues are arising as digital media is developing, such as how algorithms and artificial intelligence are influencing political content. Pariser (2011) notes that algorithms can create filter bubbles, where individuals are exposed primarily to content that reinforces their existing beliefs, thereby shaping political opinions. Use of AI and algorithms in the selection of political information raises concerns about their capacity to quietly and significantly influence political behaviour and public opinion (Tufekci, 2015)

The last years of the first decade of the 21st century, has witnessed significant transformations in the relationship between media and politics driven by technological advancements, shifts in media consumption habits, and change in political communication strategies. Here an overview of how media influence on international politics has evolved during this time. Communication is one of the crucial constituents of political life. Some, like the famous German- American Political Scientist Karl W. Deutsche, have even said that politics is nothing but Communication (Narendra Tripathi 2006). Culture refers to the unified style of human knowledge, beliefs and behaviour from which people learn and the ability to communicate knowledge to the next generations. We can also define it as the total way of life. It includes the customs, art, traditions, beliefs system, crafts and all activities learned by a man as a member of society. Simply, it is the human way of life, and on how we present ourselves to others. Media culture emerges because of mass media, intersection of media and culture. Historically, media underwent five stages of development from the earliest forms to the complex one. Oral,

script, Printing press, electronic Media, Digital Media. (Lule 2014). Media is a carrier of culture; it is a tool for the intersection of people with different cultures.

3.14 Media Impact on Global Political Process

Revolutionised technological breakthroughs, changes in international political environments and changing media consumption patterns have all contributed to a dramatic transformation in the dynamic interplay between media and the political process over the past fifteen years. The media is crucial in democratic countries because it shapes political communication, influences individuals' political engagement, facilitates the communication of political players, and disseminates important political information (McNair, 2017). Media have a complex influence on politics, stressing its benefits and possible drawbacks, especially in light of the hybrid media system combining digital and conventional platforms (Chadwick, 2017).

3.14.1 Hitler and Goebbels' Strategy of Media Manipulation

The Nazi regime, under Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, employed the media to control society, societal opinion as well as imposing Nazis ideology. Their propaganda plan was well elaborated and implemented to the extent that German society had the grip of a totalitarian state. By centralising media, exploiting emerging technologies, and manipulating content, the Nazis demonstrated how propaganda could be weaponized to serve authoritarian purposes. From the outset of their seizure of power in 1933, the Nazi government centralised all media for propaganda purposes. Joseph Goebbels was appointed Minister of Propaganda, and the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was established. Newspapers, radio, cinema, and literature were all controlled by this department. Independent media were closed or tightly controlled (Evans, 2003). This was claimed to unify the thinking of the community and prevent the spread of dissenting ideas.

Manipulation of Radio and the People's Receiver: The Nazis understood the possibilities of using the mass communication instrument as making radio

broadcasting too, and mass-produced Volksempfänger ("People Receiver"), a cheap radio simple to make, that only allowed official propaganda. It made sure that Nazi propaganda was broadcasted in almost every German home. The use of radio enabled Goebbels to spread messages faster, especially at critical times such as when Austria was annexed or when the neighbouring countries were gearing up for World War II (Kallis, 2005). This was the reason why the regime was able to manipulate this media in the way it influenced the masses and got them to be loyal to the party by capitalising on the timelessness of the radio.

Cinema served as a key element of Nazi propaganda. Goebbels produced films designed to increase the pride of the German people, portray the Jews as the enemy, and glorify Hitler as divine. *Triumph of the Will* (1935), directed by Leni Riefenstahl, is a case in point. The film, which featured large rallies and a divine image of Hitler, united the public and created a climate of acceptance of Nazi edicts (Welch, 2001).

Use of Fear and Hostility: The other feature of the Nazi propaganda was the us and them narrative. The Nazis have depicted Jews, communists, and other minorities as the biggest enemy of Germany. This was a tactful strategy since it succeeded in making people have fear in their minds and also made the Nazi Party look like the savior (Herf, 2006).

Repetition Propaganda: Goebbels' statement that "a lie told a hundred times becomes the truth" was a cornerstone of Nazi propaganda. Nazi messages were repeated in all media. The sanctity of the Aryan race, the glory of Hitler, and the cruel persecution of the Jews were all innovatively promoted among the people (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999).

Propaganda and public structure with celebrations: The Nazi Party conquered the public mind by organising large-scale structures such as the Nuremberg rallies. Such events marked the power and unity of the party. The images of these events were widely broadcast, and through them, the people were made part of a movement (Baird, 1990).

Blockade of a free press: The Nazis took strong emergency measures to destroy free thought and the press. They closed the sources of free thought by eliminating journalists and writers who opposed them (Snyder, 2015). The horrific image of this can be seen behind the burning of books. The propaganda strategy employed by Hitler and Goebbels, through precise planning and action, completely controlled the society psychologically. The story of the suppression of the freedom of the press is still a great lesson for these peace systems.

3.14.2 2016 U.S. Presidential Election:

The mainstream media played a significant role in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and such sites as Facebook and Twitter were used to mobilise them and send campaign mobilisation (Kreiss, 2016). Disinformation and falsification, such as fake news reports, and organised influence of voters by a particular party, distinguished the election. Research by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) demonstrates how fake news on social media played a significant role in altering perceptions among the people during the election. Moreover, the attack on the election in the form of disinformation campaigns by the Russians, which are described in Mueller (2019), highlighted digital platforms' weaknesses to foreign manipulation.

Much research and debate have gone on about the impact of these factors on the behaviour of the voters and the outcomes of elections. The paper by Howard et al. (2018) revealed the strategies through which Russian-controlled accounts interfered with the opinions of the general population and influenced polarisation by taking advantage of social networks, of which Twitter and Facebook were the most popular. It was mainly due to the prevalent use of the mass media that the mechanisms of manipulating political discourse through digital media were noticed, and the challenge to fight off the misinformation was highlighted. Indicatively, Benkler, Faris, and Roberts (2018) note that disinformation campaigns were often amplified by partisan echo chambers, leading to widespread distrust among the masses. Convention media was deemed to be biased and polarised, with some agencies supporting Hillary Clinton and others Donald Trump. As it has been reported by Patterson (2016), the press coverage of the campaign was unequal, and it

dwelt more on scandals instead of meaningful debates about policies, which only contributed to the dissatisfaction of voters. Last fall, the Democratic National Committee was hacked, and the released emails published by Wikileaks were covered in major news outlets as Russian attempts at influencing the election. As Rid (2020) expounds, these were indicative of intelligent methods used in undercutting confidence in democratic institutions.

The talking point with regard to the controversy between Hillary Clinton's email server and the publication of Democratic National Committee emails dominated the media. As supporters of Trump alleged, Clinton was too close to the traditional media, and her approach to the email scandal further demonstrated her connection to it, whereas the traditional media did not influence Donald Trump, as his cavalier use of tools like Twitter avoided the traditional media and appealed to his supporters. Ott (2017) describes the use of Twitter that allowed Trump to post unedited and clear messages, which were quite appealing to his audience and did not face the criticism of the mainstream media. Ott (2017) explains that Twitter use enabled Trump to develop straight and non-edited messages towards the electorate and bypassed condemnation by mainstream media, in addition to attracting support among his supporters. The 2016 presidential election in the United States proved that the media has a significant influence on political communication in the international environment, emphasising ambivalent advantages and issues of the new media technologies along with the continuing role of traditional media resources. Jamieson (2018) highlights the criticality of the collision of digital media, external influence, and media bias to reinvent political campaigning and the involvement of voters in this historical election.

3.14.3 BREXIT 2016:

In the year 2016, the Brexit referendum marked one of the most significant events of British political history where the United Kingdom decided to exit the European Union. The media was important in the way the people saw the matter and the result of the referendum. Mainstream British media such as The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, and The Sun became instrumental in the formation of the opinion of the

masses, as most of the media outlets supported the Leave movement (Levy & Aslan, 2016). The referendum was thoroughly discussed by commercial and public broadcasters, including the BBC and ITV, in interviews and analysis, which gave the population an opportunity to talk. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were some of the social media sites that helped in conveying news and political messages. According to research, bots and hyperpartisan content used on social media played an important role in the discourse of the referendum (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016; Bastos & Mercea, 2018). Other sites, such as BuzzFeed and HuffPost, were more appealing to younger audiences and provided alternate narratives that would not be carried in traditional media coverage, expanding the topic of the debate.

Televised debates, town hall meetings and online forums aided the public to debate and, in turn, mobilise voters. Severe media coverage and the interest the referendum created may be partly attributed to the great turnout (72.2%) on it (Levy & Aslan, 2016). But too much misinformation was reinforced by parts of the media, including the Leave campaign's belief that sending £350m to the EU every week would be better spent on the National Health Service (NHS). This statement, even though refuted, found a massive spread because of constant media coverage (BBC News, 2016). The poster used by Nigel Farage with the title of Breaking Point referred to refugees and the association of immigration with Brexit, but it was controversial and criticised by the media. The divisive message underlined the contributions of emotional images to shape the opinion of voters, especially on the more sensitive issues, such as immigration (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017). The data-driven campaign by Cambridge Analytica demonstrated the increased application of online strategies in campaigns. The data on the voters was also harvested to personalise the advertising, and the concerns about privacy and manipulation were brought up (Cadwalladr, 2018). This supported the need for openness and control of digital political campaigns. The Brexit referendum of 2016 highlighted the importance of media in the political sphere, including the setting of agendas as well as mobilising voters. The cases of funding claims of the National Health Service, the poster Breaking Point and the strategies of Cambridge Analytica show how the media shapes politics and drives democratic processes (Ibid).

3.14.4 Arab Spring (2010-2012):

The Arab Spring (2010-2012) was an avalanche of anti-regime demonstrations and protests in the Arab world, which had a strong influence on social media as well as conventional media. Mainstream media houses, like Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN, had wide coverage that created international interest in the events. State-controlled media, in most Arab countries, gave little coverage or none at all to the protests and acted as propaganda organs of these countries. Nevertheless, the role of international news stations, such as Al Jazeera, was crucial in covering the events and broadcasting them worldwide, thereby contradicting state-controlled media (Hroub, n.d.). The usage of social media websites that offer the service of organising protests and giving out information, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, remained a significant vehicle in this process. Activists have used these platforms to communicate in real-time, coordinate actions, and communicate with their local and international audiences. Social media made the information spread fast so that protesters could organise themselves and attract the attention of the whole world to their reasons (Pew Research Center, 2012).

In Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in December 2010, which led to mass unrest in the country. The video went viral on social media, leading to a movement that saw the toppling of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. The use of social media platforms played an essential role in arranging the protests and spreading the word about government violence, whereas media coverage by the international media helped to give a voice to the protesters and make them heard worldwide (Gire, S., n.d.). In Egypt, the Tahrir Square demonstrations started on 25th January 2011, as thousands of people demanded the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, whose 30-year rule they wanted to put to an end. Facebook and Twitter were especially critical to organising protesters, the hashtag of which was #Jan25. The global media coverage of events was immense by the international media houses to give global coverage to the events taking place in Egypt. Mubarak stepped down on 11th February, 2011, after 18 days of protests (O'Donnell, 2011). In Libya, the protests against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi

started in February 2011, and it became a civil war. The information was shared and the protests organised using social media, although the penetration of the internet was low in the country. The sources of information, which stimulated the creation of public opinion, and the actions of foreign countries included international media, which, in combination with social media, influenced the reaction of other countries. An international outcry and pressure, together with an intervention by NATO, eventually led to the toppling of Gaddafi after he was overthrown in October 2011 (Morris, 2014).

The Arab Spring has shown us how complex the relationship between traditional and social media is in contemporary political movements. Through social media, information was spread quickly and mobilisation was made easy, yet the traditional media gave wider coverage, achieving international coverage for the causes of the protesters to be recognised as legitimate. The incidents highlighted the potential of the media in imposing political discourse as well as dictating the reaction of both the national and international community in response to civil rebellion (Smidi & Shahin, 2017).

3.14.5 Panama Papers (2016): The Role of Media

One of the biggest data breaches in history occurred with the release of the Panama Papers in April 2016, which revealed the secret financial transactions of prominent figures in business, politics, and the entertainment industry. In addition to providing facts, the media played a critical role in influencing public opinion and changing policy throughout this historic event (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2017). The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) spearheaded the investigation, mobilising a vast network of over 400 journalists from 80 countries to scrutinise the leaked documents (Bernstein, 2017; Fitzgibbon & Hudson, 2021). The sources of the leak were anonymous at first, later revealed to be John Doe, a Mossack Fonseca employee who provided a staggering 11.5 million documents from the Panamanian law firm (Rusbridger, 2016). John Doe is the pseudonymous name given to the whistleblower who leaked the Panama Papers, while Mossack Fonseca was a Panamanian law firm founded by Jurgen Mossack and Ramon

Fonseca in 1977 in Panama City. The firm had offices in several countries, including the British Virgin Islands, Hong Kong, and Switzerland, among others (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2017).

In the 1980s, the firm began to specialise in creating offshore companies and providing financial services to wealthy individuals and politicians. While these activities were legal, the leaked documents revealed that many clients used these services for illicit purposes such as money laundering, corruption, and tax evasion (Bernstein, 2017). In 2015, John Doe contacted the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with an offer to leak the Panama Papers. The leak revealed widespread corruption and money laundering, leading to the resignation of several world leaders and the prosecution of many others (Rusbridger, 2016). Mossack Fonseca's activities were shut down in 2016, and the firm's founders, Jurgen Mossack and Ramon Fonseca, were arrested and charged with money laundering and other crimes (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2017).

The ICIJ and its partner media outlets, including *The Guardian*, *BBC*, and *Le Monde*, meticulously analysed the documents and published their findings in April 2016. The revelations were astounding, exposing widespread tax evasion, money laundering, and shell companies linked to global leaders, politicians, and wealthy individuals (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2017; Bernstein, 2017). The media reporting sparked a global outcry, leading to the resignation of high-profile figures such as Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson and Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (Bernstein, 2017; International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, 2023). The fallout also included protests, political upheaval, and calls for greater transparency and accountability (Rusbridger, 2016).

The media's role in the Panama Papers revelation demonstrated the power of collaborative investigative journalism in holding the powerful accountable and driving systemic change (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2017; International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, 2023). By shedding light on the dark corners of financial corruption, the media performed its democratic duty (Bernstein, 2017). The resultant public awareness and pressure were significant drivers of legislative reforms aimed

at addressing financial secrecy and corruption. The Panama Papers not only underscored the importance of media in contemporary society but also reinforced the need for continued vigilance and ethical journalism in the fight against corruption and injustice (Bernstein, 2017; Fitzgibbon & Hudson, 2021).

3.14.6 Black lives Matters

Since its founding in 2013, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has had a tremendous impact on political communication, changing the way racial justice issues are treated and debated in public discourse. The influence of BLM may be seen in political arenas and social media platforms as it pushes establishments to address institutional racism and police violence against Black people (Garza, 2014). Through the use of internet mobilisation and grassroots activism, BLM has given voice to those who have been marginalised and created a unified, decentralised movement that puts pressure on institutions and authorities to implement significant reforms (Taylor, 2016).

The BLM movement has also greatly transformed the nature of journalism narratives and political discourse, whereby the issue of systemic racism and police brutality has been in the spotlight. First, the conventional media is suspected of underreporting or failing to represent cases of police brutality towards black people accurately. However, as BLM gained momentum, it compelled mainstream media to provide more comprehensive and accurate coverage (Freelon et al., 2018). High-profile cases, such as those of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and George Floyd, received extensive media attention, highlighting the urgent need for systemic change (Garza, 2014; Freelon et al., 2018).

The issue that sparked the BLM movement was the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin on July 13, 2013. Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old unarmed teenager, was shot and killed by George Zimmerman, a neighbourhood watch volunteer, on February 26, 2012, in Sanford, Florida. Martin was walking back to his father's fiancée's house in a gated community after buying candy at a convenience store. Zimmerman spotted Martin and called the police, reporting a "suspicious person." Despite being told not to

follow Martin, Zimmerman confronted him, leading to a physical altercation and shooting Martin once in the chest, killing him (Taylor, 2016). Most people assumed that Zimmerman had killed Martin because of his race, but according to Zimmerman, he had acted in self-defence under a provision of the law in Florida called the Stand Your Ground. Racial profiling and easy access to firearms were attracting attention because of the shooting (Garza, 2014).

The George Floyd problem is the name of the unfortunate incident on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, after which the police killed George Floyd, a 46-year-old man, during the arrest. Floyd was arrested by police officers upon being called by the deli employee who called 911 to report that Floyd had tried to pay with a forged \$20 bill. In the arrest, a knee was put on the neck of Floyd by officer Derek Chauvin, and according to estimates, he knelt on his neck for about eight to nine minutes even after Floyd had lost consciousness. Floyd kept repeating, I can not breathe, " and passengers coerced the law enforcement personnel to hold off. Floyd died at a hospital later (Hill et al., 2020). The video recorded the disgusting and deadly police use of force in the form of an incident. All four of the other officers were terminated, and Chauvin was convicted of second-degree murder and third-degree murder as well as the charge of manslaughter. The other officers were accused of aiding and abetting (Hill et al., 2020).

One can witness BLM's influence on traditional media in several ways. First, mainstream media outlets have shifted their attention to more stories about racial issues, spending more time and resources reporting on topics like systemic racism and police brutality (Freelon et al., 2018). Second, victims of police violence are now framed as part of a larger pattern of institutional injustice rather than isolated cases in media narratives. This shift has led to greater recognition and understanding of the structural basis of racial disparities. Furthermore, specialists on policing and race have been featured on news programs more frequently, offering greater context and analysis of cases of police violence and the broader issues raised by BLM (Freelon et al., 2018; Taylor, 2016).

The emergence and continuation of BLM have been greatly aided by social media, which has made it possible for information to spread quickly, for protests to be planned, and for support to be mobilised internationally. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has grown to be an effective instrument for spreading awareness and mobilising support, enabling a global dialogue about racial justice (Garza, 2014; Freelon et al., 2018). Social media posts and viral videos depicting police brutality have frequently sparked instant public outcry and mobilisation, enabling BLM to bypass gatekeepers in traditional media and directly reach a sizable audience. Furthermore, social media has played a crucial role in organising activism and protests, allowing for widespread mobilisations in response to instances of racial injustice (Taylor, 2016).

BLM has also had an impact on public conversations about equality and racism in general. Terms like "white privilege," "systemic racism," and "police reform," which are now frequently used in the media and public discourse, have gained popularity due to the movement (Freelon et al., 2018). The public has become more aware of the nuances of racial issues because of the growing usage of anti-racist language, making people more knowledgeable and involved. Additionally, BLM has forced politicians and public figures to address topics like racial justice and police reform in their platforms and policy recommendations by bringing them to the forefront of policy discussions (Taylor, 2016).

Studies show that the BLM demonstrations have changed people's perceptions and conversations considerably. Indeed, research led by Indiana University and the University of Washington found that searches on internet phrases related to racial justice had increased sharply during the BLM protests, which shows that people were becoming increasingly involved in these issues (Freelon et al., 2018). This extended engagement, which can be considered in a long-term view, indicates that the BLM has left its mark on popular knowledge and discourse. To conclude, Black Lives Matter movement has changed political communication and the media. Through strategic use of social media and traditional media coverage, BLM has managed to inform the population and raise awareness about the issues of

racism and police brutality in institutions and reframe the narrative to focus on the idea of racial justice. It proves the great long-term impact of the movement and preconditions for further social and political changes (Garza, 2014; Freelon et al., 2018).

3.14.7 Me Too Movement

Tarana Burke is an American activist who started the Me Too Movement in 2006. She published the book “Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement” in 2021, and we can trace the origin of the # MeToo movement in this book. The # MeToo campaign is a global movement that began in 2006 to raise awareness about sexual harassment and assault, particularly in the context of workplace misconduct. The movement gained widespread attention in 2017, following the hashtag # MeToo, which became a rallying cry for survivors to share their experiences and demand accountability from perpetrators and institutions (Burke, 2021).

Powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was the subject of multiple sexual misconduct claims that surfaced in 2017. Decades of allegations from actors and former employees were exposed by thorough investigations published in The New York Times and The New Yorker. The same charges against Weinstein and other famous people in different areas of activity multiplied when these writings became known. Largely, the participation of renowned actresses like Ashley Judd, Gwyneth Paltrow and Angelina Jolie attracted a lot of media attention. The fact that they had the courage to go out and speak out motivated a large number of women to tell their own stories of being harassed and assaulted. The case of Weinstein received a great deal of media attention, with regular updates on fresh accusations, court cases, and the issue's wider ramifications for Hollywood and other industries. The Me Too movement saw a major triumph with Weinstein's eventual conviction for rape and sexual assault in 2020, which also highlighted the importance of investigative journalism in keeping influential people responsible (Kantor, Twohey, & Corbett, 2017).

On October 15, 2017, the actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a message urging victims of sexual assault and harassment to respond with the hashtag "Me Too." Tarana Burke, an activist, is credited with inspiring this. She first used the word in 2006 to draw attention to sexual assault. Millions of individuals used the hashtag #MeToo to express their personal tales after Milano's post went viral very fast. The campaign has forced media outlets to enact stricter guidelines for covering sexual harassment and assault, among other things, making sure that the testimonies of survivors are acknowledged and treated with respect. Publications' internal procedures and the way they handle worker claims have also come under examination. The MeToo movement has been widely disseminated, thanks in large part to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Millions of people were able to support one another and share their stories when the hashtag #MeToo became popular (Clark-Parsons, 2019). A greater variety of voices, especially those from marginalised communities, can now be heard thanks to this democratisation of the narrative.

A number of politicians who were accused of sexual misconduct have resigned, been suspended, or been removed as a result of the movement. Senator Al Franken and Representative John Conyers are two well-known American examples. Political parties have been forced to reconsider their positions on addressing claims of sexual misconduct within their ranks as well as their policies. The movement has impacted the introduction and passing of laws meant to shield survivors from abuse and to stop sexual harassment. Legislation requiring improved worker training and more transparent reporting procedures are two examples. Inquiries and task teams have also been established by governments to handle sexual misbehaviour in a variety of fields, including politics (Castle, Jenkins, Orbals, Poloni-Staudinger, & Strachan, 2020).

Political action has been sparked by the movement, with many activists and survivors calling for more stringent safeguards and accountability procedures. Voter behaviour has also been affected by it; some electorates have prioritised politicians who take a stand against sexual misconduct and who assist survivors. Allegations of

sexual misconduct by politicians have been covered by the media, which has forced political institutions to take action. Because of this, there is a greater sense of empowerment among survivors to come forward (Pew Research Center, 2022). Investigative journalism has demonstrated the relationship between political accountability and journalism by frequently coming before political action. The movement has changed the way that people talk about consent, gender equality, and power relations in public. Political agendas as well as media narratives have been impacted by this cultural transformation. Politics and the media have had to change to meet the public's evolving expectations for accountability, openness, and support for survivors (Yale Journal of International Affairs, 2021). The movement has also encountered opposition, which has included grievances over due process and charges of fabrication. It has been difficult for the media and political organisations to negotiate these issues while continuing to support survivors. Discussions about finding some middle ground between the necessity to trust a survivor and provide the accused person with justice have been common in the media and in politics. The MeToo movement is also meaningful in the context of politics and the media, it has created more awareness, caused a shift in the legislation, and promoted a cultural change. In order to achieve the movement's objectives and guarantee accountability for sexual misbehaviour, the relationship between media attention and political action has proven to be extremely important (Tippett, 2018).

3.14.8 Occupy Wall Street (OWS) Protest

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that was launched at Zuccotti Park, Manhattan, on September 17, 2011, was one such turning point. The movement was motivated by an appeal to action by the Canadian activist group Adbusters, which focused on peaceful protest as a way of addressing the structural economic injustices (Gitlin, 2012; Onion, Sullivan, Mullen, & Zapata, 2021). The phrase, We are the 99 percent, became the symbol associated with the protest, which focused on the excess concentration of wealth among the 1 percent and the resultant economic inequality by the rest of the society (Gerbaudo, 2012). The inter-relationships between big businesses and government policy making were condemned by the

participants, who said these were infringing on democracy as the interest of companies was at the expense of the people.

The early momentum of the movement was achieved by high-visibility incidents. Also, when, on October 1, 2011, a march was organised to cross the Brooklyn Bridge, over 700 people were detained, and such a phenomenon made the impact of the national media and increased the prominence of activism (Schneider, 2013). Prior to this case, on September 24, 2011, the pepper-spraying of peaceful activists by New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer Anthony Bologna became the cause of huge upheaval in society and raised the question of police brutality (Gitlin, 2012). Besides the domestic effect, the movement also boosted the chains of solidarity protests on a worldwide scale, which indicates its high degree of resonance. Demonstrations took place in such cities as London, Madrid, and Tokyo, with protestors who shared the OWS message of criticism towards neoliberal capitalism and exploitation by corporations. On the same note, mass protests in cities such as Delhi and Bangalore have also brought to the world's attention the problems of economic inequality and widespread corruption (Gerbaudo, 2012; The Indian Express, 2011). However, the forced eviction of Zuccotti Park on November 15 2011, notwithstanding, OWS gave rise to a larger discussion regarding economic justice. Its influence extended into non-physical professions and redefined how people discussed income disparity, monetary rules, and corporate responsibility in the public arena (Schneider, 2013). Albeit the movement did not yield its specific policy goals, it did leave an intangible legacy of both grassroots organising and participatory democracy, as well as effective use of online media to magnify the movements (Gerbaudo, 2012; Penn Today. (n.d.).

There are important sources which give us a lot of information about the movement. *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* by Todd Gitlin and *Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse* by Nathan Schneider look at the origins and the spirit of OWS, respectively, with both being written by people within the OWS. Writers introduce the difficulties and successes of the movement. What is more, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and*

Contemporary Activism by Paolo Gerbaudo focuses on OWS in the frame of the overall picture of activism-through-social-media by addressing the role of social media platforms in the transformation of global awareness and response. OWS is an example of the promise of mass action to disrupt established systems of oppression. The fact that it gives priority to the participation of the grassroots, to its criticism of the domination of corporations, still influences the rise of modern movements that contribute to economic and social justice.

3.15 Influence of Mass Media on Indian Politics

Since the 21st century, the Indian media environment has changed dramatically, having a huge impact on the political communication process. Along with the emergence of digital media platforms, traditional media like television and newspapers have been essential in influencing political discourse, shaping public opinion, influencing election results and changing the nature of the public sphere of India (Ninan, 2017; Chadha & Guha, 2019).

Visual Media: In India, television debates have grown to be a vital component of political discourse, especially in the twenty-first century. These debates give viewers a variety of viewpoints by giving political leaders, analysts, and specialists a forum to discuss and analyse contemporary political issues (Thakurta, 2012). Channels like NDTV, Times Now, and Republic TV increasingly dominate the political agenda and regularly sway public opinion on significant issues. For instance, prime-time conversations significantly influenced party perspectives, voter views, and sometimes even indecisive votes during the 2014 and 2019 general elections (Bhaskaran et al., 2017). Television has a strong potential to be used as a political propaganda due to its immediacy and visual nature, which leaves a huge impact on the opinion of the people. News networks of the day contribute so much to the awareness of the people in political events, policies, and election campaigns. Massive coverage of major political events such as the General Elections allows voters to gain extensive access to information about party manifestos, the biographies of the candidates, or election rallies (Chadha & Guha, 2019). Continuous news reporting brings a citizen in touch with the news coverage of

politics in such a way that it motivates a citizen to take an active part in politics. However, depending on how topics are framed and presented, the style of this coverage may also have an impact on public perception (Thakurta, 2012). News coverage is a powerful tool in the political communication process because it can influence the public's perceptions and priorities when it favours certain issues over others (Bhaskaran et al., 2017).

With television news being so competitive, sensationalism in reporting has grown to be a serious problem. This technique, which frequently sacrifices accuracy and depth, is utilising dramatic and exaggerated headlines or stories to draw viewers and readers (Thakurta, 2012). Sensationalism can cause public alarm and disinformation, which can deflect attention from crucial political issues (Bhaskaran et al., 2017). In the 2020 Sushant Singh Rajput death case, for example, overbearing media sensationalism concealed more pressing political and social problems (Ninan, 2017). Because it puts amusement over facts and reduces complicated political storylines to simplified and frequently misleading headlines, this emphasis on sensational tales has the potential to degrade the quality of democratic debate (Chadha & Guha, 2019).

Newspaper: Despite technological improvements, newspapers in India have remained crucial in shaping public debate and have continued to play a critical role in political communication in the twenty-first century. Newspapers have had to adjust to the rise of digital media by embracing online platforms and extending their audience through social media and digital subscriptions. Despite these developments, conventional print newspapers are still quite influential, particularly in areas with poor internet access and among elderly populations (Bhaskaran et al., 2017).

Opinion pieces (Opinion pieces are articles that express the views, beliefs, and perspectives of the author on a specific topic) hold considerable influence over knowledgeable readers and decision-makers. These articles have the power to influence how complicated political topics are seen and debated by offering thorough justifications and a range of viewpoints (Thakurta, 2012). Opinion pieces

that examine policy consequences, evaluate government measures, and offer expert commentary are frequently featured in *The Hindu* and *The Indian Express*, for example. These pieces have the potential to influence public opinion as well as policy decisions (Biswas, Ingle, & Roy, 2014).

Opinion articles or Editorial' framing of political issues helps in the clarification and contextualisation of events, enabling readers to interact with difficult subjects in a more nuanced way. According to Bhaskaran et al. (2017), this framing can affect how the general public perceives political events and concerns and frequently directs the conversation on these subjects in public forums and larger media. *Hindustan Times* editorials, for instance, have the potential to influence public discourse and opinion by offering critical viewpoints on government policies (Chadha & Guha, 2019).

Social Media: In India, social media has completely changed the way politicians communicate with the public and how they interact with voters. With the introduction of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram, individuals and political leaders may now communicate directly without going via traditional media channels.

While there were 481 million internet users in India as of December 2017, the number of users reached 500 million in 2018. There were 295 million internet users in India's estimated 455 million urban population, while there were 186 million active internet users in the country's (about 918 million as per the 2011 census) rural population (Agarwal, 2018). According to Statista, (a global data and business intelligence platform founded in Germany in 2007 and featuring an extensive collection of statistics, reports, and insights on over 80,000 different topics), in India internet user base increased dramatically from 493.96 million in 2018 to 696.77 million in 2020, among them 376. 1 million of them have been estimated to be social media users.

Social media in India has experienced rapid growth in recent years, with a significant increase in the number of users and platforms. India has the second largest number of social media users in the world, with over million users (Statista,

2022). Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube are the most popular social media platforms in India (Hootsuite, 2022). Most social media users in India access platforms through mobile devices, making it a mobile-first market (GSMA, 2020). Newer dimensions of social media addiction include the inability of users to distinguish between their online persona and behaviours and their inability to separate themselves from digital devices. This has created a new normal in which smartphones are an inextricable part of people's lives and such addictive behaviour is accepted as normal and natural rather than a disorder. Unlike other addictions such as drugs, social media are easily accessible through handled mobile devices. Mobile phones are perennially attached to users, offer a plethora of uses and services, and most importantly, mediate social interactions and relationships (Barclay, P., Boobalakrishnan, N, 2022).

3.15.1 Anna Hazare's Movement

The India Against Corruption (IAC) movement, popularly known as Anna Hazare's campaign, was a social and political movement that began in India in 2011 (Kumar, 2013). The Jan Lokpal Bill, which would establish an independent ombudsman to investigate and prosecute corruption cases, was one of the demands made by the movement in its effort to combat corruption in the nation. To draw attention to the problem of corruption, social activist and Gandhian Anna Hazare initiated his campaign by fasting until death in Jantar Mantar, New Delhi (Thakurta, 2011). Thousands of others joined him in his fast and protests as his cause gained enormous popularity nationwide. The movement gained a lot of media coverage as well, which aided in spreading its message and expanding its audience.

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were utilised by the IAC movement to gather support and plan demonstrations (Roy, 2015). Hazare's group established a Twitter handle and Facebook page that soon attracted a large number of followers. Young people and urban middle-class Indians, who were keen to see changes in the nation's political landscape, were mobilised by the movement thanks in large part to its social media campaign. The Jan Lokpal Bill was eventually passed by the government in 2011 as a result of the movement's considerable

influence (Pai & Kumar, 2012). But it was later diluted, and Hazare ran out of steam. Notwithstanding this, the IAC movement did indicate a major change in Indian politics, the importance of fighting corruption and the power of people's movements. Hazare led this movement by holding discussions with the Prime Minister and other political leaders to enact this bill. Simple for Hazard's style of communication. "Enact the Jan Lokpal Bill to fight corruption," he was very clear. He made contact with the public and increased political pressure on the government by using tactics such as hunger strikes. Hazares's campaign was wide-ranging since it included participation from individuals, political parties, and organisations from civil society. Rodrigues, U. M. (2024) examines the transformative role of social media on journalism, particularly in the context of media coverage of anti-corruption protests in India (Rodrigues & U. M., 2024).

The movement resulted in the Jan Lokpal Bill being introduced in Parliament in 2011, and one of the movement's major achievements was the Lokpal Act, which was passed in 2013, establishing Lokayukta in several states, an independent ombudsman to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. Even though it didn't pass in the desired format. (Kumar, 2013). Hazare's movement also brought corruption's effects on Indian society to light through the media, which sparked a greater public conversation and demand for accountability. One major effect of the movement was this change in public attitude, which forced politicians to act against corruption (Thakurta, 2011). Along with its effects, the campaign gave rise to new political figures like Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who went on to form the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). This had a profound effect on Indian politics by demonstrating the potential political power of anti-corruption activism. (Roy, 2015). The impact of the movement was also seen in the 2014 general elections, wherein the BJP secured a majority and Narendra Modi was appointed Prime Minister, largely on the strength of his promise to combat corruption. This was a big change in Indian politics since it was the first time that corruption was a big electoral issue.

With the help of his team, Hazare's movement also initiated the use of social media in Indian politics, as they mobilised support using Twitter, Facebook, and

YouTube. The protests and hunger strike were widely covered by the mainstream media, which helped him become well-known and start a hashtag campaign in social media. This had a big influence on Indian politics because it demonstrated the potential of social media as an effective instrument for political mobilisation. (Roy, 2015). Hazare's movement demonstrated that non-political players might have an impact on policy decisions, illustrating the importance of civil society in Indian politics (Thakurta, 2011). This had a massive impact on Indian politics, there was evidence that civil society could be a powerful force for change. The movement seems to have changed the government's way of dealing with protests based on an open door to demands and dialogue. This left a deep impact on Indian politics as it showed that the government was ready to listen to the voice of the people. (Kumar, 2013). Institutional reforms were yet another major achievement of the movement in the form of the Lokpal and an enhanced Right to Information Act (Pai & Kumar, 2012). These reforms showed that the government was ready to take on corruption, and in a big way too. To further refine the Right to Information Act 2011 for a more effective culture of accountability and openness?. To improve the legislation and increase its efficacy in fostering accountability and openness, the Right to Information Act was revised in 2011. In order to shield whistleblowers from harassment and reprisals, the Whistleblower Protection Act was passed in 2014. Lastly, Hazare's movement and the role of the media inspired protests of farmers and other social movements in India, including the Nirbhaya protest (Roy, 2015). This had a big influence on Indian politics because it demonstrated the potential for social movements to be effective change agents.

3.15.2 Nirbhaya Case

The Nirbhaya case, in which the 23-year-old physiotherapy intern Jyoti Singh was gang-raped and brutalised before she died in December 2012, triggered an unprecedented public outrage and marked a turning point in India's fight against sexual assault. It Mobilised Mass Protests: This incident also generated massive protests, which in turn had a major effect on Indian politics and media (TOI Online, 2024). The media played a crucial role in amplifying the Nirbhaya case,

transforming it from a tragic event into a catalyst for nationwide protests and debates on women's safety and gender-based violence. Mainstream media ensured the case remained in the public limelight and helped keep the pressure on the authorities to act fast, with comprehensive reporting and updates. This incident did not die down but was rather repeatedly exposed to news, newspapers and magazines, making people rethink the crime and protest in the process against the crime (Rao, 2013; Kaur & Garg, 2020).

Social media has become an effective instrument for mobilisation, especially Facebook, Twitter and text messages. Hashtags like #Nirbhaya, #JusticeForNirbhaya, and #StopThisShame served as focal points for the public and activists, facilitating the real-time exchange of information, planning rallies, and expressing a shared sense of anger (Ghosh, 2016; Kumari, 2017). Indeed, the role of social media played with it insofar as pushing sanctioned grievances through a society was captured in a grassroots campaign that was made up of a coalition of such disparate groups all of whom demanded justice and systemic change (Nayar 2014).

The outrage over the gang rape in Delhi went all the way from the street to the internet. As of 10 days after the incident, the Facebook groups "gang raped in Delhi", created on December 12, 2012, and "Delhi for Women's safety", created on December 18, 2012, received 5063 "likes", and 4263 "likes", respectively. The terms "Delhi gang rape", "Rape in Delhi", and "gang rape victim" were among the top search phrases in India. The organisations established shared forums where everyone could express their opposition to sexual assault. The digital world undoubtedly shows the expanding strength of this media and its impact on the masses, especially the youth. People are able to assess events worldwide regardless of their geographical location, and the virtual world is gradually discovering its social relevance (Kumar, 2014).

Politicians in India were compelled by the Nirbhaya case to bring attention to the widespread problem of sexual violence against women. The Justice Verma Committee was established as a result of public protests, and its recommendations

included extensive changes to the penal statutes pertaining to sexual assault. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which included harsher penalties for rape, including the death penalty for repeat offenders and provisions for quicker trials, quickly put the committee's recommendations into practice (Banerjee, 2014). In addition, the government introduced programmes like the Nirbhaya Fund to improve women's protection and security. This fund provided funding for a number of initiatives, such as the construction of emergency response systems, CCTV camera installations, and women-only police stations (Bajpai, 2017).

The Nirbhaya campaign triggered an increase in awareness and reporting of sexual offences and energised civic society. More survivors came forward to report incidents as a result of these issues' increasing visibility in media narratives, which helped de-stigmatise conversations about sexual violence (Rohatgi, 2015; Mehrotra, 2016). Although it is still in its early stages, this cultural change represents a significant advancement in the fight against gender-based violence in India (Chakraborty & Kaur, 2017). The movement emphasised the regional and international significance of the Nirbhaya case by sparking similar demonstrations and lobbying campaigns throughout South Asia. Marches and demonstrations were held in nations like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, highlighting how global the battle against sexual abuse is (Jain, 2018; Khandelwal, 2017).

Some impediments and criticisms persisted even under these progressive reforms ushered in by Nirbhaya. The documentary "India's Daughter" was banned by the Indian government and created waves as it was centered on the case and included an interview with one of the rapists convicted in the case (Udwin, 2015). Critics have argued that the ban was pushed through to cover up uncomfortable truths about how women are regarded by society (Sharma, 2015). The conflict between managing public perception and promoting awareness has come to light by this censoring (Bhattacharya, 2016). While new laws were passed, there are still issues with how effectively they are being applied. The fight against sexual violence is still being undermined by instances of police insensitivity, drawn-out legal proceedings, and poor conviction rates (Datta, 2016). The media, the government,

and civil society must all work together to gradually change society in order to end this kind of violence (Sarkar & Sarkar, 2019).

The Nirbhaya incident is a testimony to how the media shapes news and conversation and guides the governments on their actions. It also underlines the extent of the key role that the media plays here in the promotion of sexual assault issues, and social and legal reform. The journey to a safer and more equal India for women is coming along, even if it's not there yet. We continue to be inspired by the influence of the Nirbhaya movement, and today's work towards justice, equity, and the end of gender-based violence.

#JusticeforAsifa: Asifa was a 8 year old little girl was gang raped and brutally murdered in Kathua, Kashmir in April 2018, social media caught fire and the flames were all engulfing that it shook many age old norms and conventions. #JusticeForAsifa, was not reduced just as another hashtag online, but the nation took to the streets demanding justice to be served at any cost. As the country witnessed one of the worst tragedies of recent times and with millions of people losing faith in humanity, this online movement saw people from all walks of life coming out extending solidarity to the cause. It did mount immense pressure on the authorities to prosecute and punish the 8 accused.

3.15.3 Narendra Modi Media Strategies

That is what the “Modi wave” was supposed to be about, alluding here to the phenomenal popularity and electoral success of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in the national polls, particularly in 2014 and in 2019. This embodies much of the ground shift that bound so many of the Indian electorate to both the persona as well as the policies of Modi and ultimately ensured a landslide victory of the BJP (Jain, 2023). This situation was significantly shaped and amplified by the mass media. The Modi wave was greatly aided by the widespread coverage of his speeches, initiatives, and activities by the mass media. Modi's calculated utilisation of the media in communicating his goals and achievements had a very high correlation with public opinion of him. The larger-than-life image as a strong and decisive leader that was built around Modi was further strengthened by the massive

hype that secured him on the television channels and the media, playing up his development program and leadership qualities in that Putin-like personality cult. Another important tool in Modi's campaign was social media. His group successfully used social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter to reach a larger audience—particularly young people (Roy, 2021). His support base grew even stronger as a result of the customised communications and real-time interaction with voters made possible by this digital strategy. Furthermore, Modi's message was disseminated throughout the nation through the BJP's extensive media advertising campaign, which included campaigns such as "Ab Ki Baar, Modi Sarkar" (This Time, Modi Government) (Willnat, Verghese, & Mammadov, 2017). became nationally recognised slogans.

Mass media broad coverage, cunning advertising, and skillful use of social media all had a major impact on the Modi wave. Numerous theories on mass media explain how media content influences public opinion and political results, which helps to explain that connection. These several mass media theories can be used to analyse the connection between the Modi wave and the media. According to agenda-setting theory, the media dictates what individuals should think rather than what they should think. Modi has become a prominent figure in political discourse as a result of the media's constant coverage of his campaign and initiatives, which have shaped the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Framing theory deals with presenting information in a way that affects audience perception, and it is equally relevant. Modi's activities and leadership qualities were framed positively, which helped to create a positive public perception (Entman, 1993). In the same manner, "Cultivation Theory" posits that long exposure to media content has the power to shape how viewers understand reality. A favourable impression of Modi among voters may have been fostered by the media's consistent positive portrayal of him. Cultivation theory looks at how watching television over time affects viewers' perceptions of reality. The idea, which was developed in the 1970s by George Gerbner and Larry Gross, contends that people who watch frequent episodes of television are more likely to see the world in a way

that reflects the most recurrent and consistent messages found on television, whether or not these perceptions are real (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). How people actively seek out media to meet different needs is examined under the Uses and Gratifications Theory. According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), voters may have used the media to learn about Modi and his policies, which strengthened their support for him.

A psychological communication perspective called “Uses and Gratifications” theory investigates how and why people actively seek out various media in order to satisfy specific wants and desires. This idea, which was developed in the 1970s by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, moves the emphasis from what media does to people to what people do with media. The Uses and Gratifications Theory examines how people actively seek out media to fulfil various needs. It's possible that voters learned about Modi and his programmes through the media, and their acceptance of him was strengthened by the knowledge they consumed (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973).

Chai pe Charcha with Namo (Discussion over Tea): One of Modi's political communication campaigns during the election was “chai pe charcha with NAMO” (Narendra Modi). It is a Hindi word meaning ‘Discussion over Tea’. Smt. Sushama Swaraj formally began "chai pe charcha" on February 14, 2014 in Delhi. She claimed at a press conference that the party's prime minister candidate, Narendra Modi, would launch the campaign nationwide on February 12. In this creative initiative, Narendra Modi engaged in real-time tea conversations with individuals in various places. Modi's image has been transmitted via satellite technology to a number of locations so that people could communicate with him virtually. Through this campaign, Modi aimed to create a personal connection with voters, listen to their concerns, and share his vision for India's development (Rajwani, 2014). Town hall meetings, social media exchanges, tea stall gatherings and televised exchanges were all part of the 'chai pe charcha' effort. In several cities, Modi hosted town hall meetings where he interacted with locals and responded to their inquiries. His effective use of mass media to reach out to the Indian electorate, especially the

younger generation and marginalised communities, as well as his personal connections with voters, foster an atmosphere of inclusivity, approachability, and willingness to interact and listen to the public.

To guarantee maximum reach and involvement, the campaign included a variety of digital technologies (DTH, Satellite, Campaign Microsite, Mobile, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook). Three features were available in these campaigns: Share, Ask, and Suggest. Visitors to the website could find the closest tea shop where chai pe charcha was being broadcast, attend the live chai pe charcha conversation in a tea shop, watch it online or on DTH, and, with a single click, connect with updates on chai pe charcha in their city via Namo pages (The Hindu, 2021).

"Ab Ki Baar, Modi Sarkar" (This Time, Modi Government): The campaign's focus on Modi as the main candidate for prime minister was accompanied by carefully scripted campaign slogans that consistently appeared on all posters and billboards, together with images of Modi. Ajay Singh, a member of the campaign committee and cofounder of the Indian domestic airline SpiceJet, came up with the BJP's primary campaign slogan, Ab ki baar, Modi sarkar, which translates to "This time, Modi's government." The slogan was intended to appeal to youthful voters dissatisfied with the poor state of the Indian economy while subtly criticising the Gandhi-led administration. "The goal was to make the slogan resonate with everyone, including many first-time voters," Singh said. Achhe Din Aane Wale Hai, which translates to "Good days are coming," was frequently used after the primary slogan to convey the idea that a vote for the BJP will result in a prosperous future with an expanding economy and more jobs (Willnat, Verghese, & Mammadov, 2017). The key phrase in the 2014 election by Narendra Modi was Ab Ki Baar, Modi Sarkar. It was a very powerful and vivid message which resonated with the Indians of all ages. Tagline advertisements were seen on print, radio, television, and social media extensively. This wide coverage ensured that the message was seen by a broad audience, both in the countryside and in the town.

"Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" (Clean India Mission): The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) is one of the signature projects by Narendra Modi and was announced on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2, 2014), with an aim to promote sanitation and cleanliness across the country. The campaign went in line with the idea of having a clean and healthy India, according to the vision of Gandhi, with the standard of hygiene and the problem of open defecation that had spread massively. Some of the plans of the expedition included the construction of toilets, installing waste management systems and persuading the locals to habitually use better sanitation practices. Widespread media coverage of this audacious initiative demonstrated Modi's dedication to enhancing public health and standard of living for all Indians (Business Standard, 2014).

The public's involvement in cleanliness campaigns and the extensive media coverage helped to strengthen Modi's reputation as a leader committed to grassroots development and social causes. The installation of waste management systems and the construction of millions of toilets were two notable advancements in sanitary infrastructure that received a lot of media attention and praise. This observable advancement strengthened the campaign's legitimacy and potency (CNBC TV18, 2020). Public involvement was yet another essential component of "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's" success. Cleanup campaigns were participated in by politicians, celebrities, and regular people; the results were frequently recorded and disseminated through media outlets. More people joined the movement as a result of this group's promotion of a sense of duty and pride in the country. In addition to addressing important public health issues, "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" improved Modi's standing as an assertive and visionary leader dedicated to raising the standard of living for all Indians. One of the most important social campaigns in recent Indian history, it made a lasting impression mainly on the broad media coverage and the enthusiastic participation of the public (Business Standard, 2014; CNBC TV18, 2020; Khare & Suresh, 2023).

"Man Ki Baat": Without the need for middlemen, Narendra Modi communicates with the people directly through direct communication channels. His monthly radio

speech, 'Man Ki Baat' (Heart to Heart), is one of these platforms where he communicates his ideas, plans, and objectives to the country, and it was first broadcast on October 3, 2014 (YouTube, 2015). He covers a wide range of subjects in this show, which airs on All India Radio and the Narendra Modi App, from patriotism and national unity to healthcare and education. The Narendra Modi App is a smartphone application that enables people to communicate with him directly. In addition to keeping the population informed about the Prime Minister's initiatives, speeches, and public addresses, the app can enable people to express their ideas, opinions, and proposals to him. This app has promoted the view of inclusivity and involvement in the decision-making process. Man Ki Baat allows Modi to address criticism and controversies, providing his perspective and countering opposition narratives, and it also provides a feedback mechanism, as citizens can share their thoughts and suggestions with Modi through these channels (Rediff.com, 2014; Daily News and Analysis, 2014; The Hindu, 2014).

“Make in India”: Narendra Modi Government started the centrepiece #'Make in India' initiative was launched on 25th September 2014 by our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, to highlight India's manufacturing prowess and draw in international capital (Reddy, Devi, & Lakshmi, 2021). This campaign displayed significant involvement with social media as a strategic means to reach a large audience, which was included with hashtags, infographics, and other engaging stories to introduce the industrial capabilities of the country (Juhos, 2016; Ghuge, 2020). It aimed at promoting innovation and foreign investments and emphasised positive developments in one of the primary areas of industry, such as pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles. Modi's government also leveraged digital platforms to create a strong national and international brand, as seen in live events like his first-ever Google+ chat with citizens, moderated by Bollywood star Ajay Devgan, which further underscored his innovative approach to communication (Kapoor & Dwivedi, 2015). The combination of new and old media was important to mobilise the middle classes to participate in greater numbers and to make Modi, despite the scandals around his persona, a progressive leader (Rodrigues & Niemann, 2017; Prabhu, 2020). Overall, the campaign not only showcased India's

manufacturing potential but also created a dynamic narrative for its economic transformation (Devi & Lakshmi, 2022; Deshpande & Nayak, 2016). It cannot be argued that the proactive presence on social media helped Modi win the Gujarat assembly as well as the parliament election. But it is evident that despite being a controversial figure, Modi has been projected as a more forward-looking politician.

“Main Bhi Chowkidar”: The phrase translated as I am also a watchman or I am also a guardian is translated as Main Bhi Chowkidar; the campaign started by PM Modi. This is their campaign slogan during the 2019 Indian general election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headed by Narendra Modi. It was initiated as an opposition to the criticism of the government led by Modi by the opposition following events such as the Balakot airstrike and the Pulwama terror attack. Modi and his BJP turned the tables by having themselves taken the label of Chowkidar and wearing it as a badge of honour in their commitment towards national security. The opposition's narrative, which questioned Modi's honesty and ability to lead, was also directly addressed by the campaign. Modi rewrote the narrative by adopting the word "chowkidar," which his opponents had disparaged, "watchman," thereby highlighting his responsibility as a protector of the interests of the country. The goal of the campaign was to present Modi as a watchful defender against injustice and corruption, inspiring his followers by allowing them to feel invested in this defence effort (Times of India 2019).

Modi discussed his duties as a chowkidar and the associated obligations in a number of videos and advertisements that were part of the campaign. These videos, which emphasised the themes of integrity, commitment, and security, were extensively shared on internet platforms and television media. The chowkidar theme was an important part of several public rallies and events that Modi and other BJP leaders hosted. Testimonials from regular people who discussed their personal experiences of being watchful and proactive in their communities were frequently featured at these gatherings (The Telegraph Online, 2019).

The rallies would help to translate the virtual wave into a physical one. They provided Modi with a platform where he communicated with the people and

reassured them that he is committed to the security and effective governance of this nation. In combination, these campaign strategies helped build a solid and dynamic image of Modi, engaging both modern and traditional media, which enabled the reach of far-reaching voters and established a lasting impression. Modi's political success has been largely attributed to his communication tactics, which have also raised the new standard for political communication in India (Rao, 2020). He has been able to stay politically active and stay in touch with the public sphere by adjusting to new platforms and technologies. All things considered, Modi's political communication tactics have transformed Indian politics, and their effects will be seen for years to come (Economic Times, 2019).

3.16 Media Laws and Constitutional Provisions in India

The media scene in India has developed considerably from the time the Indian State Broadcasting Service began operating on an experimental basis on April 1, 1930, with a budget of 15 lakh rupees . This resulted in the founding of the Control of Broadcasting in March 1935 which paved the way for the future of broadcasting in India. Broadcasting was thus initiated in princely states such as Mysore, Hyderabad, Travancore and Baroda. The Mysore Akashvani Private Radio Station started broadcasting on September 1, 1936 . The name “Akashvani” was subsequently used by All India Radio (AIR), while in Travancore, the Maharaja was interventionist in the field of broadcasting and began transmissions from Trivandrum on March 12, 1943 .

According to Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian Constitution, all citizens of India have the right to free speech and expression. But the conditions of Article 19, Section 2 clarify that this freedom may be limited with reasonable restrictions by the reasons of public order, State security, the harmony, morals, defamation and even prevention of criminal investigation obstruction (Basu, 2020). Article 19(a) of the Constitution of India, which also encompasses the freedom of the press. Of course this freedom is not without limits and can be curtailed for a number of reasons as set out in Article 19(2) for, “reasons including public order, decency, morality, defamation, contempt of court, national security” . This constitutional arrangement

enshrines the freedom of media yet allows for it to be countered by national interests (PRS, 2011). Section 118A The 2020 controversy, Kerala government issued an ordinance in 2020 that inserted a new section 118A in the Kerala Police Act. Under it, a person may be imprisoned up to 5 years, or can be fined up to Rs. 10,000, or both, who may publish threatening, insulting, or defamatory statements in any manner by whatever means through newspaper, television, social media, or on any online portal. The government states that it is an effort to block cyber crimes against individuals, such as women and children (Government of Kerala, Kerala Police Act (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020).

The law, however, has come under overwhelming criticism from media houses, human rights activists, as well as legal professionals. They believed that Section 118A would have had an impact on freedom of press and would be unconstitutional. The 2015 Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal vs Union of India case (Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, 2015) had ruled that an equivalent IT Section 66A of the Act was declared as being unconstitutional. The government scrapped the law after it had come under flak before its full implementation (Mathrubhumi, 2020).

3.16.1 Press Council of India

Indian media law covers advertising, broadcasting, censorship, confidentiality, contempt, copyright, defamation, privacy, telecommunications and more. The State seeks to enact these laws in order to keep the balance between free expression and societal responsibility. Media censorship refers to those instances in which laws are enforced to stop harmful things like hate speech or materials that threaten public order. The Press Council of India (PCI) is a statutory, quasi-judicial, and autonomous body re-established in 1979 under the Press Council Act, 1978 ((Press Council of India, n.d.). Initially constituted in 1966 under the Indian Press Council Act, 1965, the PCI was dissolved during the Emergency and subsequently revived to uphold press freedom and journalistic standards. The Council is composed of a Chairman, who is typically a retired Supreme Court judge, and 28 members representing journalists, newspaper proprietors, news agencies, parliament,

and academia. According to Section 13, its primary objectives are to maintain the independence and ethical standards of the press, review matters affecting news dissemination, and advise the government on media-related legislation. The PCI adjudicates complaints involving the press, issuing warnings or censures in cases of ethical violations, and protects press freedom from external interference. Supported by government grants and newspaper fees, the Council serves as the watchdog of Indian journalism, promoting a balance between press freedom and responsibility. All media in India including print, broadcast, film, and digital come under the purview of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). (Gaur, 1994 & Press Council of India, n.d.).

3.16.2 Legal Provisions

- Press Council of India Act, 1978 - Lays down ethical standards to be followed by the press, preserves freedom of the press, and provides a mechanism for redressal of press ethics-related wrongdoings ((*Press Council of India Act*, 1978)).
- The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, relates to television channels and television broadcasters, and puts in place rules regarding content and programming coverage, as well as advertisements (Government of India Act, 1995).
- Information Technology Act, 2000- Governance of internet content and online communication, and incorporates prescriptions on cyber crimes, unlawful content on the internet, and the liability of the intermediary (*Information Technology Act*, 2000)
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita– It has provisions regarding media activities such as defamation, hate speech, sedition or prohibited publication (*Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita*, 2023)
- In India, the freedom of media is obtained mainly due to the basic right to freedom of speech and expression which is enshrined in Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian Constitution. Yet, this is not an unlimited freedom and is subject

to reasonable limitations mentioned in Article 19(2) such as national security, public order and defamation among others (*Constitution of India*, art. 19(1)(a), art. 19(2)).

3.17 Media Regulations and Democratic Health

While India does not have a single, comprehensive statute exclusively governing the media, media regulation is shaped by the framework of these legislations and laws by a combination of constitutional provisions, statutory laws, judicial pronouncements, and self-regulatory frameworks (Basu, 2020). In India, media workers and owners enjoy the same rights as all other citizens, and there is no separate legal status accorded to them.

The freedom of expression and the effectiveness of the media are generally considered to be the benchmark of a healthy democracy. Freedom of the press is critical to a well-informed citizenry, since it allows citizens to make up their minds by listening to a diverse range of views, especially in a democracy. Control of media content also guarantees that the information provided to the public is fair, accurate, and responsible, thus facilitating participation in the democratic process. It is in this regulation that the media plays a role to ensure that the members of the public can access a wide range of informed voices, particularly around election time.

Censorship laws, although necessary for safeguarding national security and public order, can sometimes overstep their bounds, leading to the suppression of critical journalism. Legal frameworks related to defamation, privacy, and national security must strike a balance to ensure that the media retains its ability to act as a watchdog over the government, while simultaneously preventing the dissemination of harmful content (Ibid).

Indian media law and its regulatory system, which includes important institutions such as the Press Council of India, has been instrumental in shaping India's media landscape. Freedom of Speech and Expression under Indian Constitution is not only an essential freedom in a democracy, but also a right that is constrained and prudent. As India's media continues to grow and diversify,

maintaining a balance between media freedom, ethical practices, and national security will remain vital for upholding democratic values.

3.18 Conclusion

There are numerous techniques for studying the effects of political communication, just as there are various types of media output. However, there is no simple way to determine if a particular approach is effective or not. This section addresses the effectiveness from a broad international scenario perspective for the purpose of clarity. Here, we consider the degree to which political and civil society actors can affect the attitudes and actions of their target audience through deliberate communication strategies, including political advertising and conference speeches. The effects of this can be analysed at two levels: the macro level and the micro level of each individual message recipient. Different people's reactions to political communication are combined to create indicators of the general political will, such as common sense or public opinion polls. Next, we can understand how the increasing significance of mass communication in democratic societies has impacted their political processes and practices. Then, we considered the practical effects of the rise of political communication on developed capitalist nations like the US and the UK. Political communication, already noted, is largely mediated communication, transmitted through the print and electronic media and new media platforms. The media distort the message in their functions as reporters and critics of it. They are, hence, actors in their own right who are political.

CHAPTER 4

MASS MEDIA & PUBLIC SPHERE: THE EXPERIENCE FROM KERALA

4.1 Introduction

The interaction of the mass media and the public domain is the factor which one has to be familiar with in order to understand the dynamics of modern democratic societies. A place where people can converse, exchange ideas and influence public opinion is the public sphere. The mass media, as one of the central information and discourse arteries, plays a great role in shaping this space. Changes in this interaction could have a big impact on social change, democracy, and government. In order to investigate the influence of mass media on the public realm, this study analyses Kerala, a state in India that is well-known for its high literacy rates, active civil society, and progressive socioeconomic indices. According to the 2011 census, the population of Kerala was about 33 million and thus one of the densely populated states in India. The literacy rate of Kerala stands tall at 96.2% the highest in the country and life expectancy is 74 years. The majority of the state lives in the rural section and about two-thirds of the population lives in the rural areas. Most of the population in Kerala is Hindu, with the following groups being Muslims and Christians. The state language is Malayalam, and English is common. Kerala is socially equal to its female colleagues, and the female population is only a bit higher than that of males (Menon et al., 2023).

Kerala's particular socio-political and cultural atmosphere makes it an interesting case study. Kerala provides insightful information about how mass media shapes public opinion because of its long history of social reform movements, politically engaged citizens, and vibrant media landscape. A wide range of print, television, and internet media channels that serve an educated and politically aware public define the state's media landscape. In addition to allowing for a broad range of opinions, media diversity also promotes a vibrant and engaged public sphere.

The television revolution that took place after the 1990s replaced the public sphere with television (Isaac & Chandrasekharan, 2010). The public sphere of Kerala has changed even more when the digital media came into the scene and this has managed to open the door to a greater number of citizens and democratisation of the information. The online news sites, social media and digital forums have emerged as valuable tools of mass mobilisation, activity and participation. These digital platforms have challenged established power structures in the media environment, given voice to under-represented groups, and enabled real-time communication.

Examining how the media has shaped Kerala's public sphere is the goal of this chapter. It aims to comprehend how the state's societal movements, political engagement, and public discourse have been impacted by traditional and digital media. This research will offer a thorough knowledge of the transforming form of public participation in Kerala and its implications for democratic governance and social change by examining the linkages between mass media and the public sphere.

4.2 The Debut of the Printing Press in Kerala

The advent of printing in the Dravidian languages was an important stage in the history of Kerala. It brought about major changes in linguistic purification, cultural awakening and social reform. It shed a new light on scholarly status and public milieu.

Early Introductions to the Printing Press; The printing press designed by the Jesuits at St. Paul's College, Goa, in 1556 is known as the first printing press in Asia. It was originally intended to be taken to Abyssinia in Africa, but was brought to Goa and used to print religious texts in Latin, Portuguese, and Dravidian languages. Later, Henry Henricus, a Jesuit scholar, printed the first Tamil book in Tamil Nadu, Thambiran Vanakam, which was started in Kollam (Map Academy, n.d.). Early investments in printing in Kerala, efforts by Portuguese missionaries extended to Kollam in the late 16th century. The printing press was established in Kochi under the Dutch East India Company in the 1670s, and printed books were printed in Dutch and Malayalam (Jeffrey, 1994; Map et al.).

Benjamin Bailey and the first printing press in Malayalam; The Church Missionary Society's press, established by Benjamin Bailey in Kottayam in 1821, became the first modern machine to start printing Malayalam in Kerala. The printing of the Bible, devotional songs and educational books played an important role in the purification of Malayalam grammar (Kumar, 2003). The print media played a crucial role in the cultural revival of Kerala. The printing press had a profound impact not only on literary works but also on social reform movements, providing a public platform. Print media encouraged people to respond to authority and helped them discuss equality (Bayly, 1999). The introduction of the printing press in Kerala was a synthesis of missionary goals, colonial news, and foreign customs. The efforts of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and Benjamin Bailey marked a historical turning point in the history of Malayalam.

Missionary Impact and Growth of Printing: The activities of most of the missionary organisations present in Kerala were directly associated with the arrival of the printing press. Printing presses were also set up by the Basel mission which worked in the Malabar area. The Basel Mission Press at Mangalore, which was started in 1841 and with a rise in written material, immensely enhanced the availability of Malayalam books and magazines in the region. In line with Jeffrey (1994), the opening of the Basel Mission Press helped to spread educational and religious literature with a view to spreading literacy and use of the Malayalam language in the area. On the same note, Kumar (2003) says that the printing activities at the Basel Mission assisted both in the growth of Christianity as well as in the growth of local literature and journalism in Kerala. Such proliferation of the print materials was an important step in the cultural and intellectual history of the region, important as it was, given that K M George (1968) emphasised the influence the press had in increasing the availability of written materials, not to mention its contribution to the shaping of the realm better known as the sphere of publicity in Kerala.

The local population's literacy rate was raised in large part by the work of missionaries like Hermann Gundert and the Basel Mission. They made printed texts

in the common language accessible, which was essential for the propagation of religious and educational ideas as well as information. According to George (1968), the efforts of these missionaries in making printed materials available in Malayalam were instrumental in promoting literacy among the local population. Jeffrey (1994) supports this by underlining the importance of the mass circulation of these books through the presses set up by Gundert and the inside of the Basel Mission since they helped in educating the people and provided knowledge, both religious as well as secular, in the area.

Hermann Gundert's Role in the First Press; A German scholar, linguist, and German based missionary named Rev. Hermann Gundert is frequently credited with founding Kerala's first printing press in 1846 at Illikkunnu, close to Thalassery. He arrived in Kerala in 1839 as a missionary of the Basel Mission. The entrance of Gundert in Kerala was a pivotal moment in the intellectual and cultural history of the area. He made significant and wide-ranging contributions to Malayalam journalism, education, and literature.

Learning the language gave Gundert a complete understanding of the culture of the Malayalam language. His attraction to the Malayalam language motivated him to make a huge collection of published materials that contributed to the development of the language. His greatest contribution was the first Malayalam newspaper called *Rajyasamacharam*, published in 1847. Being the pioneer of organised journalism in the state, the publication can be seen as a landmark work in the media history of Kerala. *Rajyasamacharam*, besides being a newspaper, was also a platform where ideas, news and religious teachings were publicised. It was essential in enlightening the local populace and building a feeling of community among Malayalam speakers (Zachariah, 2001; Jeffrey, 2000).

Gundert published a number of books and magazines in addition to *Rajyasamacharam* that enhanced Malayalam literature. He published a complete Malayalam to English dictionary and a grammar of the Malayalam titled *Grammar of the Malayalam*, which are the main references in the study of the language (Menon, 1967; George, 1968). The analytical nature of Gundert in approaching the

Malayalam language helped in the standardisation of the language and making it more accessible to the learner and the native speakers. He was also dogged in education which was evidenced by his efforts on founding schools and promoting community literacy which set him as one of the major players in Kerala history in terms of intellectual life (Jeffrey, 1994).

Apart from his contributions to literature and education, Gundert's journalism work left a lasting impression on Kerala's public sphere. The region's heritage of critical and independent journalism was established by Rajyasamacharam (Published as a Magazine), and it would develop and strengthen over the ensuing decades. His efforts to syndicate the printed news and information to the people of the region were very instrumental in creating an engaged and informed population and the vestiges of his initiative continues to fashion the vibrant media landscape of Kerala to date (Menon, 1967).

Standardisation of Malayalam; Similar to numerous other Indian regional languages, Malayalam has a restricted and disjointed literary heritage prior to the invention of the printing press. Manuscripts were written by hand and shared only within small, frequently privileged groups, which restricted access to information and literature. This dynamic was altered by the introduction of the printing press by missionaries such as Rev. Hermann Gundert in the mid-19th century, which made printed literature widely accessible. The standardisation of the Malayalam language depended heavily on this process (Menon, 2007; Jeffrey, 1994).

The language received great help in the codification of the language with the first Malayalam-English dictionary and the encyclopedic grammar book Malayala Bhasha Vyakaranam of Gundert, 1872 and 1851, respectively. As indicated by Gundert (1989) and Menon (2007), the works provided a standard way of writing and speaking in Malayalam which was later adopted by institutions of learning and which influenced the rest of the literary world at large. For instance, the dictionary was widely used by Malayalam speakers as well as those studying the language, while the "Malayalabhasha Vyakaranam" established the grammar norms of the language and became a fundamental text in schools. The standardized printed

materials made it easier for literacy to spread because they offered tools for language learning that were consistent, allowing individuals in Kerala to acquire and use the language in the identical way regardless of where they lived (Jeffrey, 1994).

Encouragement of Social and Political Concepts; Kerala's social and political awakening was greatly aided by the printing press, even beyond its impact on language and literature. Following the invention of the press, newspapers and magazines proliferated and offered forums for the discussion of political movements, caste issues, and social reform. The availability of the reformist thoughts through the printed word was useful in spreading the causes, such as the struggle for Indian freedom and the struggle against caste discrimination. Jeffrey (2000) states that the mushrooming of newspapers and periodicals in Kerala gave publicity to the much-needed critical communication platform and disseminated political and social ideas. Sreedhara Menon (1967) goes on to support his argument that the availability of print materials contributed to the galvanisation of social reform movements in that it made information and ideologies on social reforms available to the masses, which helped catalyse the social-political transformation process in Kerala. Also, according to Thomas (1993), the press favoured the transference of nationalist and anti-caste ideals in the struggle to provide freedom to the Indian nation at large as well as the battle to end social injustices in Kerala. Media such as magazines, such as Rajyasamacharam, and even the subsequent newspapers, such as Malayala Manorama and Mathrubhumi, helped generate the support of the masses as well as spread a feeling of community among the Malayali masses. Not only did these newspapers report the news, they also printed opinion pieces and editorial pieces which both questioned the status quo and promoted social and political involvement.

The printing press had a long-lasting effect on the Malayalam language and literature. It established the groundwork for the growth of a strong literary heritage that is still thriving today. The role of the press in standardising and popularising the language also played an important role in preserving the linguistic heritage of the Malayalam language and the ability to develop and evolve to fit into the new world.

Besides, Malayalam literature is an active and meaningful feature of the cultural identity of Kerala because the press helped to stimulate literacy and discussion in the population.

4.3 Early Newspapers Role Shaping Public Sphere and Public Opinion in Kerala

The first Kerala newspaper, Rajyasamacharam, began operations in the mission church porch in Illikunnu, Thalassery, in the month of June 1847. Distributed in the form of a magazine, it was published between June 1847 and December 1850, with 42 issues. In royal size, there were six pages, and in certain instances, eight pages. It can be assumed that the subscriptions were given out without charge because they are not recorded. A printing press that resembles a cyclostyle machine is called a 'kalach'. The name of the editor was not noted. The introduction reads: *'if you read this poem, you will not know the meaning. It is not our opinion to preach the special things that will happen in each country. It is not necessary to think that the new daughter of the Malayalam kingdom is going to be announced. Our kingdom is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. It is not unique to Malayalam and Bharathkhanda. The King Jesus Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies. We have thought it good to report some of this news for the sake of the King and the happiness of the Subjects. God bless you.'* (Jayaraj, 2013).

Similar to this, numerous magazines that were newspapers were launched in Kerala at different locations. They were Paschimodayam 1847 October, Njananikshepam 1848 November 1 (the treasury of knowledge), Paschima Tharaka 1864 August (westernstar); it was the newspaper published without the influence of Missionaries in Kerala. Sandishtavadhi 1867 and Sathyanadhakahalam 1876 were other main influential newspapers in Malayalam. When the press was introduced, versions of Malayalam, such as Arabimalayalam, Suriyani-Malayalam, and Aryanezhuthu/modern-Malayalam, were seen to be associated with different communities. The varied community and religious orientations of Malayalam were reflected in the newly emerging Malayalee public sphere (Babu, C. T. S, 2022). Newspapers are daily publications that record current events. Journalism is the act of

collecting and publishing news. In addition to communicating news, it is also a powerful means of propagating ideas. They reflect all the emerging fields of knowledge in the world, and the knowledge gained through them is tangible, so periodicals can also be called the mirror of the world (Sam, 2003).

Based on the duration, publications can be classified as weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, quadrennial, and semi-annual. But based on the purpose of publication, they can be divided into religious, community, scientific, educational, political, and literary. *Rajyasamacharam*, *Jnananikshepam*, *Sathyanathakahalam*, *Nasrani*, and *Deepika* are newspapers that prioritise the ideas and propagation of Christianity. It can be seen that *Aryasidhanthakaumudi*, *Vidyavilasini*, *Aryakesari*, *Sadhguru*, *Sanathanadharmam*, etc., were popularising Hindu principles and Islamic principles, such as *Kerala Deepika* (Sam, 2003).

Before independence, British rule was in Malabar, and kingdom rule was in Travancore and Cochin in Kerala. The public consciousness of Malayali, the public sphere, was formed through the exchange of information through the press and through the revival work, with the help of libraries, telegrams, post office services, schools, etc. However, in Kerala, which was under state rule and the caste-communal system, many crises have been created in the evolution of the public sphere. Many sections have been excluded in this process because it is history that many sections were denied admission to educational institutions on the basis of caste. With the help of lightning, Christian missionary work, Western scientific advancement, books, knowledge, etc., and the work of social reformers, public consciousness, social thought, and critical thinking began to grow. It also raised opposing voices among the elite (Thomas, 2012).

Newspaper publications and the involvement of missionaries led to people's discussions in the villages. The first editions of newspapers contained news with religious morality or advice. However, from the end of the nineteenth century, they began to change, leading to criticism, awareness, and new ideas. Reading communities were in the public sphere, and in the end, they became places where people gathered, such as workplaces, markets, and public transport, and led to

discussions. Changes began when missionaries and the British administration started English education and schools. The independence of missionary work is evident because educational institutions were called "*pallikoodam*". With the spread of newspapers, the nature of the newspaper began to change at the beginning of the twentieth century. Political journalism began by bringing the Malayalee people, who were scattered across caste, religion, class and nation, to public consciousness. Most newspaper editors and newspaper owners had English education and the opportunity to collect more information, and since they had received from the West, their newspapers began to grow with a sense of criticism, secular thinking, and scientific consciousness; it was the morality and responsibility of the newspapers (Kalesh, 2019).

It can be said that the independent newspaper had already started till the last quarter of the 19th century. Malayalam newspapers started coming forward to give shape to the ideological aspirations of the citizens, advocate forcefully for civil rights, and sharply criticise the misdeeds of the rulers (Raghavan, 1985). It is noteworthy that the general nature of newspapers in the late nineteenth century was such that some community or literary and cultural organisation was behind almost all of them. The beginning of the twentieth century saw revolutionary changes in the periodical publishing industry, due to the transformations that took place in the social, political and cultural arenas. It was a time when people had to organise communally. That is how organisations like SNDP (1903) and Ganaka Mahasamajam (1913) came into existence. The rise of one community became a guide for other communities. The installation of the Narayana Guru Shivalinga at Aruvippuram in 1888 was a serious challenge for the Brahmins. It was the beginning of a social revolution in Kerala. Ignoring the oppression of upper caste communities, newspapers and magazines became a means for backward communities to move forward, fight for their survival, highlight their weaknesses, and gain rights.

As a result, many newspapers began to be published, representing different communities. Similarly, it is clear that the upper castes also relied on newspapers and magazines to convey their position to society. Almost all the sections had

publications, except those who could not get modern education and who were not organised. Also, with the introduction of English education, it was clearly visible in newspapers and magazines, and it can be assumed that it was during this period that information on various branches of Western knowledge began to be available.

The First World War was an important event during this period (1913-1919). The newspapers of this period gave information about it, which increased the interest of the people in newspapers. Another political event was the Indian National Congress session held in Banaras, which was divided into two groups, moderates and extremists. The newspapers also gave their positions on both sides. Moorkothukumaran started a Malayalam newspaper called 'Mithavadi' in 1907, which is an example of this. Later, this newspaper became the mouthpiece of the Thiya community. The 'Swadeshi' magazine, started by K. Raman Menon in Kumaranallur, was a newspaper published in the name of the Swadeshi movement. Similarly, 'Kerala Patrika' (1884) by Chengulath Kunjirama Menon, 'Mathrubhumi' (1923) by K. P. Kesava Menon, etc., were started in connection with the national movement (Sam, 2003).

4.4 Media Ethics and their Role in Political Communication of Kerala

Two giants of the Kerala press, Kesari Balakrishna Pillai and Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, are the most well known names in press history as far as their contribution to the ethics of the press and their struggle towards journalistic dignity in the early 20th century. Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai (1878–1916); Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai (1878–1916) is considered the *Father of Political Journalism in Kerala*, and most celebrated journalists, recognised for his fearless, reformist approach to journalism, best known for his role as the editor of *Swadeshabhimani*, a nationalist newspaper. He was a Western-educated journalist, and his career is a landmark in Kerala's history of press freedom and media ethics (Sahadevan, 2015). Ramakrishna Pillai was an uncompromising advocate of free speech and fearless journalism, qualities that earned him the title "Swadeshabhimani" (meaning 'patriot'). The newspaper *Swadeshabhimani* was founded by Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi in 1905 and

came under Pillai's editorial leadership from 1906 to 1910. During this period, the newspaper became a strong voice for justice and reform, fearlessly exposing corruption and criticising the administration of Travancore, particularly targeting the then Diwan, P. Rajagopalachari. Pillai's bold writings helped *Swadeshabhimani* gain a wide readership, making it a platform that mobilised public opinion in favor of progressive political and social movements in Kerala.

Ramakrishna Pillai's journalistic philosophy was defined by a commitment to truth and integrity. He considered journalism as a tool of social change and political responsibility, focusing on the freedom of the press and openness in public administration. Responsible governance, social equality, and the protection of the rights of citizens were covered in his editorials and investigative articles. A collection of his writings and thoughts composed by other people appeared in the book *Vrithantha Pathrapravarthanam* (1912) which remained a classic on journalism and media ethics as an introductory book. His intellectual interests were wide as he also wrote *Balakalesham* (1912), which was a critique on society and politics. Despite this, his legacy endured, with thinkers like Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai later praising his work as foundational to political journalism in Kerala. Kesari described Ramakrishna Pillai as a visionary who upheld the ideals of a free press as a pillar of democracy, comparing his contributions to that of global pioneers in journalism (Sahadevan, 2015).

In his editorials published in *Swadeshabhimani*, he unveiled the network between the holders of power and the looters in the state and demanded transparency and equal justice in the government. He adopted the idea that the press has a moral duty to dissent even against the might and express the voice of the people, particularly in the time of colonial oppression and dictatorship (Pillai, 2018). His biting criticism of the government in 1910 saw a historic event when the Travancore government seized the *Swadeshabhimani* press and Ramakrishna Pillai together with this press was arrested and exiled out of Travancore (Menon, 1967). This event brought to the fore the fact that the government did not tolerate a free press and the episode added to the legend that Ramakrishna Pillai was a martyr to journalistic

freedom. Kesari Balakrishna Pillai (1889-1960) was a first-generation journalist, critic and editor and was important in spreading modern journalistic ideals in Kerala. And he was the founder and editor of the Malayalam weekly *Kesari*, which was fearless in its criticism of evils affecting society and politics (Sahadevan, 2015). The journalism of *Kesari* was highly influenced by the moral conviction that the press was to act as the voice of the voiceless and the powerless, marginalised, rather than act in the best interest of the powerful. In his view of media ethics, Balakrishna Pillai considered that the press had the duty to spread awareness in the country, promote democratic ideals and democratise intellectual thought (Pillai, 2018). He also underscored the importance of fair reporting and spoke strongly against sensationalism. His winning arguments usually revolved around things like emphasised corruption, discrimination between the casts, and mismanagement of resources by the government and made the government responsible in front of people (Nair, 2002).

Kesari developed a sense of accountability and ethics on Malayalam journalism which is the foundation of another generation of journalists to come up with. This sense of accountability and justice was introduced through Balakrishna Pillai. His offensive attitude and critical remarks, although not always popular, were honoured with his stand on great moral ground towards truth and justice (Nair, 2002). Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai who brought political thoughts and social movements to the forefront in Travancore. The newspaper *Kesari* was his main medium, which played a major role in the crises and movements of the 1930s. When *Kesari* was started in 1930, it started its work as a magazine. *Kesari* attached great importance to freedom of expression and the welfare of the people. The articles published in the newspaper provided a platform for political and social thoughts and analysis along with mere news. He has repeatedly emphasised that freedom of the press is a fundamental element of democracy and that laws that restrict it violate the people's rights. It strongly criticised the legislative reforms in Travancore and the imperialist traditional approaches to power. He stated that the legislative reforms in Travancore in 1932 had weakened the power of the House of Representatives and that it was only a tool to increase tensions between communities. He raised issues of

lack of representation, untouchability, criticism of the Travancore administration, and the problems faced by workers and peasants. In his article "To the Maharaja" (1931), he urged the king to implement some of the people's expected reforms. The values of the Kesari were freedom of expression and popular representation. The paper's contribution was highly relevant in setting the tone for democratic movements in Travancore and efforts to end social and communal discrimination.

Deepika and Ethical Concern: In 1939, to portray the newspaper as more "secular," the word Nazrani was dropped from the newspaper's name. Yet, Deepika's readership remained limited to Syrian Catholics who were mostly prosperous traders and land-owning farmers. After India's independence in 1947, Deepika opposed Kerala's newly elected Communist government to defend the "rights" of these farmers to cultivate paddy in reserved forests, which they acquired during the shortage of food grains in the Second World War. In 1961, the newspaper also showed support to farmers who were evicted to build a hydro-electric dam in Idukki district. Partly because it was focused on community and agricultural issues. Deepika was also the first Malayalam-language newspaper to start a digital edition, in 1997 (Paul & Alex, 2022).

The concept of a melting solid serves as a metaphor to illustrate the nature of contemporary Malayalam journalism. It also symbolises the various ice ages one undergoes in the evolution of Malayalam media culture going through modernity to post modernity. Malayalam journalism appeared with vigor that was politicised by concern for nation, language, and self, all parts of literacy awareness inculcated due to modernisation education. The modernisation movement that started in the nineteenth century crystallised many forms such as Malayalee identity, Keralite culture, Indian nationalism, scientific rationalism, and humanism, culminating into a cohesive Kerala society regardless of political, caste and religious differences. The journalist and newspaper played a critical role in fostering world awareness, leading to the formation of a democratic society (Rajasekharan, 2019).

4.5 The Evolution of Radio Broadcasting

Broadcasting is a unique art form that, once transmitted, reaches the ears and hearts of the people in real-time, with little opportunity for review or repetition. Unlike other forms of media, such as print or television, radio broadcasts are ephemeral and can only be revisited through rebroadcasts or personal recordings, which are not always a common practice (Prabhakaran, 2016). This inherent limitation, however, did not deter the role of radio as a crucial medium for political communication and public engagement, particularly in the context of India and Kerala (Hybrid Media Services, 2023).

In India, radio has been very instrumental in the sharing of local, domestic and foreign news and sharing of cultural and social programs. India, the National Radio network Akashvani, became an essential subject of daily routine, and the network streamed through homes, tea shops, as well as other community places (Sujoko, Rahmiati, & Rahman, 2023). The station was more of a source of information, as it was a method of political communication. In the early days, the government-owned station was the source of information, particularly for political events, where people could hardly get other opinions in the newspapers and on television. The broadcasting of the historic speech of Jawaharlal Nehru, the eve before the 14th August 1947, the dawn of independent India, i.e. 'A Tryst with Destiny', became one of the memorable moments in India radio history. It was a breakthrough in terms of radio as a means of national integration and political propagation (Baruah, 2017).

At the time of India's partition, there were only six radio stations—Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Thiruchirappalli, and Lucknow—while those in Lahore, Peshawar, and Dacca became part of Pakistan. Following the integration of the princely states, radio stations in Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Thiruvananthapuram, and Baroda joined the All India Radio (AIR) network, under the newly established Ministry of Information and Broadcasting led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In the first two Five-Year Plans, AIR expanded significantly, reaching 55 per cent of India's population. In 1957, AIR was renamed to become formally Akashvani or

Voice from the Sky, the name that symbolised its evolution into a national broadcaster (Baruah, 2017). The next important landmark in political communication with Akashvani was 1977, when political parties were allowed to go on air through AIR. With this development, the radio became a platform through which the major political parties could address the electorate with electioneering messages as well as communicate their political messages to the masses. Indian political parties also started to use the power of the radio as a resource to reach voters directly, particularly in the rural and remote segments of the country, where access to TV and newspapers was not high (Baruah, 2017).

The history of radio in Kerala starts on 12th March, 1943, when the then Maharaja of Travancore, Balarama Varma, started the formation of a radio station in Kerala, which was called Travancore Radio. The original installation was small, with a small number of facilities and equipment, and was done in Thiruvananthapuram. The station was operated under Kerala University with initial broadcasts taking place at Bhakthavilasam Bungalow on 1st April, 1950. Over the years, this station became part of the All India Radio network. The station had its 60th anniversary on 1st April, 2010, and this is one of the landmarks in the long and powerful history of the station (Kunhikrishnan et al., 2000). Akashvani network spread in Kerala by opening the Kozhikode station on 14th May, 1950. In 1971, a medium-wave transmitter at Alappuzha greatly increased the broadcast range of Akashvani Thiruvananthapuram, carrying its programmes regionally and beyond. With the establishment of Thrissur radio station in 1956, FM broadcasting in Kochi, Devikulam, Kannur, Manjeri and Thiruvananthapuram came later in other decades (Yasmin, 2021). Although with the emergence of television in the 1980s and an increasing urban culture, the ascendancy of radio started deteriorating, the discovery of FM radio revived the media. The emergence of private FM stations, in particular, revitalised Akashvani, as listeners once again found local and national news programs as well as cultural shows accessible. This revival allowed Akashvani to reclaim some of its former glory, continuing to serve as a political communication tool (Kunhikrishnan et al., 2000).

Until now, Akashvani has been an active player in the business of political communication in a country like India, especially at the time of elections. The radio provided a platform within which the central government spread political messages and spoke to the nation concerning important issues. The democratisation of the medium came early when the political parties were first allowed to use Akashvani beginning in 1977. Radio was perfectly suited to be a medium through which the political leaders could talk directly to the people, particularly at elections in rural parts where the level of literacy was lower and television coverage was scanty. Akashvani became a powerful political tool for both the government and opposition parties, allowing them to broadcast political ideologies, manifestos, and rallies. Drama was the political party's main political communication tool, which aired in akashvani, '*Ningalenne Communistakki*', '*adukalayil ninnu arangathek*' were the main examples of that and radio broadcasting has played a major role in social education because it broadcast from the infancy mode of India and Kerala (Prabhakaran, 2016).

In Kerala the effect of radio on political communication was also very high. The option of local political leaders to use Akashvani services to send political rallies and speeches enabled them to approach the voters on a personal level. Radio was a most suitable medium of political outreach because of the geographical diversity and the vast rural population in the state. The programme '*Vayalum Veedum*' helped the farmers with information about the agricultural field, and fishermen also depended on the radio for weather conditions in the sea. Despite its importance, Akashvani's role in political communication faced challenges, particularly from government control. In 2016, the information ministry ruled that the Akashvani news section would only be aired in capital centres, which was considered an endeavour to indirectly centralise power over information. This was a move that ended in a mass protest and its subsequent withdrawal, showing the importance that Akashvani still has in understanding democracy through discourse and rippling voices of the people. The development of radio broadcasting in India, and more so by Akashvani, has shown the same development of the nation in the race to democracy and political communication. Radio has not only been the channel

of news and enjoyment but also an effective method of political communication that has been used to form the public sphere. The role of radio in the politics of Kerala was crucial especially in the rural community. It developed the news listening culture since the media was readily available then. Even in the face of newer media forms, radio has still been finding its way back to political communications with the revival of FM radio. It could be seen that the radio had become an important source of news for the people. Akashvani was a government-controlled institution. Therefore, we can understand that radio was mainly used to get information. Because the various political stands available through newspapers and television are less available here. Then, mainly drama broadcasts were used by political parties to spread their political stands.

4.6 Television Broadcasting

Konstantin Persky is a scientist who made a breakthrough in the history of television. The term "television" was first used in scientific terminology in his paper "Television by Means of Electricity", which he presented at the International Electricity Congress held at the Paris Expo in 1900. The word television is a combination of the Greek word "tele" (meaning distance) and the Latin word "visio" (meaning viewing), so its full meaning is viewing from a distance. Although Persky's contributions were philosophical, they inspired many future scientists and inventors to lay the foundation for the practical form of television technology. Many scientists, including John Logie Baird, Philo Farnsworth, and Vladimir Zworkin, developed these beginnings in the future (Abramson, 1987; Burns, 1998).

The history of television in India dates back to the early 1950s. The Government of India started the first experimental television broadcast in Delhi on 15 September 1959, under the auspices of the Indian National Radio and Television Committee (INCORT). The first television programmes were broadcast on a very limited scale, mainly for government educational purposes (broadcasted twice in a week). Initially, television was available mainly in Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. The television station was delinked from AIR and it became 'Doordarshan' under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting established in Delhi in 1976. It expanded

to other cities in the 1970s and began regular broadcasting. Initially, television programmes were mostly limited to educational, cultural, and news programmes, and in 1982, colour television was introduced in India, coinciding with the Asian Games in Delhi. Satellite television also started in India during this period, but it was only in the 1990s that private television channels entered the market, which also brought about a major change in Indian media. Cable television entered India in the 1990s, creating a major revolution in television consumption in India and DD news (24x7) started only in 2003. (Rajagopal, 2001; Mehta, 2008).

The history of television in Kerala began a little later than in other parts of India. The first television service in Kerala was launched by Doordarshan in 1981. Based in Thiruvananthapuram, this government-run Doordarshan service broadcast for only a few hours in its early years. In the next few years, Doordarshan Malayalam was launched as a local channel in 1982 (Malayalam language-based broadcasting began in 1985). This channel played a crucial role in introducing news, entertainment and educational programmes in the Malayalam language to the public. The real change in television in Kerala began in the early 1990s with the entry of private channels. Once Asianet was introduced in 1991 as the first privately owned television in Kerala, a new era of Malayalam television started. The success of Asianet was followed by the success of other local channels, e.g. Surya TV (1998); Kairali TV (1998), which in turn created massive changes in the media scenario of Kerala. These private channels broadcast a mix of entertainment, news and cultural programmes, and cable television was widely available in homes in Kerala until the late 1990s. This development created a cultural revolution in media consumption, providing a platform for Malayalam culture, politics and regional issues.

Television in Kerala proved to be not just an effective entertainment medium but also the means of forming the opinion of the population, affecting politics, and stimulating a sense of identity in the region. Channels have created several programmes in Malayalam which make people more attached to their language and culture. Over the years, the rapid growth of digital platforms and satellite channels has affected the media system in Kerala, creating major changes in the competition

among local channels, which now maintain a strong presence on television and online. The history of television in India and television in Kerala captures the general patterns in the technology revolution, cultural evolution and development of the media industry. The television broadcasting in Kerala, starting with the modest transmissions of the Doordarshan to the local media environment, represents how Kerala has developed its own particular media course, based on national and local factors. The fact that television combines the technical features of radio and press communication makes it different from the two above, and makes them technologically obsolete, is important in the transformation phase of mass media.

4.7 TV Channels Functions in Political Communication

Some of the most notable effects of Malayalam news television service included bringing live political dramas to the people. These debates brought on board the representatives of various political parties to talk about burning issues and gave an instant to what was happening. As an example, in the election campaigns, the news channels provided debates where candidates of the opposing parties discussed major problems. This format introduced political speech out of the closed rooms, where the parties held a meeting or assembly, to the lives of common citizens in their living rooms. It is in these debates that the citizens became more involved in the political process. Traditional media only welcomed editorialised views, but live television promoted free dialogue between different opinions, and the viewers were capable of experiencing the spontaneity of the politicians as well as their reactions in person.

Television has initiated drastic changes in the electoral process of Kerala. News channels in Malayalam broadcast live elections and exit polls that proved to be a favourite during state and general elections. Television news channels such as Manorama News and Asianet began comprehensive pre-election programming involving expert commentaries, panel discussions and viewer polls. The importance of exit polls emerged especially when it comes to the setting of public opinion and even the tendency to vote. With this, political leaders were forced to be more tactical

not only in responding to street demonstrations but also in defining messages that would pass across on television.

The greater competition among channels led to the slow but progressive escalation of the level of sensationalism. Certain channels started to frame political problems in a more dramatic or controversial way, and in many cases, they shouted divisive political messages. Although the practice made television more popular, it also influenced the process of the perception of political issues. The element of sensationalism might distort the image of the politician or political party and form perceptions based on sensation and not intellect. Meanwhile, the political leaders were being chased to be ever present in the media by the 24-hour news cycle. Political communication became more rapid and reactive, with politicians needing to respond quickly to news stories and scandals that were amplified by television.

Television emergence also ushered the stage of what is referred to as media trials, political scandals that were probed and discussed in the news networks long before proceedings got to the courts. Malayalam news channels played a quasi-investigative journalism role where the politicians and the government officials were questioned on corruption and governance. In the most high-profile cases, such trials in the media formulated the popular perception, and in certain cases, such trials even impacted the results of official investigations. Television also had the ability to affect a political scandal more widely and quickly than ever, and such capability introduced media as a dynamic in Kerala politics.

Private channels like Asianet and Surya TV were instrumental in shifting the focus of television from being a purely entertainment-driven medium to one that also engaged with news, politics, and social issues. Asianet news channel started in 2001, but as a 24/7 news channel broadcasting in 2003. Sherry (2005) asserts that the entry of regional satellite channels has brought in more localisation of the contents that help broadcasters to appeal to the cultural and language identity of Kerala. The shows were format-wise marketed according to the taste and preferences of the domestic audience and mixed entertainment and information.

For example, Asianet launched its political talk shows, such as *Nere Chovve*, which soon became highly popular among the politically conscious Malayali audience. This reflects how television catered to a population already engaged with political discourse through print media, particularly newspapers. Surya TV, among other channels, came up with similar programs where people got space to debate and analyse political matters. So by doing this, television turned into an important medium of the middle class, which was not only trained to be consumers of entertainment but also played a role in the socio-political discourse of the state. The political engagement exhibited in Kerala paved the way for television to become a major source of information sharing and opinion building. Unlike in the print media, television presented a dynamic and easily available form of political communication. It gave a visual aspect to news and argument, which made news and argument more engaging to the audience. Debates and investigative journalism programs became staples of Malayalam television, with channels competing to offer credible and critical content.

Television, as an extension of the public sphere, aligned with Jürgen Habermas' (1989) concept of the public sphere as a space where citizens could engage in rational-critical debate. In Kerala, shows like *Mukha Mukham* and *Politricks* on the Kairali TV and Indiavision, respectively and evening debate (*Anthi Churcha*) had a similar impact as they provided a platform where professionals, politicians and common people would discuss the burning issues of that time. These programs offered viewers a chance to see political leaders questioned on live television, creating a more interactive and transparent political culture. But the agenda or the subject of discussion vested in the media.

In the News Broadcasting industry, the advent of Indiavision; Indiavision was the first 24-hour Malayalam news channel in Kerala and was launched by politician M.K. Muneer, a Kerala Indian Union Muslim League, with the help of media professionals in the year 2003. The channel was a milestone in the media history in the state as a transition was witnessed in the state towards exclusive news programming in Malayalam. Prior to its creation, the news section used to be an

element in the line-up of general entertainment television networks like Doordarshan and Asianet. With this 24-hour news channel, one was able to have constant and real-time updates, with breaking news, political changes and social aspects being discussed in more detail. Indiavision also contributed to defining the benchmark of news broadcasting in Malayalam, which focused more on real-time coverage, investigative reporting, and discourse on live debates, filming television as the vehicle of political activism as well as social critique. For example, Indiavision gained prominence with its live revelations about the Ice cream parlour sex scandal in 2004, and the 2004 Indian general elections and the 2006 Kerala Assembly elections. Indiavision provided extensive, around-the-clock election coverage, which included live discussions, interviews with political leaders, and real-time results analysis. It is this holistic nature of conduct on the election news that even later shaped the methodology in the coverage of political news by other channels such as Asianet News, Manorama News, and contributed to making the level of news journalism in the state more competitive and of a better standard.

Strengthening the role of the television in the world of politics; being purely a news channel, Indiavision also helped in democratising the political discourse in Kerala. Political leaders, activists and scholars were given a platform in this channel and thus there were numerous opinions that could be expressed. Newsnight was the kind of program that positioned important political discussions and specialised intellectual comments in the drawing rooms of Keralites. These programs used to address very sensitive political and social issues and provided a critique on how the government was handling issues as well as a look at the issues affecting people and also the way parties were handling issues which then brought a more informed citizen. In addition, many political scandals as well as controversies were uncovered through the investigative reporting of Indiavision putting responsibility in the political process of Kerala. Its negative coverage gave it an edge in the market amongst the viewers of other channels interested in serious news, as most of the channels were entertainment-oriented.

Public Participation and Regional Identity; Kerala's regional identity was also greatly influenced by Indiavision's reportage on state-specific issues, cultural issues, and local events. The channel's localised focus made it easier to connect with typical Malayali viewers, who felt that the topics and debates broadcast on the channel represented them. The focus on local topics additionally contributed to the establishment of Malayalam television news as an alternative to national news networks, which frequently ignored local problems in favour of national stories. This kind of local, real-time reporting established trust between the channel and the people of Kerala, further entrenching television's role as a medium for public engagement and social action.

News Channels Diversification and Competition; The popularity of Indiavision paved the way for the establishment of more news channels in Kerala, including Manorama News (2006), Kairali People TV (which debuted as Kairali TV but changed its name to Kairali News in 2012), and Mathrubhumi News (2013). Due to the battle among the channels for a piece of Kerala's expanding television viewership, the media became more diverse. In order to ensure a more pluralistic and balanced media environment, diversification played a crucial role in giving audiences a variety of viewpoints and dismantling media monopolies.

This development in the news market really began when the news channel Indiavision officially entered the news market in 2003, with a more competitive and sensational form of news broadcasting that really changed the Kerala scene in news journalism. Before the existence of Indiavision, the Kerala news had been dominated mostly by All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan, who used a more restrained, more government-preference form of news. The advent of private news channels like Asianet News in 2001 had already begun to change the media scene, but it was Indiavision that fully embraced the national trend of fast-paced, live news coverage, investigative journalism, and more sensational reporting. This allowed viewers to access different political viewpoints, making the public sphere more informed. Individual channels such as the Asianet News and the Manorama News were considered to have a strong tradition in investigative journalism with shows such as

the Cover Story and the '*Parayathe Vayya*' becoming a sensation by reporting scandals in politics and cases of corruption. This has been in line with the national trend of the media as a watchdog with a Kerala-local emphasis on local governance, policies of the region and social problems.

There was more sensationalist reporting as a result of the competition for TRPs that developed among these news networks. For example, news stations provided round-the-clock coverage of events such as the controversial Sabarimala ruling in 2018 or the solar scam involving Kerala's political class, sometimes framing the news in an emotionally charged and dramatic way. This further divided Kerala into political circles and also gave a market to more and more opinions, and this is like the varying composition of the population of the state.

Effects of Politics on the TV News Channels; Kerala is a diverse state and the transformation of the Kerala public sphere regarding the emergence of the television news channels is intermingling with political, social and cultural aspects of the state. With a peculiar combination of political awareness, a large literacy level, and active civil society, Kerala has been the place where TV news channels became the main object in the society. The political affiliations of these channels in the hands of political parties, economic interest groups and ideological groups, however, ensure that they are biased by content, which may influence the shaping of the opinion of the masses. In Kerala, political or ideological affinities frequently impact the ownership and editorial orientation of television news outlets. As a result, there is a fragmented but dynamic public sphere, with different political and social organisations having their own platforms to spread their narratives across the media landscape.

Much of the normative impulse that may have once viewed this as an ideal has also diminished in response to the social realities of late modern civilisation, if the idea of a single, integrated public sphere has. On the grounds of plurality and difference, the objective of bringing all citizens into a single, cohesive public sphere with a single set of cultural and communicative traditions is typically rejected. Citizens who speak in various registers or even languages, or who belong to diverse

groups and cultures, must be able to participate in meaningful ways. Disparities of many kinds, such as location, gender, ethnicity, political orientation and interests, and cultural capital, can call for specific communication spaces. Some organisations might eventually need a private area where they can resolve internal conflicts and/or develop a sense of identity. Last but not least, alternative or counter public spheres—where political currents opposing the prevailing mainstream might find expression and support—must be considered (cf. Fenton & Downey, 2003; Asen & Brouwer, 2001). Habermas focus on the bourgeois public sphere prompted the initial formulation of these in terms of class ("the proletarian public sphere"; see Negt & Kluge, 1993). The concept was later expanded upon by Fraser (1992), in least with regard to feminist horizons.

Kerala has long been recognised as a unique case within India due to its high literacy rate, political consciousness, and vibrant public sphere. A number of developments have shaped this public sphere in Kerala; some are the emergence of the print media during the 19th century, and the recent emergence of digital platforms at the beginning of the 21st century. The development of Malayalam news channels marks one important part of the history of the public sphere in Kerala as the establishment of these channels transformed the way the political world communicated and discussed the politics of the state. Asianet which commenced in 1993 was the initial free Malayalam channel out of which a turning point in the background of media in Kerala occurred. The station went on with a mix of entertainment and news material, but its politics program became a smashing hit. This gave way to the existence of other more news based channels and all channels gave 24hr news. With their increasing reach, visibility created influence and popularity among Kerala people, these channels became crucial platforms for political parties, leaders, and activists. The channels offered real-time political debates, election coverage, and breaking news, which transformed the nature of political communication, and these advancements are entirely different from other media that have come before. Political leaders no longer relied solely on party meetings or print media; they used live debates, interviews, and opinion polls on

television to directly reach voters. Malayalam news channels created a space where political discussions became more immediate, dynamic, and at times, contentious.

4.8 Social Reform Movements Impact

Kerala's political history deeply intertwined with its vibrant social reform movements, which laid the foundation for the political consciousness seen in the state today. By the end of the 19th and beginning of the 21st centuries, Kerala was a society frail with inflexible caste pecking orders and social disparities, especially within the princely states of Travancore, Cochin, and the Malabar territory of British India. Such social crusaders as Sree Narayana Guru led movements that openly protested against the hallowed caste system, citing dynamic notions of social equality and social justice. The popular Guru saying, '*Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu*' (One caste, one religion, one God to mankind), propagated unity and equality between the castes, especially to gain a better future for the oppressed groups, such as the Ezhavas. The spiritual message of Sree Narayana Guru was not only revolutionary in terms of spiritual point of view but also, the political implication involved. His programs like the opening up of temples that barred discrimination along caste lines had a huge influence on the prevailing society and triggered the rise in political movements. The movement led by the Guru caused a social enlightenment trend and created a precondition of communal political awareness, which came to notice later in the development of progressive movements in the state.

Another like strand of defiance was spun by Ayyankali who was a social activist and a leader of Dalit Pulaya group. The efforts of Ayyankali in freeing the Dalits in Kerala are immense. His fight against caste oppression, especially his attempt to win educational rights to Dalit children was significant in the social justice fight. Ayyankali defied the discriminatory practices of the day by enrolling Dalit children in schools, even facing violent opposition from upper-caste Hindus. His leadership in organising strikes, such as the 1907 agricultural workers' strike, and his protests against the restrictions on Dalits using public roads, provided early models of political resistance. Caste-based organisations like the Nair Service

Society (NSS) and the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam also formed along with these movements to give a voice to the interests of the Nair community and the Ezhava community, respectively. NSS, because of Mannath Padmanabhan, it was established in 1914 and aimed at integrating the Nair community, enhancing their education, social reforms, and political participation. Conversely, the SNDP Yogam, formed in 1903 by Narayana Guru, aimed at uplifting the position of the Ezhavas, by promoting equal in rights and freedom of education and employment, as well as access to places. Such organisations helped establish a sense of political identity within their communities as they connected social grievances with the bigger political objectives. Their contribution to the political situation in Kerala may be visualised through the way in which such caste-ran organisations changed gradually into the politically centred ones that got involved in the elections and anti-feudal movements of landlords. Incidentally, the greater anti-colonial movement also largely influenced the realm of Kerala politics. The Khilafat Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s, for instance, paved the way to strengthen communality irrespective of caste and religious differences and connected the local issues with the struggle for national independence. The Khilafat Movement was more in the context of the defence of the Ottoman Caliphate, but what appealed to the hearts of Kerala mappila muslims in Malabar was its message against infidelity and foreign domination. However, the movement also led to the eruption of the Mappila Rebellion of 1921. This violent uprising was rooted in both anti-colonial sentiment and longstanding socio-economic grievances of the oppressed Mappila tenant farmers against the upper-caste Hindu landlords. K N Panikkar acknowledges that it acquired a religious tone due to the majority of the oppressed being Muslim. The landlords, being Hindu, and communal mobilisation also occurred (Panikkar, 1989). The Non-Cooperation Movement also enhanced the Kerala political mobilisation by promoting the civil disobedience movement and boycotting British products. These national movements contributed to developing a platform of political unity by the various communities in Kerala especially in caste terms because it united various marginal communities in Kerala under the great umbrella of the freedom struggle. Figures like K. Kelappan

and other Congress leaders actively participated in these movements, laying the groundwork for a politically conscious society that would later embrace socialist and communist ideologies.

The unique political culture of Kerala would later come to be known for the result of the integration of these social reform groups with more general political involvement. This culture combined progressive social views with active political participation. Kerala's collective political consciousness was greatly enhanced by the early movements led by leaders such as Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali, as well as by the collective organisational backing of the NSS and SNDP. The realisation against colonialism in the first half of the 20th century simply solidified this and opened the road to the rest of Kerala politics, such as the rise of socialist and communist parties in the state, and the continued existence of left-leaning governments.

4.9 Leftist Impact

By the 1930s and 1940s, the initial phase of Kerala's renaissance driven by influential socio-religious reform movements had begun to lose momentum. The continuation of this transformative spirit found renewed vigor through socialist and communist ideologies that had taken root within the national movement in Malabar. The mass and class organisation led by the Left caused people to rise up in reaction to economic matters mainly on wages and land reforms. In Malabar they changed the upper peasantry dominated tenancy reform movement into a general agrarian reform movement, a demand that echoed in the south of Kerala too. Concurrently, the Left advanced demands for essential social services and justice, utilised newspapers and journals as vital tools for their campaigns. Village libraries became hubs of nationalist organisation, and school teachers emerged as key political guides for local communities. The anti-caste movement is a significant part of the nationwide list of left actions, which was part of their mobilisation schemes, particularly among agricultural workers in Kuttanad. By the moment of Indian independence, the Left had become the leader in the national movement in Malabar. The armed rebellion of Punnappra-Vayalar also fortified the Left wings in southern

Kerala that is the source of a swift sprouting of Left politics in the 1950s and 1960s. The left regimes that followed in Kerala subsequently turned out to be extremely useful in encouraging social sectors and activities and welfare (Isaac & Tharakan, 1995).

The left-wing movement that broke out in Kerala and the grouping of the Communist Party of India (CPI) were regarded as the decisive moments of the political, social and economic directions of Kerala. The disconsolate social and economic conditions that affected the people, especially the peasants and the labourers who were brutally exploited by the feudal as well as the colonial authorities, resulted in the early political activism in Kerala. The origin of the leftist movement in Kerala could be traced to various workers and peasants uprisings e.g. Kayyur uprising (1943), Karivellur uprising (1946) and uprising in Punnappra-Vayalar (1946), all of which revealed the suppressed frustrations of the working-people, the peasants. Major characteristics of these movements were resistance to feudal landlords, colonialism and were key in preconditioning the communist movement in the state. The anti-colonial struggle in India was strongly associated with the Kerala leftist movement. Most of the leaders in the early communist movement were in the Indian National Congress and took part in the movement's struggle. However, they diverged in their focus on issues related to class struggle, workers' rights, and land reforms, which were often sidelined by the Congress's broader nationalist agenda. The Communist Party's emphasis on Marxist ideologies gave voice to the landless peasants, agricultural labourers, and factory workers, who were essential to Kerala's economy but historically marginalised (Sreedhara, 2011).

The official start of the Communist Party in Kerala in the year 1939 after it was formed nationwide in the year 1925 was a very prominent step within the political history of the Indian state. The CPI quickly became popular in Kerala due to its firm rural organisation especially in the South, which advocated the rights of the agricultural labourers and the tenant farmers. The party's focus on organising the labour class through trade unions and cooperative societies resonated with the

masses, leading to widespread mobilisation against feudal landlords and British colonial rule.

The Punnapra-Vayalar uprising; One of the most significant peasant-worker revolts in Kerala's history, further solidified the CPI's presence in the state. The rebellion was directed towards the oppressive policies of the Travancore princely state that was on a mission to establish a separate independent kingdom outside the Indian Union. Although violently suppressed, the uprising was the indicator of the increasing power of communist thoughts and mass movement. It became a symbol of resistance against authoritarian rule and economic exploitation, helping the CPI garner widespread support across Kerala.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad and the 1957 Communist Government; The political success of this early straggling was realised in 1957 when the Communist Party, led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, won the first ever democratically elected Communist Government in the world. The electoral success of the CPI marked a milestone in international politics as the nation with the one-party system peacefully shifted violence-free complete power authority to a Marxist regime in a peaceful, democratic manner. The Namboodiripad government, once in power, embarked forthwith on a programme of enacting reforms of progressive nature, especially in the field of land redistribution and education (EMS, 1966).

Land Reforms and Social Equity; The biggest legacy left by the first communist government was the Land Reforms Act of 1963, which was produced to oust landlordism and redistribute the land to tenant farmers. The act was successful in breaking up the feudal system of landholding which had systematically subjugated the major parts of the rural populace. The government allowed the tillers to have rights in the land, this minimised economic disparity and the agricultural workforce built up economic authority in the rural economy (T. J. 1982).

Educational Reforms and the Kerala Model; In addition to land reforms, the 1957 communist government laid the foundation for what is today known as the "Kerala Model" of development, characterised by high levels of human development indicators such as literacy and life expectancy, despite relatively low economic

growth. The focus of the government on education saw the quick growth of primary schools, the enhancement of teacher training, and larger access of people to education which greatly increased the level of literacy. Further investment in education, health and social welfare as opposed to industrialisation was a hallmark of Kerala political economy (Franke & Chasin, 1994).

The Kerala Liberation Struggle (Vimochana Samaram); It was the first movement after the formation of Kerala as a state, a significant movement between 1958 and 1959, aimed at overthrowing the first communist government in Kerala, led by E. M. S. Namboodiripad. Elected in 1957, this government was historic as Kerala became the first state to have a democratically elected communist leadership. Nevertheless, the radical reforms of the EMS government, in particular, land division and education created mass opposition among the segments of the population, such as landlords, religious organisations, and opposing political parties. This conflict between the government and these groups culminated in the Liberation Struggle, a movement that mobilised public opinion against the communist government and ultimately led to its dismissal in 1959 under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

The land reform policies adopted by the EMS government where it had embarked on redistributing land to the landless and also ending the system of feudalism was the main catalyst to this Liberation Struggle. The action itself directly undermined the interest of large land owners and established elites, especially those of Nair and Syrian Christian groups that had traditionally dominated huge swathes of land. The other area of conflict was the move by the government to control the activities of the privately owned schools with several of them being run by Christian churches. The Education Bill proposed to have state control over private schools, and it was seen by Christian schools as an abridgement of their freedom and religious rights. Such reforms caused widespread resentment among influential groups of the society, such as the landed classes, religious minorities and opposition groups such as the Indian National Congress, which resisted the government policies. Media and the Construction and Direction of the Conflict of Media in

Kerala 25; The media scene in Kerala at the time was political in orientation and newspapers were instrumental in getting the people on both sides of the conflict. The most influential medium of communication at the time was the print medium because television had not been introduced in Kerala, and although the radio was important, it was controlled by the government and was therefore less autonomous.

Such publications as *Deshabhimani*, which was the official newspaper of the Communist Party of India (CPI), were a fervent supporter of the EMS government and its policies. The land reforms and education policies were presented in the left-wing publications like *Deshabhimani* as the way towards social justice and empowerment of the poor. These newspapers tried to defend the actions of the government, to make them an act that could diminish inequality and restrain the influence of old elites. The pro-communist press emphasised the long-term benefits of these reforms, particularly for the marginalised sections of society, and attempted to counter the opposition narrative that depicted the government as authoritarian.

Meanwhile, on the other side, newspapers such as *Malayala Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, and *Deepika*, which had links with the opposition community, came out strongly against the EMS government. These books helped greatly in getting people to rally against the policies of the government. One of the most popular circulating dailies, *Malayala Manorama*, adopted a rather aggressively oppositional stance of the Education Bill, presenting it as the violation of religious freedoms and one more effort of the communist government to concentrate the powers over the educational schools and universities. *Mathrubhumi*, on the one hand, being more centrist, brought the issue of the landowning communities and the religious minorities to the foreground, and viewed the government reforms as overboard and alienating (Isac, 2017).

The Christian-run and congress-oriented *Deepika* was one of the most vocal critics of the EMS government, reflecting the widespread opposition from the Christian community to the education reforms. The anti-communist press depicted the EMS government as oppressive, portraying it as dismissive of religious and cultural freedoms. There were also numerous reports of police dealing with

protestors in these newspapers, and this is what led to a view in the minds of the people that the government was applying authoritarian means to quiet voices against it. Besides print and radio broadcasts, there was use of pamphlets, leaflets, and wall posters by both the government and the opposition to pass the message across to the people. They were disseminated to a large extent especially in the rural sector and they contributed greatly to influencing the local attitudes. Pamphlets were also used to spread the image of the government being anti-religious and undemocratic by the opposition and the communist government utilised the same avenue to spread the gains of the reforms that they were making. Aside from this, in an effort to inform the public and maintain contact, both sides organised several public gatherings, marches, and conferences. During that period, media was not as readily accessible as it is today. Not only that, education had only just begun to become accessible to everyone, and hence a low literacy rate.

The influence of the media in shaping the Kerala Liberation Struggle was important to the determination of the outcome. The anti-communist media did an excellent job of emphasising the issues of religious organisations, landowners and opposition parties, which formed a powerful resistance to the government. These newspapers contributed to the development of mass resentment to the EMS government using unceasing reporting, editorials, and sensational exposure of police activities. The press had a major role in shaping the future because of boosting the belief that the rights of the religious minorities were in battle with authoritarian state control. The resultant widespread protests and strikes into which the media cast much publicity also resulted in intervention of the central government. With the Security Act of Article 356, the President of India dismissed the EMS ministry on July 31, 1959, thus ending the first communist government in Kerala.

The Kerala Liberation Struggle was a politically loaded movement that was significantly influenced by the media. The newspapers both in favor and against the war were the major influence on the opinion of people and they presented the political support or opposition of the EMS government. The government reforms were caught under the attack of the pro-communist media and the anti-communist

press, which exceptionally managed to demonstrate the government as oppressive and distant to the religious and cultural values of the people. The freedom of the media to place high-profile issues, including freedom of worship, land redistribution, and state intrusion, on the agenda became critical to determining the way things will finally turn out in the fight. Ultimately, the anti-communist press was more effective in mobilising popular dissent, leading to the fall of Kerala's first communist government. Liberation movement (Vimochana Samaram) is the base of communication and media intervention in the political public sphere of Kerala.

4.10 Rise of Coalition Politics in Kerala

Since the defeat of the first communist government of Kerala in 1959, coalition politics has become the defining feature of the state's political scenario. Unlike in most of the Indian states, where single-party dominance (usually the Indian National Congress) was in vogue after independence, Kerala, by the 1970s, established a unique two-front system. The result of this system was the rise of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and its leader, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] and the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its head, the Indian National Congress (INC). This change of shift to coalition government was due to various factors. To begin with, strong trade unions, peasant movements and grassroots political organisations made the Kerala population so politicised that it would not allow one party to dominate. Second, factionalism and division of political parties and the emergence of other types of organisations at the community level contributed to the smaller political parties pursuing partnership with either the LDF or UDF so as to keep the coalition dynamic to be the order of the day. The LDF and the UDF have been alternating in power every five-year interval since the 1970s, resulting in a political culture characterised by high government turnover while maintaining a stable underlying structure. Both the UDF and LDF rely much on small regional parties to build governments. As an instance, the Kerala Congress, which is fragmented to various groups, accommodates various interests, e.g. Syrian Christians and agriculturalists. These groups call the shots in most elections as they join one of the major parties. Also, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the

old-time ally of the UDF, is a dominant Muslim community party and commands power in the Malabar area of Kerala. They have a place in the hybrid system coalition government, and this leaves less minority voice at the political table as compared to the other Indian states (Oommen, 1995).

The coalition regime has had both virtues and vices in Kerala. On the one hand, it has guaranteed that diversity of interests is represented in the decision making of the state including the religious minority, as well as, farmers groups. This pluralism has aided in the avoidance of monopoly of power by any other entity which in turn has led to a very active electorate. In Kerala the voter turnout is one of the highest in India and the credit goes to the active participation which is a result of the coalition system (Franke & Chasin, 1994). Coalition politics is however not without challenges. Governments are continually plagued with internal wrangles with big parties paralysing policies as lower parties in the coalition table their interests. Such competing interests may delay the decision-making process and cause some compromise that waters down the effectiveness of policy. In other situations, the cohesiveness of a coalition has been so politically advantageous that mid-term elections or replacement of the government head has happened in order to satisfy the opponents of the coalition. Nevertheless, one can argue that coalition politics in Kerala have helped the state to achieve a thriving democracy, where diverse voices are heard, and government rule is a mirror of a decently diverse socio-economic and cultural population in the state. The change of power between the LDF and the UDF has also made the population of the society stay active in politics throughout. Although the policy formulation process may be further delayed due to coalition formations, the coalitions have also introduced the culture of negotiation, compromise and inclusiveness in Kerala politics, which makes Kerala a special example of Indian democracy (Heller, 1999).

In order to go into more detail with the contribution of caste and religion to the political life of Kerala, it is necessary to review the history of the evolution of the political alliances with references to certain facts and scholarly support. Historically, the Nair community, an upper-caste group, has wielded significant

influence. In order to go into the details of how caste and religion affected the political life of Kerala, we need to discuss the historical development of political alliances supported by definite data and scholarly sources. In Kerala state, with regard to historical background, the Nair, who are an upper-caste community, have played influential roles in Kerala politics. Nair Service Society (NSS) is the key to mobilisation of this group. They can be linked to socio-economic principles of the upper-caste elite and opposition to the radical left's policy on redistribution of land and secularisation. The power of NSS can also be traced in key elections, and the support they give on specific candidates usually determines the outcome of the election, and this is always influential especially in constituencies whereby Nair is high in numbers. The Ezhavas, a powerful middle-caste community, were long term affiliates of LDF which is headed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)]. This relation arose due to the early participation of Ezhavas in anti-caste movements like the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) movement, and a drive to have land reforms during the first communist government in 1957 when E.M.S. Namboodiripad became the chief minister. This group has been attracted by the left's promise of social equality and redistribution of land, especially anti-caste politics. In Kerala, the political orientation of Dalits is not fixed as they shift positions between the UDF and the LDF. Dalit voters, who historically have been treated as untouchables and even excluded in access to the benefits of the economy, have been reacting to the land offers, education, as well as welfare policies. The Left has always had more popularity because it is egalitarian and promotes redistribution. Yet, there exists dissatisfaction on both fronts among the Dalits, which has also given way to the emergence of identity parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), though this has not yet taken off.

4.11 Political Parties and Religion in Kerala

Political parties and religion in Kerala have very close associations with the socio-political histories and socio-political situation of the state. There is a trend of religious communities, especially Hindu, Christian and Muslim, over the years getting into strategic alliances with political parties in this state, controlling the

political scenario in Kerala. Religious communities in Kerala have actively participated in the political process since the colonial period when several socio-religious reformation organizations, some of which were led by Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali, were formed with the intention to fight social alienation and caste structures. Kerala possesses a large Hindu (54.73%), Muslim (26.56%) and Christian (18.38%) population (Census of India, 2011). This religious segmentation has impacted the political appeal and the affiliation of the political parties to specific religious groupings. The caste-based organisations such as the Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) were instrumental in leading the political organisation of Hindus during the early 20th century, Christian and Muslim groups began to form comparable institutions in order to secure their interests as a community. Out of these religious bodies emerged future lines of political orientations and the patterns of election (Panikkar, 1989)

The Indian National Congress, which dominated Kerala's political landscape in the pre- and post-independence period, has traditionally relied on the support of upper-caste Hindus, Christians, and a section of the Muslim community. The concentration of the Christian population is in the central and southern districts of Kerala; hence, the Christians have been assimilated into the Congress since they share domains in education, medical care, and land reforms. They have to a large extent supported different segments of the Kerala Congress which has at one time or other been with the UDF and the LDF. The Kerala Congress can be largely identified to belong to the section of the Agrarian interests as that is what many of the Christian voters in central Kerala relied economically upon. This is one more aspect on which the community has always lent its support to the UDF, which has a moderate approach on religious matters and a strong position in the country in terms of the national positioning of the Congress party. The influence of Christian-dominated areas such as Kottayam Idukki and Ernakulam served very well to shape the base of the Congress. The Congress was greatly aided by Muslim backing, especially from the Muslim League (which later became the Indian Union Muslim League, or IUML), in winning elections. IUML had entered into strategic alliances with the Congress and consolidated communal vote bank politics in Kerala within

the United Democratic Front (UDF) coalition. The alliance of Muslims enabled them to obtain political representation and clout in the state government. Although the Congress was supported by religious patriots, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and subsequently the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M) had more of a secular belief by championing the cause of the working class, landless labourers and the downtrodden population. Lower-caste Hindus, especially the Ezhavas, favoured the communists, as did certain sections of the Muslim and Christian communities disillusioned with Congress policies. The left Democratic Front (LDF) which is headed by CPI(M) puts itself forward as a secular union that cuts across religious lines. But religion is not dead as it influences its political initiatives even through elections. The success of the LDF has had a significant impact on balancing the interests of religious groups.

4.12 Rise of Identity Politics and Fragmentation

Political parties such as the CPI(M) claim to be secular, but religion still has a bearing on the way people vote and whether to join parties together. There has been a growing concern in the need for religious bodies to be represented in political circles, a feature that has come to be known as identity politics. An example is that the Christian fraternity has complained about the dwindling level of Christian candidates within the CPI(M) party which has contributed to the tensions in the LDF group. The Muslims, especially IUML, have also exerted their political weight by bargaining to have their voices heard in policy making especially on matters that touch on education, land and development.

Another important phenomenon in the correlation between politics and religion is the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Kerala albeit on a smaller scale than the rest of the states. The BJP with its appeal to hindu voters and especially upper caste Nairs has threatened the age-old occupation of the Congress and CPI(M). The party has tried to gather hindu votes by associating itself with other organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and appealing to the Hindu nationalists. The media both traditional and digital has strengthened the tendency of fragmentation of Kerala political scene on religious lines. Different

religious groups, especially Christians and Muslims, run their own media outlets that promote their interests to shape the opinion of the masses. The media, including Christian favoured newspapers, television channels run by Muslims favoured have also been instrumental in influencing politics among the communities that have only served to strengthen the existing religious identities within the political arena. Besides that, the growing popularity of social media has helped religious organizations to gain more support when it comes to building political coalitions. Religious agitations and community-based electoral campaigns ahead of political elections have been enhanced on digital spaces, cementing the influence of religion in the political arena in Kerala.

The relationship between religion and political parties in Kerala is a complex history of the socio-political history of the state in which religious groups provided an inseparable part in the constitution of the political orientations. Even though the political parties such as the Congress and CPI (M) present secular exhibits, they still need to access the religious communities so as to gain political leverage as well as votes. The development of identity politics, as well as the growth of the BJP and the presence of media in the mobilising process of religion, continue to demonstrate the significance of religion in the politics of Kerala.

4.12.1 Fragmentation Role of Media in Kerala

The concept of the public sphere described by Jurgen Habermas involves a space created by the masses where individuals express their opinions and give their ideas on issues of national interest, thereby promoting democracy. Kerala is a politically conscious and literate state where the media has been the agent of defining the opinion of people. However, with the proliferation of both print, visual media, and social media the public sphere has become transformed and increasingly fragmented. The media landscape, particularly in Kerala, is characterised by political alignment, sensationalism, and the focus on local issues, all of which contribute to a divided public discourse. The Sabarimala court verdict, the Quran controversy in the gold smuggling case, and the religious rants on social media after the RSS Popular Front murder in Alappuzha and Palakkad in 2021 and 2022 are evidence that the

overreach of religious communal forces has entered television and social media through the public sphere. Related to this, the media through reports created a violent atmosphere in Kerala society, through the political party and religious organisations, it can also be seen that they carried out various types of aggressive protests and strikes.

4.13 The Transformative Media Landscape in Kerala

The modern tendency of the last several decades is the emergence of television, which thus far has overwhelmed newspapers as the major source of information adoption. Then, in Kerala, it is a different story since newspapers are important even in the era of television, which has become prominent. Such a peculiar situation may be explained by the socio-demographic profile of Kerala and its media development and the role of TV in the development of movement among people. The media scenery of Kerala in India changed considerably after the independence of the country indicating other socio-political transformations. Newspapers such as Mathrubhumi was founded in 1923 by K. P. Kesava Menon and part of the Indian independence movement, whose ideals were national, and whose opinion was able to influence the masses (Ahmed, 1986). On the same note, in 1942, the Deshabhimani was established, which acted as an almanack of the communist movement to shape politics in the state of Kerala (Jeffrey, 1997). During the post-independence period, these publications began to lean towards developmental journalism covering education, health, poverty and so on. They gave high meaning to the issue of national welfare, and this can be seen in their coverage of social issues that aimed at instilling the spirit of collective responsibility in nation-building. The ethical principles of media at this time focused on the service to the interest of the people, preventing sensationalism, and defending journalistic integrity (Kalesh, 2019).

It was the 1990s that became the turning point of the Indian economy when the Indian economy was liberalized and the introduction of the media channels in the private sector. This period marked the demise of monopoly by Doordarshan, and satellite television such as Star TV came into the scene. New ethical dilemmas

appeared in Kerala where Asianet, a private channel, was launched in 1993. Higher competition had resulted in sensationalism whereby channels were more interested in gaining viewership rather than being responsible journalists. Unethical practices such as the violation of privacy and biased political coverage became a normal occurrence in the media world, which turned into a very commercialised one (University of Journalism, 2023).

The digital era added more complexity to the landscape of ethical challenges, as the emergence of social media allowed the quick sharing of information which cannot be checked. It is this phenomenon that led to fears of misinformation and even the traditional media in elevating such forms of contents without duly checking the facts on the ground. The influx of the digital space has also made it very difficult to ensure that the standards of journalism are met, which is why reconsidering journalistic ethics within the modern environment should be reconsidered. Another shift in Kerala media space is with its exposure not only to developmental journalism like the post-independence period but also to how it will deal with the twists of economic liberalisation and digitalisation. All of this speaks of the necessity of a renewed interest in media ethics so that in a more competitive and digitalized field, journalism may remain relevant in the service of the greater good.

The culture of newspapers in Kerala is more than 100 years old and closely tied with the culture and status of the state. To Radhakrishnan, familiarity that comes with this long period has contributed to the popularity of the print media at least among older generations. No doubt the high level of literacy in Kerala which is said to be one of the highest in India has contributed to the demand of newspapers. Such a trend is evidenced also by the demographic set-up of the state wherein the aged citizens have the greatest number in the entire India. In Kerala, old age keeps the consumers in newspapers, which the younger generations use increasingly turning to internet sources of news as noted by Radhakrishnan (Radhakrishnan, 2018). Older people in the state prefer to read newspapers to get their daily news, but TV, which is highly consumed, is used by most people in the age group 45 and above. The infographic also demonstrates that the number of people who read newspapers is

slightly decreasing especially when younger generations turn to online media to access news. Although Radhakrishnan admits that newspapers can one day become a thing of the past in Kerala, he indicates that such a transformation will not occur when the future is discussed, because the state constitutes a different environment of media (Ibid).

Television has been a medium that has grown very fast especially in Kerala having been introduced into the state only some 25 years ago. This effect is greatest during the 9 pm news time, which, according to Radhakrishnan, even contributes to the political and social agenda of the next day. The question has however raised concern about the content of TV news, especially its inclination towards opinionated news rather than news facts. Sashi Kumar Menon, a media personality and the founder of one of the first television channels in Kerala, Asianet, states that there are too many news channels in Kerala that develop influence on the population instead of the objective reporting of the facts. Although Kerala might be doing better compared to the rest of the country in balancing between news and opinion, this domination of setting the agenda makes the practice go against the principle of responsible journalism (Menon, 2018). This scenario inspired Sashi Kumar Menon to open up a television channel in the state of Kerala because the state ranks among those provinces where people have a high interaction with information through news. He, however, observes that the news channels have proliferated in Kerala in a disproportionately manner with respect to the size of the state and whether this kind of news would be sustainable or qualify as good news.

The invention of television in Kerala was a turning point of the media in Kerala and this new medium gave a new life to entertainment, education and politics. Kerala first experienced television in the 1980s, when Doordarshan television was introduced with predominantly state operated, national television. It was only with the introduction of the private channels in the early nineties that the field underwent a revolution. Asianet, the first private channel in Kerala in 1993, made the first attempt in the region to introduce the broadcasting of satellite television networks in the Malayalam channels. Soon, other channels such as Surya

TV (1998) and Asianet met with success, augmenting the visual media territory even further in the state.

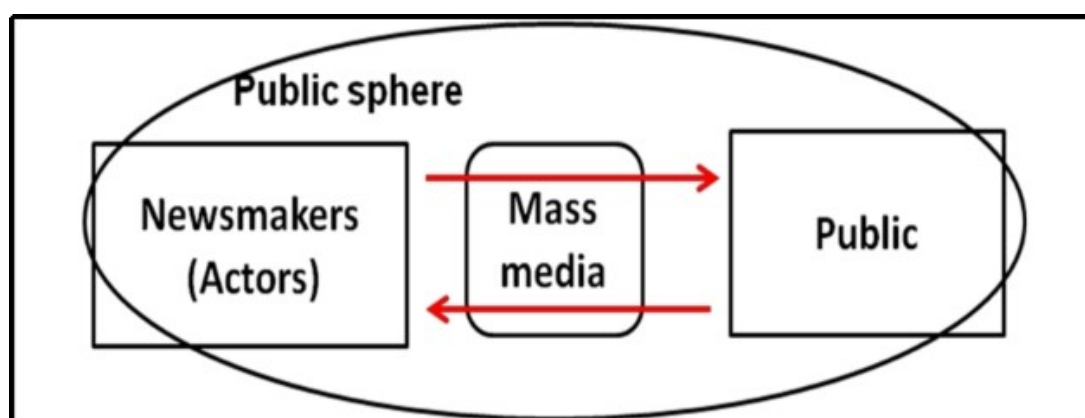
News reader Alakananda wrote in an article *True Copy Think* (2024. March, 22), who started her career as a news reader at Doordarshan and later became a news editor at Asianet, examines in detail the technical and procedural evolution of news production during election seasons from the 1990s to the present. The newsroom in the early 1990s was quite another place, which was characterised by constraints on writing about the technological space. The technical devices applied during the times of elections could not be compared with those in modern days. Telex, fax machines and telephones were the frequent modes of communication that were required at the newsroom. Election coverage, like all news at that time, was manual, relying heavily on human knowledge and skill. Journalists and editors had to rely on their memory and skill, as they did not have instant access to the information we take for granted today. With hours of planning during election coverage, newsrooms operate under immense pressure. A lot of time was spent ensuring accuracy, as any errors could delay or distort the news. Even as the results trickled in slowly from the counting stations, journalists had to manage the information, often relying on slow fax machines to receive and disseminate the results. News updates were limited by technology—images and footage were taken manually, often delivered by KSRTC buses, and the content had to be carefully transcribed and broadcast. This traces the significant change that occurred in the late 1990s with the advent of satellite channels and the entry of private channels such as Asianet. The role of technology in the newsroom became more important, and with this came new challenges and opportunities (Alakananda, 2024).

In the 1990s, the introduction of *teleprompters* (electronic devices that display scrolling text, allowing the person reading from it to maintain eye contact with their audience while delivering a scripted speech or presentation), (Stromberg, 2012). helped streamline the news reading process. Editors and reporters worked with written copies, sometimes having to make edits by hand. Over time, private news channels began to adopt new technologies, improving the speed and quality of

reporting. For example, satellite channels provided more immediate access to information and footage, thus speeding up the entire production process. The implementation of the era of satellite communication, also enabled the news channels to go live talking in various locations, this made the news reported to be much more immediate and reliable. The development of technology in the period after 2010 became very fast, due to the emergence of the internet and social media sites. The newsroom has now evolved into one that is very dynamic and digital. With the new introduction of the internet, new levels in reporting have been introduced. Now the newsrooms are able to get timely updates and even images, on the social media platforms news can go viral in a second. There has been a heightened need for speed and precision which has required newsrooms to cope and innovate. Technological advances in the creation of digital software, images and the real-life relay of news has brought the fact that news can be reported at any time on any platform. In fact, the author observes that, virtual technology has taken over the newsrooms whereby live news streams and the virtual newsrooms have become the norm. Once a labor intensive procedure, it has been automated and made easy.

Figure 4.1

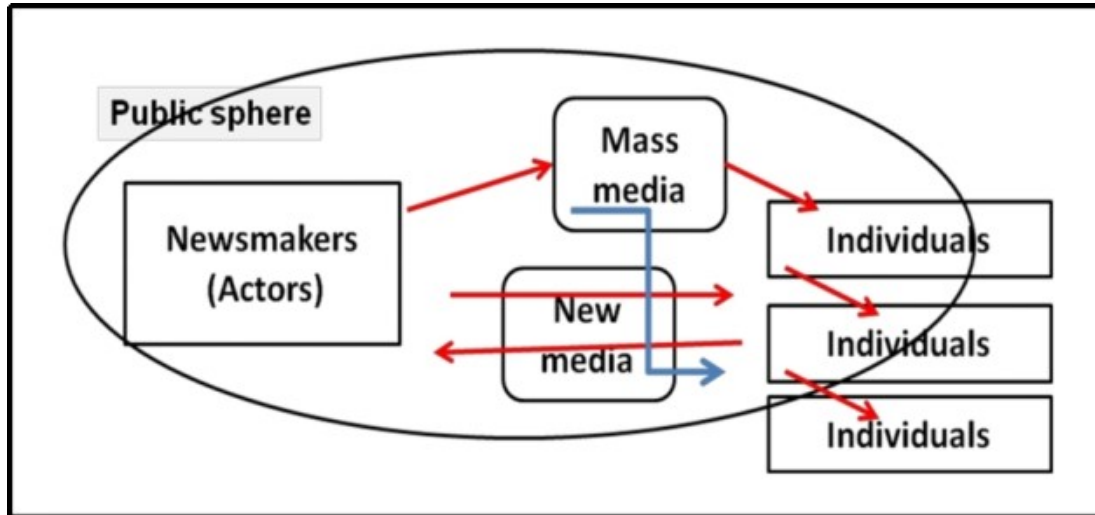
Classical Public Sphere Model



Sources: From Public sphere and new media by Y. Kuryшева & A. Ivanov, 2015, European Journal of Science and Theology.

Figure 4.2

Public Sphere Communication Model (taking in account new media).



Sources: From *Public sphere and new media* by Y. Kuryшева & A. Ivanov, 2015, *European Journal of Science and Theology*.

4.14 The Impact of Digital Media

Although both the newspapers and the television have existed and continued to exist, there is a tremendous change which is fast occurring in Kerala in news consumption due to digital media. More youthful generations, especially, are going to abandon common media forms to join the internet. This trend is not specific and is an overall international tendency whereby an internet has managed to bring much information to people making it not only the main source of news but also the more advantageous one with its timeliness and accessibility. The writing on the wall is simply that: print media is on the decline as digital news takes over the scene, despite the attachment of the older generation to newspapers.

From the arrival of television to the emergence of social media, the development of communication technologies in Kerala can be seen as a global media landscape evolution and a reflection of the specific socio-political situation in the region. The late 20th century became the starting point of the emergence of television in Kerala, and it marked the development of this sphere in entertainment and even politics and common opinion. Social media further democratised communication in the 2000s and gave voices to populations belonging to all social

groups and opened new opportunities in political engagement, cultural production, and activism.

The media environment in Kerala is experiencing dramatic changes, with the interactions between the traditional print media, televisions and the mounting impacts of the digital media. Newspapers remain the most influential source to older generations, but television has become an influential entity in dictating the public discussions, though with associated problems of objectivity. With young people using the internet to find out their news, Kerala with its news rich print media may have to rethink the future of the time honoured medium. The experience of the state presents an interesting case study of the interaction of local social-demographics, history of the media, and the development of technology in influencing the changing nature of media consumption (Cris, 2018).

Kerala has always been a news-driven State. News awareness is very high. Reasons are literacy, the old history of being aware of issues, enlightened public, a very good education system. As far as consumption of news goes, this must be the state that records the best performance in India. Media veteran, Sashi Kumar Menon, agrees. “Kerala has always been a news-driven state. News awareness is very high because of literacy, the old history of being aware of issues, enlightened public, and a very good education system. As far as consumption of news goes, this must be the state that records the best performance in India,” Sashi Kumar says. “We have an aware public. It keeps the government on its toes,” says Sashi Kumar. “That’s why you find fewer scandals in Kerala, although they surface once in a while. We have an alert, vigilant environment, which enables news to thrive here”(Cris, 2018).

4.15 Conclusion

Social reformers' role was crucial in forming the public sphere in Kerala. In a society where the caste system and immorality were intertwined, social thinkers and movements united the people and raised the importance of justice, equality and education. Sree Narayana Guru encouraged public debates against social divisions with his message of "one caste, one religion, one God". His ideas greatly influenced movements such as the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924). Ayyankali led movements to

ensure education and equality for the lower castes. The "Villuvandi Sram" of 1904 and the 1905 'If our kids are not allowed to enter your schools, your paddies will grow mere weeds' (Singh, 2023) paved the way for raising public consciousness and ensuring a place for the lower castes in society. Vaikom Abdul Khader Maulavi criticised the religious traditions of Islam and raised public consciousness. He inspired the new generation by using journalism as a tool for social change.

The Malayali Memorial (1891), the Kallumala Strike (1914), and the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924) laid the foundation for the public sphere in advocating for caste equality. The Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931) and the 1936 struggles for temple entry questioned the caste system in the general society. The Nivarthana agitation took place in 1932. The different struggles for freedom at various stages, the various demands for a united Kerala, and the entry of communist movements into Kerala have helped guide the formation of the Kerala public sphere. The activities of social reformers became the main focus for the purification of the general society and engaging the people in active debates. These interventions continue to be the foundation of Kerala's educational and cultural progress today. The evolution of the media has shaped the public in Kerala and has been subject to political communication and discourse. This concludes the analysis above on how the development of public society has influenced political communication in Kerala in relation to the historical transformations of the media.

The print media was influential to the development of the public society in Kerala in the 19th and early 20th century. According to Sahadevan (2015), freedom struggle and social reform movements were carried out through newspapers such as Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Swadeshabhimani, and Kesari, etc. Editors such as Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai and Kesari Balakrishna Pillai became crusaders of the freedom of press. They paved the way to the democratisation of thought and social equality as they broke the power structures. The print media gave awareness to people and also gave a forum through which people discussed various issues like equality, caste reform and political rights. Political communication was transformed in Kerala in the mid 20th century by radio and TV. Early development

oriented content as well as cultural assimilation was propagated through platforms such as All India Radio and Doordarshan. After the 1990s with the privatisation, Asianet and Kairali TV started to cover political developments in Thiruvananthapuram and the rest of the state in real time. Television live political debates encouraged more inclusion in the level of political debate in the rural regions and encouraged people to be a part of the democratic process.

Digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have further democratised the public and eliminated boundaries. The 2018 Kerala flood relief efforts and protests like #JusticeForWalayar, Nipah, and COVID-19 have given digital media a major boost. Mobile phone usage, especially smartphones, has given rise to new forms of media work or challenges to traditional media. WhatsApp groups, blogs, and citizen media have provided new platforms for engagement for marginalised communities. Similarly, new challenges like misinformation and fake news are also being faced by Kerala society in the era of the digital public sphere. Examples include the Omanakuttan fake money collection case in Alappuzha, misinformation related to COVID-19, Nipah, and fake information or orders in the name of the government. The hybrid model, which combines traditional and digital media, is giving a new direction to political communication in Kerala. Debates on news channels like 24 Hours Malayalam are now reaching audiences through live streaming on YouTube. Political leaders' use of traditional and social media together makes election campaigns and public engagement more effective.

As digital infrastructure improves, the public in Kerala is becoming more interactive and inclusive. The fact that political leaders and government officials have at least one account on social media is a clear indication that Kerala has entered the digital public sphere. Government schemes and the Kerala Fiber Optic Network (KFON) opportunities aim to bridge the digital divide. 'Work from home' during the lockdown, online classes, digital filing, and online government applications, Kerala Startup Mission (2006) and K-DISC (2020) have paved the way for a new type of governance in government. Communication is becoming more targeted and strategic

with the use of artificial intelligence and data analytics in political campaigns. The public in Kerala, shaped by print, electronic and digital media, has paved the way for new ways of communicating, debating and participating. The media foster a free and democratic public, demonstrating that media discipline is necessary to overcome challenges and that ethical journalism is crucial. The public in Kerala will pave the way for a more equal and creative public in the future.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN KERALA: EMERGING TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Kerala as the social society with high literacy and great political involvement is seeing a kind of revolution in terms of political communication owing to the growth of the social media or new media platforms. It has changed the way politicians relate with voters, how they get their support, and how they share information. The year of 2016 saw the then President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee declaring Kerala as the first digital state in the country with over 600 e-governance applications covering almost all departments and delivering e-services (Adam-I Venture Co. Ltd., 2020). With the aim of establishing internet access as a human right, the then Kerala Finance Minister Shri T. M. Thomas Isaac launched the K-Fon (Kerala Fiber Optic Network) project in 2017 to provide high-speed internet connectivity in Kerala. It also had the aim of bridging the digital divide. K-Fon received an Internet Service Provider license from the Department of Telecommunications in 2022. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the project on 5 June 2023. Whether it is using social media to mobilise public sentiment and support social causes, protests, and injustices, or utilising its potential to play a critical role in relief and rescue efforts during the devastating floods of August 2018, social media in Kerala has been in the news all the time. Social networks have run several campaigns covering current events, entertainment, politics, and other topics of widespread interest. This chapter delves into the emerging trends in political communication within Kerala, emphasising the role of social media, supported by recent studies and data.

The usage of social media by Kerala politicians has grown dramatically. According to a Leaders and Ladders research (a political research organisation

located in Kottayam), 137 of the 140 lawmakers have Facebook accounts, 64 have Instagram accounts, and 17 have Twitter accounts. With more than 1.5 million Facebook followers, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is in the lead, closely followed by other well-known leaders. This tendency highlights the fact concerning a social media tool being an important political marketing tool.(The New Indian Express, 2021 & Radhakrishnan, 2021). Political messages have taken over in the use of short form videos. Younger audiences are reached through such platforms as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, which are used more frequently. It is expected by the year 2026, short-form content will come up to 90 percent of any socially related content being generated in Kerala. This mode enables brevity and a meaningful message, which targets the minuscule attention spans of the contemporary audience (Brain Cyber Solutions, n.d.).

5.2 Mobile Phone as a Media

In fact, mobile media-supported communication has accelerated what communication scholars described as “the end of mass communication”(Maisel, 1973; Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). Mobile news, primarily in the form of mobile apps or mobile websites, has gained popularity. More importantly, mobile media enables users to bypass news produced by institutionalised organisations in order to receive updated and officially unsanctioned news. To fight for their relevance and keep up with the pace of 24/7 news demand, media organisations, large and small, have incorporated mobile media apps and websites for distributing professionally produced content (Wei, 2013).

In 2024, the most dominant device in India is the Mobile Phone, with a share of 75.50%. Falling smartphone costs is one of the reasons for this boom. The next device on the list is Laptop & Desktop with 24.05% followed by tablet with 0.45% (The Global Statistics, 2024). The popularity of mobile phones in Kerala can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Kerala has a high literacy rate of 96.2% (Census, 2011), and many residents are well-educated and tech-savvy. Second, the state has a high penetration of mobile networks and affordable data plans, making it easy for people to access the internet and stay connected with family and friends.

Mobile phones have also become an essential tool for businesses in Kerala, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Many hotels and restaurants use mobile apps to facilitate bookings and reservations, while tour operators use mobile phones to provide real-time updates to travellers. The rise of Facebook usage among older adults has also led to concerns about social media dependency (Menon et al., 2023). After 1990, communication and information distribution underwent a permanent transformation, and media are evolving to keep up with or adapt to new media trends. In the digital age, smartphones with touch screens and internet access are more common than Computers. As smart phones altered their audience, emerging new technologies have altered journalism as well as news presentation and distribution approaches. Reporters who use smartphones for reporting, recording, editing, and even uploading content to media ports or the air are engaging in mobile journalism (Mehta, 2023).

Figure 5.1

Mobile Journalism makes Everyone a Reporter, Editor and Owner



Source: Adapted from “Mobile Journalism (MOJO) Workshop on ‘Digital Storytelling’” by Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna (2019, March 13-14)

From “*Vayanashalakalilninnu social mediayilek; marunna Platform, thudarunna porattam*” by Kunhikannan provides the reader with an account of the rise of digital platforms and their potential for socio-political resistance. In a recent human rights debate, the article makes room for internet access and caste, religion and gender differences in the digital arena. In the late 20th century, the digital divide primarily referred to the gap between those who had and those who did not have a telephone. By the late 1990s, it primarily referred to the gap between those with and without internet access. This disparity exists on many levels, between urban and rural areas and between the educated and the uneducated. The digital divide in the country exists in relation to economic inequality.

Deeply assessing the power of digital size and its limits, he explains how digital media reinforces capitalist interests and the potential for widespread resistance to emerge from its clutches. He argues that social injustices exist in this new medium, showing that men dominate the share of social media users in India and 61% of Indians with mobile phones are male. His statement that the 'populism' that existed in libraries has today been re-transmitted through social media to be freed from the constraints of economic status characterizes the relevance and necessity of the public sphere becoming a progressive bulwark (Kunhikannan 2024).

Kerala, with its vibrant political culture, being a densely populated state has long been a state where public participation in governance and policy-making is an intrinsic part of daily life. Traditionally, this involvement was facilitated through face-to-face interactions in tea shops, reading rooms, and public rallies, conferences. However, with the advent of digital technologies, particularly social media and online platforms, the political discourse has undergone significant transformation because Kerala is a consumer state, increasing affluence and remittances from abroad have contributed to a consumerist society (Heller 1999). Digital platforms have become integral to the state's political communication, altering not only the speed and reach of information but also the nature of participation and activism.

5.2.1 Smartphone as a Mobilising Tool

The shift from print, broadcast media to digital platforms makes political discourse more immediate and pervasive. Through smartphones new media platforms have emerged as critical tools for political campaigns, discourse and mobilisation. Facebook and WhatsApp, Instagram have emerged as major media for political communication in Kerala. There have been hartals in Kerala through social media. The 'WhatsApp Hartal' was held in Kerala on 19 April 2018. This was the first such hartal in Kerala, apart from major political parties, organizations, etc. It was against the Kathua rape. The source of this was a WhatsApp group called 'Voice of Youth', and the group admin was a minor from Malappuram district, and it then spread to many groups. Widespread attacks were reported in this hartal (Mathrubhumi News, 2018).

Social media cells of political parties are using memes, videos, digital posters and parodies to campaign online. Followers of Political Parties on Facebook (in Lakhs): BJP: 7.16 L. CPI(M): 6.72L. Congress: 2.98 L. Followers of Political Parties on Instagram in Thousand: CPI(M): 263k followers. Congress: 48.5k followers. BJP: 20.8k followers (Oommen, 2021). These changes can be traced through the lens of the networked public sphere, which emphasises the role of digital networks in democratising communication. Digital platforms allow for a wider spectrum of voices that promote decentralised and more inclusive political debates or it is a, “networked information economy”, in which *nonmarket and nonproprietary commons-based peer production* (i.e. “*social production*”) and exchange of information, knowledge and culture play a central role. This has become feasible because the capital required for social production and exchange in the networked information economy is relatively cheap and widely distributed (Benkler, 2006). This is evidence in Kerala of how Smartphones facilitate political communication that includes marginalized voices, thus reshaping the public sphere to the Digital Public sphere. Dalit groups, feminist organisations, and environmental activists, previously underrepresented in the mainstream media, have an advantage in social media for communicating social justice and promoting political change.

5.2.2 Live Streaming

Live streaming via social media is another trend growing in the digital media sector in Kerala, as more people use it to engage in civic communication. The potential of this medium is that those with social media accounts can report live and in detail, such as raising awareness about irregularities in state institutions or the poor condition of road construction. Facebook Live, as well as YouTube Live, is a service that enables its users to share live video content with their viewers. It has now emerged as a potent instrument of digital communication, journalism, and activism that allows instant communication through comments and reactions. The government officials, political leaders and citizens in Kerala and other places are all using it to update, report on events and give opinions without necessarily using the traditional media medium. Facebook Live, therefore contributes to the development of the popular dialogue and the culture of participation in the media in the digital world. It is essential to note that various political leaders and other celebrities have utilised this platform to instill a sense of social unrest and garner administrative attention. For instance, a suspended IAS officer once disclosed through a live stream that the Chief Secretary of Kerala had withdrawn the clearance for the hearing, bringing to the fore questions of administrative transparency and bureaucratic accountability (Deccan Herald, 2025). These examples indicate how live streaming has been reflected in other ways, both politically and institutionally, in Kerala.

5.3 Changes in Communication Platforms

The traditional media was the leading agency for communication between political parties and the public. Until the rise of traditional media, political parties communicated through public meetings, conferences, notices, and graffiti. The graffiti in Kerala during the National Emergency is an example of this.

Figure 5.2

Written on the wall of a building in Karivellur in Kannur district of Kerala during the Emergency period



Sources: The Korah Abraham [@thekorahabraham], 2022, X

But the growth of social media has changed all that. With increased access to social media and everyone's chance to raise their voice, it has brought about a huge change in political communication in Kerala. Earlier, the media that political parties mainly used to reach out to the people were newspapers, radio, television, publications, posters, rallies, etc. These had some major symptoms, such as a delayed response from the traditional media or limited space for public response. The expressions of media presenters, the intervening conversations, ownership of newspapers and channels, and their agendas influenced political communication.

With the advent of social media, political communication has become more active and two-way. Communication through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube directly connects leaders and parties with voters. Leaders like Pinarayi Vijayan often use social media posts to explain policy. A leader's statement gets an immediate response from the public, which the leader measures and changes strategies based on. Social media platforms collect data on their posts' likes, shares, and comments, and they use that information to target geographic and demographic groups. Civic activists, students, women, and the backward classes, among others,

use these platforms to raise their voices. In addition to traditional political communication channels, they use new and active media to hold discussions and communicate their positions to society.

Today's news consumers no longer wait for breaking news on TV or in the newspaper, they are always connected to events around the world through their social profiles and smartphones. Social media helps media outlets and journalists to monitor their audience interests more effectively than ever before and then provide them with rich and informative news, thereby enhancing their brand objectives. People are no longer passive recipients of news. They have an active presence in the news where they can comment, engage, share and post their opinions on the news that comes online. Journalists and media outlets have become very important in effectively branding themselves on social media to gain acceptance, credibility, and goodwill from their followers and potential target audience. There is also a popular trend of using online influencers to share their content to reach a wider group of people.

Figure 5.3

Model of Social Media Applications that enable Communication in various ways



Sources: Note. From The role and importance of social media in communication by A. Rathore, 2024, Cannibals Media

Media organisations that operate under the outdated tenet that "we talk, you listen" will not survive. This crisis is widely known in the media. Counterarguments to the media, such as "we talk, you listen," have begun to be made. The majority of old media channels of reaching people have been closed as computers and mobile phones have become accessible and people have become occupied with activities. This does not imply that individuals are consuming less media. The amount of media consumed has grown, and new and creative formats and methods for consumption have emerged. In the past, news was only available to us within specific set hours. We had to wait till dawn to get details about the events that took place the previous day. But with the advent of social media, news has started to haunt people.

What commercial television provides to the audience is product. Here, news has become entertainment. Malayalam channels have created a single language, television, and that is entertainment. Especially with the emergence of new media/social media, they have become the fifth estate. Therefore, all television news channels and newspapers in Kerala have found a place online, they have accounts on YouTube, Facebook, etc., and newspapers are also available in e-paper form. Creating content for cyberspace and tailoring news according to cyberspace is a speciality of this era. In this way, traditional media is merging with cyberspace. The visual new media culture has formed a vast community of media that cannot be separated into right or wrong, vulgar or obscene, story or life, news or entertainment. The fear that presenting reality will bore the people is driving the media to resort to hyperbolic antics and visual dramas. The world has shrunk to a mere fingertip, and therefore, it is imperative for the Malayalam media to embrace reality and develop its own unique media ethics. This situation has accelerated political communication and brought challenges.

5.4 Digital Political Communication and Online Engagement

The digital revolution has transformed political communication, especially in regions with high internet penetration and literacy, such as Kerala. Social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook have emerged as critical tools for political

mobilisation, grassroots campaigning, and civic engagement. Here explores how political parties, government agencies, and civil society in Kerala utilise social media to influence public discourse and participation while also confronting the ethical and strategic challenges that come with digital engagement.

5.4.1 #JusticeForJisha

In April 2016, a Dalit woman named Jisha was brutally raped and murdered in her home in Perumbavoor, Kerala. The hashtag #JusticeForJisha was created to accelerate efforts to get justice for the victim. As more details of Jisha's torture began to emerge, the social media community used the hashtag to protest and express anger over the poor media coverage the case received. The incident brought back memories of a girl named Soumya. In the Soumya murder case, a 23-year-old lady from Manjakkad, Shornur, Kerala, was raped and killed on February 1, 2011, when she was riding a passenger train from Ernakulam to Shornur. An incident occurred as soon as the passenger train 56608 from Ernakulam Junction to Soranur Junction departed the Vallathol Nagar railway station. In the rape and murder case of Soumya, the Thrissur fast track court declared Govindaswamy, a local criminal from Virudhachalam, Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, guilty on October 31, 2011. The Supreme Court ruled against murder accusations and changed the punishment for rape to seven years of harsh jail. Jisha's murderer, Ameer Ul Islam, was found guilty and sentenced to death by the Ernakulam Principal Sessions Court. The court sentenced him to death nearly 20 months after the incident.

5.4.2 #JusticeForSreejith

Sreejith (Sreejith S.R) has been protesting for over 800 days outside the Kerala state secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram and has unexpectedly become a social media sensation. Since May 22, 2015, Sreejith has been staging a solitary sit-in, enduring harsh weather conditions from intense heat to torrential rains and chilly nights with only a mat and a makeshift shelter.

Figure 5.4

Thousands of people have visited Sreejith in solidarity



Source: The Week, 2018, January 28

His sole demand is a fair and independent investigation into the death of his younger brother, also named Sreejith, who allegedly died in police custody. While the police claim that the 26-year-old committed suicide after being arrested for allegedly stealing a mobile phone, the family believes he was murdered. They suspect foul play linked to a personal relationship, stating that Sreejith had fallen in love with a woman who was involved with a police officer and was taken into custody just a day before he was to marry someone else. He died in the hospital the next day, reportedly after a suicide attempt. Despite being held right outside the state's power centre, the protest received little attention for a long time. However, things changed when his story began circulating on social media. Posts featuring Sreejith and his protest began gaining traction on Facebook and Twitter, prompting public interest and support. Notable Malayalam film actors such as Prithviraj Sukumaran and Tovino Thomas voiced their solidarity with Sreejith. Prithviraj through social media posts and Tovino by visiting the protest site.

The movement picked up momentum with the hashtag #JusticeForSreejith trending online. A song bearing the same title, composed by acclaimed lyricist Gopi

Sundar, also drew significant attention, with over 500,000 views since its release on January 17. In response to growing public pressure, the Kerala government ordered an internal inquiry into the case. However, Sreejith refused to accept the findings of a state-level investigation. He demanded that the case be transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's top federal investigative body.

5.4.3 Kiss of Love Protest

The 'Kiss of Love' movement was one of the unusual and distinctive protests that Kerala has seen, and it garnered national notice. Facebook served as a rallying point for this nonviolent protest against moral policing. In November 2014, the initiative invited young people from all around the state to come to Kochi. The immediate trigger for the protest was an incident in Kozhikode, where the Malayalam news channel Jaihind TV broadcast footage alleging "immoral" behavior in the parking area of a city café. Following the telecast, the café was attacked and damaged by a group of vigilantes. In response, a few friends who identified themselves as 'independent thinkers' launched the Kiss of Love campaign. As soon as their initiative gathered traction, activists from all over Kerala began to support them. Following its launch in Kochi, the program expanded to other Indian cities. However, a number of political parties and religious organisations also strongly objected to the protest's style and message.

5.4.4 #Avalkoppam Campaign

After an actor was kidnapped and attacked in a moving car by goons allegedly paid by Dileep, a group of women professionals from the Malayalam film industry formed the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC). The hashtag #Avalkoppam started trending as more women came forward to express solidarity and support for the survivor. The campaign has been dubbed the #MeToo movement of Malayalam cinema. In May 2017, the WCC submitted a petition to the Chief Minister of Kerala demanding an investigation and action in the sexual assault case against the actress.

Figure 5.5

When Rima Kallingal chose her own way to support a young actress at the Kerala State Film Awards ceremony



Source: Onmanorama Staff, 2017, September 12, Onmanorama

Later, the WCC strongly condemned and opposed AMMA's (Association of Malayalam Movie Artists) decision to reinstate actor Dileep while the matter was pending in court. They have also filed a petition seeking government intervention in formulating a wage structure and welfare schemes for women artists. WCC has emerged as a voice for all women who have long suffered from gender stereotypes and misogyny in the industry. With the tagline of 'Equal Spaces, Equal Opportunities', the WCC aims to raise awareness about the issues faced by women in the industry and to break patriarchal views. They have mostly led virtual protests and made public statements through press conferences.

5.4.5 Vizhinjam Port Protest

In February 2018, Kerala witnessed a unique and symbolic protest that captured the imagination of the state's online community. The campaign, known as #AStoneForVizhinjam, was entirely led by social media and emerged in response to the indefinite delay in constructing the sea wall as part of the Vizhinjam port project. Many viewed the interruption as a weak excuse to put off an important development

project, citing a lack of stones as the cause. The port near Thiruvananthapuram was regarded as a significant infrastructure undertaking that may improve Kerala's connectivity and economy. The public was irritated by the delay, though, particularly those who thought special interests were trying to undermine the project. People started urging one another to "donate stones" symbolically online as a way to express their dissatisfaction. The concept was straightforward and effective the people would supply the stones if the government didn't have sufficient. The hashtag #AStoneForVizhinjam, images of stones, and messages of solidarity were all over social media sites, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. People all around the state expressed their support for the campaign, both online and in local media, as it quickly acquired traction.

The Vizhinjam Mother Port Action Committee's demonstration near the Kerala Secretariat was one of the movement's most important gatherings. Here, the gathering and contribution of stones turned a symbolic gesture into a material expression of the group's will. The protest was widely covered by the media and was praised for being unique and peaceful. Social media has once again proven its capacity to voice disapproval, inspire groups, and transform intangible complaints into tangible action. The campaign reflected the people's desperation and will to see the port project through to completion by transforming digital areas into what many have called a "sea of stones."

5.4.6 Kerala Police and Motor Vehicle department on Social Media

Interesting changes in the social media strategy and content of the official Facebook page of Kerala Police and MVD. The Facebook page started winning hearts with interesting memes and reactions and is now ranked second among the Facebook pages of the police department in the country. It also has an Instagram account on both Instagram and Facebook, which has millions of followers. The Kerala Police as well as Motor Vehicle Department social media cell regularly presents contemporary issues and socially relevant topics and then transforms them into very funny and thought-provoking memes. This is very helpful in increasing legal awareness among the people.

5.5 Troll Culture in the Digital Age

The last decade has seen major changes in the digital media landscape in Kerala. The growth of social media, the proliferation of smartphones, active youth participation, and the emergence of civic consciousness have all combined to strengthen the civic society in Kerala while simultaneously reinterpreting and subverting political perceptions. During this period, the humorous form of political criticism known as trolling has become a widespread socio-political movement. But, the growth of this troll culture raises several communication problems and ethical questions. Never-before-heard phrases and idioms are born every day. Trolls are the source of new styles and embellishments. The English word troll means to behave in an unbearably bad way. Many organizations, channels and pages work exclusively to create and spread trolls without any reward. In Malayalam, this was started by two leading organizations, *Troll Malayalam* and the *International Chalu Union*. Many such troll groups, managed by political party cadres and those not, are present on digital platforms. Their source is through memes, troll cartoons, video formats, etc. These are considered an unofficial propaganda style between political parties (jayan, 2019).

In the past, trolls mainly focused on making fun of entertainment, movies, and personal life issues. However, in recent times, political issues, parties, and leaders have become their main targets. Troll pages spread political messages based on such issues. For example, when a political party's announcement is posted on social media by a troll, users perceive it as mocking but not serious. This often affects the party's reputation and activities. There are many troll groups active in Kerala with clear political stances. Troll pages sympathetic to the Left, Right, and religious groups express their experiences and protests through trolls. These groups often get involved in the propaganda strategies of the parties. For example, there has been an increase in posts during election seasons, trolls mocking opposition and ruling party leaders, and the trend of recreating the slogans of political parties in troll form. Criticism, questioning, and different perspectives are essential in a democratic system. Troll culture often provides a platform for such criticism. When young

people share political issues through trolls, political awareness grows, and society debates the issue. However, this development also has the potential to turn public debate into a series of directionless comedies. That is, when political ideas are portrayed in a derogatory manner, the seriousness behind the idea is lost. The main issue to be noted is the spread of fake news and hate propaganda through trolls. Since it comes in the troll format, many people consciously accept it without checking it. In this way, the public is misled and hatred against specific groups is fostered. Troll images and videos that are retconned using AI are now being circulated intensively on social media. The number of people who are unable to recognize them is increasing.

Trolls sometimes pave the way for assassination and defamation. Trolls that violate people's privacy, make anti-women comments, and ridicule socially sensitive issues are prevalent. Troll culture is often seen as transcending the parameters of media ethics. This trend can even lead to cyberbullying. The youth of Kerala are strongly involved in Troll culture. Troll content on WhatsApp, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Facebook pages is widely used. They form political opinions through troll cartoons, sarcastic memes, and ironic dialogues. The most important feature of this culture is that the nature of the overall political consciousness is reflected in the Troll.

The names of political parties in Kerala are often used by people in opposing parties to call each other like trolls. Because of this, in cyberspace if someone wants to show mutual respect, it is not possible. The nicknames in cyberspace for communists are "*Kammi or Antham kammi*, Congress as *Kongi*, BJP as *sangi* or *chanaka sangi*, muslim league as *moori* and SDPI as *Sudapi*". Today it has become commonplace. These types of trolls, calls and accusations are happening without the direct knowledge of political parties. For this, cyber wings of parties exist in Kerala today on the basis of individuals and groups. Emily Bell, former editor of the digital section of The Guardian newspaper, says that there are many ways to think about why a person or a movement behaved in a particular situation, in a particular way. One side is to raise 'reasonable skepticism'. The questions of why, when and how

should be answered logically. Instead, as both sides engage in a debate by ridiculing each other, communication between the two sides is lost. This kind of situation in Kerala is indicated by trolls and the double names used to call political leaders in social media, 'Luttappi, Kunuvava, Kummanam, Ulli Sura, Amul boy, Mongiji, Amitt, Elayappan, Vyajan, Showofi, Covid aunty, Irattachunken', are examples (Jayan, 2019).

The campaign EnteVaka500 (Here's My 500) was a major troll in Kerala, started by film director Aashiq Abu. Kerala's young people and responsible internet users launched a campaign on social media in January 2015. All sides criticised Mr. K. M. Mani for his suspected corruption in the bar bribery case. He was charged with accepting bribes to renew liquor licenses from bar owners. Aashiq Abu, a well-known South Indian film producer and social activist, launched the initiative. "For dear Mani sir, who lacks the funds to support himself, we still need to raise crores. "This is my 500 rupee donation," he wrote on Facebook, referring to it as the state's first youth-led anti-corruption campaign. Money poured into Mr Mani's constituency right away. Orders came flooding in from, it became a new form of protest against corruption through digital platforms.

Figure 5.6

A Troll poster Satirizing the former Finance Minister of Kerala



Source: Adapted from a post by The Ashiq Abu, 2015, Facebook.

Trolling should not be completely rejected. Rather, its spirit – criticality, thought-provokingness, raising questions against temporary ideas – can be valuable to society and democracy. Therefore, it is important to note that troll creations at least follow the basic truth and target ideas rather than individuals. Digital citizenship in Kerala has become a major political symbol through troll culture. Trolling is not a form of entertainment but a part of political expression. Therefore, the use of trolls should be implemented responsibly and, through it, pave the way for public debates and political communication to be taken seriously.

5.6 Cyber Attacks in Kerala: Political Cyberbullying and Its Impacts

The problem of political cyber attacks in Kerala has become a major concern, having an overwhelming impact on the politicians of both ends of the political spectrum and contributing to the further increase of digital harassment in the political sphere in Kerala. Women politicians especially Congress party leaders have been on the receiving end of this challenge and have been subjected to intensive online bullying, which has jeopardized their psychological health and political activism. Former United Democratic Front (Kerala) candidate from Kayamkulam Assembly constituency, Aritha Babu, wrote to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan about cyberbullying directed at her and accusing left-wing cyber groups of targeting her. She also urged the CM to take action against them. Aritha's letter came after a spate of disparaging and disrespectful remarks were posted on her social media profile (India Today, 2022). A report by the India Today published in August 2025 noted a brutal cyberbullying campaign against a Congress MLA Uma Thomas and other women politicians who wanted a party MLA accused of abhorrent behavior to be taken to task. These women had to tolerate threats, vicious trolling and vilification in public, which is a gendered form of political cyber harassment that forms an unfavorable atmosphere towards the woman in politics (India Today, 2025).

Congress women leaders are not the only people targeted by cyber attacks, even left-wing politicians such as K K Shailaja and Thiruvananthapuram Mayor Arya Rajendran have been targeted by cyber attacks. Congress and the supporters of

Youth Congress were accused by the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) of extreme and indecent cyber bullying as a way of suppressing the voice of opposition. Being full of misogynistic and threatening materials and being in the form of strategic harassment, it is a reflection of an attempt to frighten and destabilize the political opposition in a digital way (Mathrubhumi, 2024).

In addition to the personal forms of cyber bullying, widespread political cyber bullying in Kerala is usually in the form of orchestrated campaigns meant to undermine political leaders of particular social or religious beliefs or those holding an opposing ideology. These types of cyber offensives involve organized trolling, releasing fake news, and cyber stalking, which have had psychological trauma, possible career harm, and polarizing the public. These tricks weaken the democratic discussion and add to the atmosphere of fear and intimidation among the politicians (Kuniyillam, 2024).

As a reaction to the increased wave of political cyber harassment, the government of Kerala has accepted the severity of the problem. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced that most recent ordinances are aimed at preventing online abuse, and that the steps are essential to maintain the integrity of democracy without violating free speech (ThePrint, 2023). Scholars propose a strong law that should directly focus on cyber harassments of politicians and should be more focused on accountability and protection of politicians who have to operate in digital environments. The cases registered by Kerala police against a group of social media news portals and individuals such as activists on the accusation of cyber stalking and online bullying against a Kochi-based actress, who had filed a complaint against a young politician, who allegedly had been misbehaving with her (The New Indian Express, 2025).

The high literacy and human development rates in Kerala is another complicated issue in terms of cyberbullying since, on the one hand, state indicators are high, and on the other hand, cyber harassment cases are increasing (Rohith Associates, 2025). Female politicians in Kerala who are vocal politicians frequently face body shaming, death threats and sexual harassment through the internet, and

many are too shy to report it, as it is stigmatized in society. Laws enforced by the Information Technology Act and the work of cybercrime lawyers play an important role in assisting the victims and investigating the offenders. The Information Technology Act, 2000 (amended in 2008) provides several sections addressing cybercrimes, including Sections 66(D), 66(E), and 67, which offer penalties for misusing personal details, publishing inappropriate content, and posting vulgar or insulting information online (Drishti Judiciary, 2025). Nonetheless, there are still issues with the establishment of a secure and non-discriminatory online political discourse area.

At this point, the instances of cyber harassment are on the rise in Kerala. When we take a closer look into it, we will realize that the majority of cyberbullying is directed toward women. Cyberbullies on Social Media also victimize men who protect the harassed women. As mentioned in the article *Cyber Crimes in Kerala: A Study*, Kerala ranks 6th among the cyber-crimes in India. They further indicate that 5 out of 8 cyber cases are against women in Kerala. The State Government of Kerala reported that at least most women who are bullied online are teenagers or young women. Kochi, the commercial capital of Kerala, is the place where most of the cyber cases are reported. Indian women are supposed to be ideal. They are mostly classified below the men. This conservative thinking can be found in Kerala as well. It is evidenced by the rising cases of cyber-crimes against women. The sex ratio of Kerala (women to men) is the best in India and the only state where women are more than men. Women, as compared to other parts of India, have a significant household. Nevertheless, women are supposed to limit themselves not to express their ideas to their advantage (Roy, 2021).

Renowned Malayalam writer, literary critic, and educationist M. Leelavathy faced a wave of online abuse after she expressed grief over the suffering of children in Gaza. The controversy was said to have begun on September 13, when the 98-year-old writer told the media that she felt unable to eat because children in Gaza were starving. Following her remarks, sections of the right wing allegedly accused her of selectively highlighting certain tragedies while ignoring others. The News

Minute also reported that several Sangh Parivar activists and a right-wing Christian organisation, CASA (Christian Association & Alliance for Social Action), were among those leading the online criticism (TNM Staff, 2025). Political cyberbullying in Kerala is a critical problem that affects individual leaders, particularly women and the entire process of democratization due to the instillation of fear, intimidation, and polarization. The solution to this problem involves changes in the legal framework, awareness, and digital literacy initiatives to create safer internet environments where political activity and free speech can be exercised without harassment.

5.7 Social Media Platforms and Kerala Political Parties

Originally the WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram apps were used to bring friends together, but they have evolved into effective means of political control. Parties such as UDF, LDF, and BJP in Kerala have now started to use proper social media teams in Kerala to increase their presence online since they have realized that this medium could benefit them. Social media has become the political outreach means in India due to cheap internet data and the presence of many young people who become targets. These parties enhance their elections campaigns to gain the attention of voters and have maximum impact as the date of the Kerala Assembly election draws nearer since memes, posters and reels help them in doing so. In Kerala, the CPI(M), Congress, and BJP are the most active competitors who want to take part in social media platforms as campaigners. CPI(M) Kerala has the most number of followers on Instagram followed by Congress, whereas BJP Kerala has the least number. BJP, on the contrary, has the highest following on Facebook where it has 7.16 lakh followers followed by CPI (M) and then Congress (Oommen 2021).

The Congress party in Kerala has a vast and coordinated social media campaign, utilizing over 30,000 WhatsApp groups, organized by constituency and mandal, to distribute campaign-related content to both party members and the public. With more than 10 million people engaged through WhatsApp alone, Congress aims to reach a broad audience with attractive campaign materials, updates, and strategic messaging. The social media campaign is led by Mathew Antony of the AICC and KP Anil Kumar from KPCC. Their team, primarily aged

24-27, coordinates efforts across the state. A key strategy, Mathew Antony explains, is creating a unique, research-based branding approach that asks questions to engage voters, rather than making political statements. The Congress campaign relies heavily on WhatsApp but also uses Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The AICC and KPCC teams manage content creation and dissemination without outsourcing, helping control data and coordination. The party's social media cell also collaborates with coalition partners, like the Muslim League, for content sharing. For strategy, a media committee decides on trending topics and approaches, with insights provided by the social media team. Pavan Khera heads the AICC media department, ensuring that key messages align with trending voter interests and concerns (Oommen 2021).

The CPI(M) in Kerala primarily relies on its organizational network and party workers for its campaign, with WhatsApp as the main communication tool. Although they value physical campaigns over social media, party workers contribute to social media efforts and suggest strategies. CPI(M)'s primary focus is combating fake news; when misinformation arises, local teams quickly verify and share accurate information to counter it. Dr. V. Sivadasan, who oversees social media and IT for the party, highlights that while there is no dedicated social media team, this decentralized approach effectively addresses misinformation (Ibid).

WhatsApp and Facebook have been used to coordinate campaigns by the BJP in Kerala, although they do not have precise figures in terms of the number of groups. The BJP social media team in Thiruvananthapuram has 40 members and the district coordinators have an average age of 35 years. They have concentrated on the slogan of Puthiya Keralam (New Kerala) and their campaign uses the positive sentiments to promote development, education, employment, and governance. Top leaders tend to engage with digital conclaves to enhance penetration since Kerala exhibits a great deal of digital penetration. It does not employ any blunt strategies, does not do any trolling, and reacts to misinformation with their social media department. The E. Sreedharan model of development is the one to inspire the social media strategy (Ibid).

Social Media Influencers; A random search through internet on the most popular social media influencers in Kerala has shown a variegated list of influencers that works in the spheres of technology, automobiles, travel, fashion, lifestyle and cooking. Nevertheless, the politics are quite vital in Kerala, but powerful political figures do not feature in such lists. Neither is the practice of wooing voters by using popular social media influencers from other sectors as election campaigners, which is an accepted practice elsewhere, prevalent here. Social critic Sebastian Paul believes it's unsurprising, as the average Malayali, regardless of social class, tends to think they know everything about politics and sees being influenced by others as beneath them. This attitude, he suggests, is also why even a highly popular actor like Prem Nazir faced defeat at the polls. "Aristotle's remark that man is a political animal could easily apply to Kerala," said Mr. Paul. "When seeking political guidance, people here turned to leaders like AKG and EMS, who were, in a sense, their influencers.

Advocate A. Jayasankar, political critic, attributed the lack of political social media influencers to Kerala's deeply partisan society. He believes, however, that the CPI(M) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are effectively using social media, while the Congress is falling behind. "Because everyone is politically partisan, credibility becomes dubious. The audience is equally partisan with clear political affiliations and is not easily influenced," said Mr. Jayasankar, who, incidentally, is one of the rare voices who regularly airs political opinions through YouTube.

Santhosh George Kulangara, a well-known travel vlogger and founder of Safari TV, believes that there's no room for social media influencers in Kerala's political sphere. He explained that this space is filled by the social media teams of television channels and other media outlets. "Political content from parties on social media is often aggressive and primarily comes in the form of memes. The media handles most of the analytical content, which adds a greater level of credibility," Kulangara noted (Hindu 2024). All these comments indicate that even though the political communication method has changed, social media influencers in Kerala,

apart from the parties, are not able to influence the people divided by political parties even in the era of digital public sphere.

5.8 Social Media as an Alternative Space for Political Communication

The emergence of social media in the last decade has brought about major changes in political communication in Kerala. Citizens and political parties no longer rely solely on traditional media but are using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube to engage in discussions and campaigns in a new way. Technology has greatly helped in digitalizing the concept of the public sphere, and the increasing availability of mobile phones in Kerala has also created a situation where political communication can be carried out easily, unlike traditional means.

In India Social media users are around 0.467 billion (The Global Statistics, 2024). Social media's contribution to information and news distribution in the twenty-first century has been significant. While they have created new channels for networking and communication, they have also served as a fertile ground for the propagation of false information for a number of reasons: Social media viral nature enables knowledge to spread quickly and broadly. Before it can be verified, false or inaccurate material can spread swiftly, reaching thousands or even millions of people. New technological advancements are also helpful for the digital public sphere to catch information. Social media and information dissemination In Kerala, social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Youtube, Reels are very important for the spread of information. These platforms have made it easier for news and information to circulate quickly, but they have also helped spread incorrect and misleading information. Social media users in Kerala according to *Kerala State Economics and Statistical Department* (2023), 45% of people for learning, business and networking, and 51% for entertainment.

Social Media key Interventions: Whether new media technologies improve the health of democracy is a difficult question to answer Blumler & Gurevitch (2000). With the spread of the internet, new media or social media has become the fifth estate, According to William Dutton's 2009 argument, the Fifth Estate consists of

"networked individuals" made possible by the Internet, such as social media, who can hold the other estates accountable, rather than merely being a blogging community or an extension of the media (Dutton, 2009). Unlike traditional media, cyberspace offers people the ability to self-examine and to be able to enter as well as exit in their interest. We cannot say for sure that social media is a place where values such as ethics, morality and authenticity exist because everyone here is a journalist and editor. Therefore individuals can post or share anything with their own interest. But social media is often good at exposing the fake news, hoaxes, and political biases of traditional media. Another peculiarity of cyberspace is that the same person can be the editor, the audience and the reader, there are no gender based inequalities. Moreover social media opens up freedom of expression that people have not had before, it is an open space where there is no door.

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Entertainment is the first and most crucial component of social media platforms. The reels and YouTube have completely changed how consumers find and consume intriguing content. Short YouTube films have been created by social network educators on a range of subjects, such as teaching academics, ethics, and online skills like stock trading, using the equities and digital currencies, and spoken English instruction, among several others. It's true that YouTube has established

itself as a major hub for video production, and a lot of people use it to share their interests, pastimes, and knowledge in addition to having the ability to make money through various monetisation choices. Logging in particular has become quite popular since it enables content producers to offer a genuine and personal viewpoint on a range of subjects.

The Malayalam content on YouTube is enormous, covering such topics as food and technology, and political content, as well as vlogs of trips. This multiplicity depicts the ability of the platform to accommodate different audiences and interests. The video creators can also monetise their videos by letting advertisements be run on it prior to, during or after their content. This advertising brings to creators a share of the revenue via what is called a Google AdSense that contains the ad revenue according to such metrics as views, engagement, and interaction with the advertisement. Paid Campaigns or Sponsorships; several content creators on the site collaborate with one another in paid campaigns or sponsorships there. This includes placing adverts of goods or services in their short videos at a fee. Which certainly implies that political paid campaigns and fakes news do generate revenue too.

Facebook is a popular social media site that may be used for a variety of things, including political discussion and communication. Political leaders, parties as well as individuals use Facebook to share information, interact with supporters, and spread their political agendas in Kerala and many other areas. Another well-liked messaging service that has been heavily utilised throughout India for political reasons is WhatsApp. It provides users with the ability to organise groups, post messages, photographs, and videos, making it a useful tool for political parties to broadcast information and enlist supporters. The program '*Thurannukkattapedunna sathyanandharam*' (Unveiled Post Truth), started by Communist Party leader M. Swaraj, is presented on the CPM Kerala YouTube channel mainly to criticise the media.

On a daily basis, new features are being added to Facebook and Whatsapp. These media bring more and more information to people. Undoubtedly, such newly introduced features increase political communication in a highly literate state like

Kerala. Unlike other media, every social media user takes on the role of content writer, reporter and editor. This naturally creates a potential for misleading content and the dissemination of false information. In Kerala it's already been reported that propaganda is being spread using social media. In addition, these media are being used to increase depoliticisation.

Memes are a different method for communicating effectively with others. It is a typical form of internet culture whereby amusing or funny pictures, videos, or texts would be created and shared. They often refer to shared experience, inside jokes and cultural references. Memes have since proven to be an essential part of the communication processes in the online world and they have evolved with time to assume many variations and forms. It is a well-liked strategy for successfully connecting with people. Users are getting increasingly active in both watching and creating memes. Memes are well-liked as advertising and marketing tactics in Political communication, largely used by political activists against their opponents and the government. Number of troll groups in Malayalam for this purpose.

Social media is flooded with many kinds of news and information. It is difficult for common people to understand whether it is credible or whether it is not. So fake news it's a phenomenon which is becoming very interesting as we go on, particularly because of the role social media has played within the political context. How did fake news come to be, let us look at what it is that causes it. Mainly, the 24-hour news channels are going up and up every year. And just imagine that the twenty-four-hour running news channels where did they have content from, and they need to encourage the people or the audience with something new. The competition is definitely there, so that the rush and busiest life of channels and business leads to fake and incredible news, and the social media following it, this is a controversial situation. Political parties, political activists, politicians, and individuals themselves are using social media as a tool for sending out their messages convincing people to vote for themselves. Therefore biased and emotions reflecting there most of the time truth is far away from it and fake news which exists because anybody listening to it. There is no regulating mechanism in this digital public sphere or social media

platform, this situation is named as post-truth era. Kerala literacy rate is high but the fake news and political conflicts through social media are also widely reported. Although social media has been given the opportunity to challenge the monopoly of traditional media in cyberspace, their political discourse is still noticeable.

Includes Social Media in Kerala: Unlike print media, news from visual and social media attracts people, and the first reason is technological excellence. If in the print media, one had to read and understand, today the news is like 'spoon feeding' because of information overloaded in the digital era and discussions are shifting to digital platforms (Arnold, Goldschmitt, & Rigotti, 2023). The comment box message-sending system on social media helps guide such discussions. The news becoming 'viral news' and the emergence of 'trolls' help us understand the scope of the news. Unlike traditional media that provided political news by holding media conferences, through opinion bytes of leaders, panel discussions, and reporting on protests, the unique feature of social media is that everyone can be a part of the discussions. In other words, everyone has become a media worker. The sight of political party workers clashing with each other in the virtual space is a constant in Kerala, and the fact that they can communicate in such spaces in the 'Malayalam' language has created a situation where all people can be a part of it. Traditional political communication methods such as door-to-door campaigning, organising public events, and publishing leaflets are now more common in Kerala during election times. At other times, virtual spaces are increasingly the centre of the debate.

The paper is named as 'Social Media Dependency and Facebook Usage among the Older Adults of Kerala' which discusses the involvement of elderly individuals (age 60 and above) in social media and, in particular, Facebook. The study is based on a sample size of 416 people studying the trends of social media addictions, the level of Facebook usage and its impact on well-being. The research findings show that social media, especially Facebook, has become an essential part of the lives of senior citizens in Kerala. It was found that the majority of people (88.2%) use social media for more than three hours daily, of which 52.4% spend this

time on Facebook. Furthermore, 47.8% have more than 400 Facebook friends. These findings indicate that Facebook is an important tool for them to maintain connections with family and friends and to avoid isolation to a lesser extent. The results point to a growing relationship between seniors in Kerala and digital platforms, with Facebook being a tool of social connection and a potential source of addiction for this age group. This study demonstrates the necessity of offering a more comprehensive outlook on the digital life of older adults and an examination of the dynamics of social media use on the wider scale of the respective population (Menon et al., 2023). According to the article, the state of Kerala has the highest percentage of internet users in India (Digital Marketing Scenario For Running Online Campaigns in Kerala- An Overview (Updated). 54% of the people in the state have access to the internet. Based on this, approximately 18 million (1.8 crore) people in Kerala use the internet (Blusteak Media, 2022).

In the article, *The Internet, 'Public Spheres and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation (2005)'*, Peter Dahlgren discusses the destabilising impacts of the new media and especially the internet in changing the manner in which political communication occurs in the modern democracies. It shows the way advancement in communication technology has made political processes very complex but also rich with the development of political events and the question of whether or not the democratic processes remain healthy and dynamic in the changing environment of the media. *Key Concepts from the Essay, Destabilization of Political Communication:* The traditional political communication systems are under strain due to various factors, such as increased media outlets, changes in media formats, and the rise of non-journalistic political mediators like consultants and spin doctors. Such changes lead to some degree of polarisation of political language and make it difficult to govern. *Sociocultural Heterogeneity:* Political communication has also been becoming more decentralised in the face of an expanding media market and the various audiences that each channel possesses. This cultural diversity complicates the ability to deliver a unified political message and has led to greater individualisation in political engagement. *Media Abundance and Cacophony:* The internet has contributed to a media landscape full of competing

voices and perspectives, leading to what the essay describes as a "cacophony." This saturation makes it harder for any single political message to stand out, fostering cynicism and disengagement among citizens. Market Forces and Media Commercialisation: The deregulation and commercialisation of the media industry, fueled by market forces, have pushed aside traditional journalistic values. This shift has resulted in a political communication system that prioritises profit over civic responsibility, further destabilising democratic processes. The Public Sphere on the Internet: The internet is presented as a double-edged sword. Although it has opened the way to the extension of political participation and novel democratic contact, it exhibits and exacerbates most of the problems in traditional media. The selling of the internet, consumerism spread and undermining of civic participation restricts the opportunity of genuine democratic deliberation on the internet. New Political Actors and Mediation: The emergence of professional political mediators, politicians, political consultants, spin doctors etc. has meant that to a much greater extent than previously, political communication does not go through traditional journalists at all. These mediators tend to dispose of more power in the political discourse than the press and influence the way politics is packaged to the people. Digital Divide and Global Inequalities: In the essay, the phenomenon of the digital divide is also touched upon; this is because whereas in the West the use of the internet is on the rise, in the global South it already serves a major obstacle. This gap bars some groups of people from enjoying the digital public sphere to full extent. Why the net is a threat to political systems: Although the internet brings a chance of the grassroots movement and subversive political process, the authoritarian worldwide is trying to suppress the democratic capabilities of the internet. These attempts are more or less successful, yet they evidence the extent to which it is difficult to keep the digital public sphere free, open, and honest (Dahlgren, 2005).

Transferring the article themes to the situation of media and political communication in Kerala, it is possible to state a number of similarities or points of collision. Evolution of Media Landscape: With the emergence of digital media, the media landscape in Kerala has seen a drastic change. Although the traditional newspapers such as Malayala Manorama and Mathrubhumi are still gaining ground,

online news portals and social media websites have grown by leaps and bounds, not to mention new media. It is true to the general trend of media fragmentation evidenced in other democracies.

Cultural and Political Heterogeneity: Kerala fluctuates in the complicated efforts of culture and political factors shaping life, such as caste, religion, and regionalism. With the media becoming more diverse, it means that there are more diverse and subtle voices in politics, although this means that audiences are focused on media that resonate with them, creating political polarisation. Political Mediation and Professionalisation: Just like it has been the trend stated all over the world, Kerala too has witnessed the emergence of the political consultant, media professional, and spin doctor, who together have a very important role to play in creating the opinion of the people during election time. These experts tend to have a greater impact on political discourse than the conventional journalists, which has caused some realignments in the exposition of political messages. Cynicism and Disengagement: Excess of media coverage in Kerala and disproportionately in social media has resulted in a cynic attitude on the part of the voters. Due to widespread sensationalisation of information, misinformed, thus, a lack of faith has been adopted about contemporary political frameworks. Such detachment is reflected in the greater democratic crisis addressed in the essay.

Digital Transformation and Civic Participation: Kerala has had a history rich in activism because of its high literacy rates and increased internet presence. Although the internet should provide more chances to take part in the civic lives, there are often limitations such as the digital divide or inequalities in accessing the internet. Just like in other regions of the world, there has been fear that internet conversation might not always play an important role in democratic deliberation, simply because it tends to be engulfed in the ruckus of entertainment or consumer-driven information. Commercialisation and Media Ownership: An effect of the emergence of the corporate media in Kerala and a consequent takeover by mega media houses has resulted in growing commercialisation of political communication. This profiteering has been seen as a process that has changed the coverage of politics in a way that it favours the sensational accounts as opposed to serious and investigative reporting.

Global and Local Challenges: Analogous to the way in which the internet has been employed to criticise political systems at the international level, the digital media has also been utilised in Kerala as an instrument of political opposition. But like any other part of the world, there exists a fight against the emergence of authoritarian tendencies and the control of the media in the region. All the potential of social media to create a civil society in the situation of their use as political influence areas is compromised by the possibility of a politically organised manipulation of the situation, when social media are used to manage the election process and fake news.

5.9 The Post-Truth Era in Politics

In 1992 Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich introduced the word ‘post truth’ in his article. Post truth was chosen by the Oxford Dictionary as the international word of the year 2016 (The Guardian, 2016). “This will become the defining word for our phase” said Casper Grathwohl academic product director Oxford University Press. The dictionary given meaning is ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. and Cambridge also given same ‘relating to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and belief, rather than one based on facts. In Kerala post truth politics and fakes news we can understand with some examples of social media news reporting.

False information regarding purported treatments, cures, or preventative measures may have been spread on social media in Kerala during the COVID-19 outbreak and fake news regarding 2018 flood. These statements might not have any supporting scientific data, but they might spread because of apprehension and confusion. Targeted Incident Framing: Videos or pictures of specific occurrences could be manipulated to produce a specific story. This could include protests or political gatherings where the context is twisted to advance a particular viewpoint. Brexit and Trump’s electoral success also exemplify this, and Goebbels’s strategy also follows certain pleasure groups and political activists (Freedman, 2018).

Post truth has received more attention from the blog ‘Grist’ by David Robert, who has put forward a concept of post-truth politics. This is how he defined politics, a political culture in which politics (public opinion and media narratives) had

become almost completely divorced from. (change from substance of legislation). It also meant that post truth created incredulity towards the political institution. Political institution is inevitable in politics, but the trust deficit there and the trust flowing into the individual concepts of emotion (Robert, 2010).

In the post-truth era, interviews and propaganda settings are used through social media to spread false information (McIntyre, 2018). Social media terms like name-calling, glitter, plain folks, testimonial, generalities, euphemism, bandwagon, and fear are often associated with different techniques used in social media, communication, and persuasion. Here's a brief explanation of each.

Name-calling: This technique involves using negative labels or derogatory terms to evoke strong emotional reactions and prejudices against a person, group, or idea. It's a form of propaganda designed to discredit opponents (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019).

Generalities: This tactic uses ambiguous, empathetically appealing words or phrases that lack particular information. Without offering meaningful proof or information, the goal is to establish positive associations (Ellul, 1973).

Glitter: The use of eye-catching and visually pleasing information, frequently involving photos, videos, or design elements, to capture an audience's attention and promote interaction is referred to as glitter (Galli, 2016).

Testimonial: This strategy involves using people's recommendations or firsthand accounts to promote a good, service, or concept. Positive feedback from reliable sources is frequently disseminated to affect the beliefs and actions of others (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001).

Plain Folks: This technique emphasizes typical, everyday values and experiences to make a person or message seem accessible and grounded. The objective is to generate a sense of authenticity and general appeal (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019).

Euphemisms: Euphemisms are gentle or covert expressions that are employed in place of harsh, delicate, or possibly objectionable words or phrases. They're frequently used to soften or make something sound more appetizing than it truly is (Begzjav & Nyamsuren (2023).

Bandwagon: The bandwagon strategy persuades individuals to adopt a particular attitude, viewpoint, or way of thinking simply because "everyone else is doing it." The intention creates a sense of homogeneity (Henshel & Johnston, 1987).

Fear: This strategy uses messages that evoke fear to sway attitudes or behavior. In order to persuade people to take particular acts or support certain views in order to avoid imagined negative repercussions, it plays on their emotions and concerns (Witte et al., 2001).

All these techniques are used in the digital public sphere, through social media, and the public sphere, deeply relying on propaganda. Therefore, the post-truth era captures or damages our critical thinking. Here we do not believe in the truth; this is the post-truth society (McIntyre, 2018). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt examines social and psychological ground in which the emergence of totalitarian forms of government is possible. One of the major questions she asks is; who is the perfect subject of such systems? The ideal type of subject is not a zealous ideologue; the ideal is rather the person who has been deeply alienated and isolated in relation to social and political life as Arendt tells us.

Arendt argues that these individuals are disconnected from traditional social structures, such as family and community, which typically provide a sense of belonging and shared purpose. This alienation puts them in the category of being manipulated as they find meaning and identity in the totalitarian ideology. Moreover, this kind of people loses a hold on reality, is ready to believe in lies and contradictions due to the fact that the story (narrative) of the regime gives them an internally coherent picture of the world, although not true. Such perfect subjects are also outlined with distrust and cynicism who have no faith in truth and rationality. It is this mistrust that causes them to become open to an oppressive system that gives them a certainty and an order. Also, they are intimidated by the sense of hopelessness and helplessness, and thus they end up being compliant subjects to the totalitarian society. The analysis by Arendt indicates that prospects of the totalitarian systems do not lie in the zealous nature of the people following this system of operation but rather that they do lack the capacity to ask questions and to make independent decisions. The totalitarian regimes create an environment where individuals have to play the role of a tool of the state, replacing individual autonomy

with a blind nature of loyalty. The thoughts of Arendt are relevant and they act as a warning message regarding the downsides of alienation and how due to lack of critical thinking in contemporary societies, totalitarianism can be discovered (The Origins of Totalitarianism, 1951). The nature of the post-truth era and its relationship with social media is specifically challenging in the example of Kerala, a state in India with exceptional levels of literacy and high participation in social and political discourse, where it is a thought-provoking case study. Although Kerala can boast of a population with a high level of education, it has not been exempt from the difficulties presented by misinformation, especially in crisis situations, including the Nipah virus outbreak, the 2018 floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are the explanations of what the politics of fake news is and how Kerala social media can be viewed as an example of the post-truth era.

Figure 5.7

A Piece of Fake News that was Spread on Social Media



Source: Adapted from In Kerala, fake news floods — social media adds to panic, by The Hindu, 2019, August 10,

Fake news is a great concern, not only in Kerala, India, but also across the globe. Kerala possesses a rather large media and a highly educated population, which is also vulnerable to the issues that arise due to false information. Specifically, the politics of fake news in Kerala is addressed as follows.

Misinformation normally uses sensational pictures or stories that attract attention. In one example, during the 2018 floods, there were false alarms that electricity would be turned off, leading to unnecessary panic among the residents (BBC News, 2018). False or exaggerated news reports can quickly go viral and provoke panic or irresponsible behaviour in Kerala, where a number of social, cultural, and political concerns are of serious concern. By discussing this phenomenon, Pierpoint reiterated the importance of proper data and responsibility in reporting during emergency situations that allow the effectiveness of disaster management and assures citizens of the trustfulness (Pierpoint, 2018). Misinformation; Social media has been used to share information at a high rate through false information. In the case of the Nipah virus outbreak, there was misinformation surrounding the transmission modes, which caused the workers in the health sector to be socially ostracised, and this did not facilitate a proper response to the outbreak (RSTMH, 2018). Fake news is a political leverage that tarnishes certain parties to generate a desired change of opinion. Misinformation during the time of a disaster, including the 2018 floods, is not new, and research studies point to the fact that untrue narratives have the potential to make the effects of a disaster even worse (ResearchGate, 2018). Since there are pre-existing social tensions, misinformation can make social tensions worse. As a result of the Nipah outbreak, panic and fear took hold of communities, and an absolute plethora of rumours and unconfirmed allegations covered social media, which caused communities to be even more socially ostracised and stigmatised. It was Arun Perooli who said, (Arun Perooli, 2023). The economic impact of dissemination of untrue information may be harmful. The health crises occasioned baseless rumors and caused people to fear and avert contact effects on local businesses and economies. To give an example, in case of the outbreak of Nipah virus, rumors made people fearful, and it impacted the business and people of the region (Livemint, 2018).

In 2018 there was an outbreak of Nipah virus in Kerala. Disinformation that was disseminated about the contagiousness or deadliness of the virus went very fast causing a public fear and discrimination of both people with viral infection and health care workers. To have a proper response regarding the phenomenon of

government protection to the health of citizens, the government had to fight these misleading messages (RSTMH, 2018). Fake news about power cuts also led to panic among people as social media was used during the 2018 devastating floods when people received false alerts about power being cut off. This misinformation was attempted to be overcome with efforts of guaranteeing the security of the masses (BBC News, 2018). Misinformation was on the rise with the COVID-19 Pandemic and Kerala was not an exception. Misinformation about the origin, prevention and treatment of the virus were rampant and thus the government and civil society organisations took steps to divert such information and directed proper information to the people (BMJ Global Health, 2021).

During the time of pandemic situations like Nipah virus, Covid-19 and flood in 2018 the political parties and pressure groups used the pandemic situation for their gain through creating propaganda against government policy, and spreading rumour against vaccination etc. The Nipah virus actually affected a panchayat of Kozhikode district, and we could see the responsible intervention of Kerala Government, panchayat and health authority (Livemint, 2018). This was a panic situation not only in Kerala but also neighbouring states and in our Country as a whole.

There were unfounded speculations and reports that the number of deaths caused by the Nipah virus was much higher than what was stated by reliable sources. The people became alarmed and perplexed as a result. Virus's mode of transmission was incorrectly reported, which resulted in misunderstandings about how the virus spreads. There have been some unfounded allegations that the virus can spread by water, air, and even casual touch. Fake Remedies and Cures on social media, a number of home remedies cures and treatments for the Nipah virus were shared. These cures had no scientific basis and might have harmed patients by deterring them from obtaining appropriate medical attention (Purohit, 2020). Case of identification, when erroneous or unsubstantiated information about potential Nipah virus cases was spread, it unnecessarily stoked panic and anxiety in some communities. Unverified Precautions; Misleading Precautions and Warning were

circulated, confusing the public. This false advice included avoiding particular foods, wearing particular masks, or adopting untested techniques of viral prevention. False notifications that the virus was shutting down public facilities like schools were circulated, causing unneeded disruptions and feeding the widespread dread (BBC News, 2018).

Kerala, like many other areas, witnessed the dissemination of false information during the COVID-19 outbreak via social media. During the epidemic, some of the false information that was spread in Kerala, several unsubstantiated cures and preventive methods were discussed, including the use of particular foods, plants, or medicines to either treat or prevent COVID-19. These assertions lacked any basis in science and might even be dangerous. Inaccurate information regarding the modes of COVID-19 transmission was disseminated, which caused uncertainty over the virus's mode of transmission. Some untrue assertions included the idea that certain foods, animals, or even 5G technology may spread the illness. There has been fake news regarding the closure of all the check-posts that Kerala shares with other states. Due to this there was a law and order issue reported in Palakkad Walayar, Kaliyakyavila and Kasargod.

There were cases of false information being circulated on social media during the deadly 2018 Kerala floods, which were a natural calamity. These erroneous stories frequently made the crisis's anxiety and bewilderment worse. A number of pictures and videos that had nothing to do with the flood were posted on social media under the false pretense that they were from the present situation. Images from earlier floods, other locations, and even unrelated calamities were included. False information concerning rescue activities and helplines has reportedly been circulated, according to sources. This made it difficult to coordinate actual rescue operations and caused misunderstanding among individuals who needed assistance.

Some social media posts shared exaggerated death toll and casualty counts, which unnecessarily stoked public worry and anxiety. On a number of sites, fake donation campaigns were launched, taking money away from actual relief efforts.

Speculations of Reservoir and Dam Failures, upstream residents were unnecessarily alarmed by speculations that reservoirs and dams might eventually fail. Some posts made an effort to politicise the tragedy by accusing particular parties or people without solid justification. These cases of false information and fake news brought to light the difficulties presented by the quick dissemination of unreliable information on social media platforms during a public health emergency (BBC News, 2018). The Kerala government and health officials were forced to actively combat these false narratives by communicating factual information via authorised channels, using social media to post updates, and advising the public to rely on reliable sources for information (Livemint, 2018). This epidemic brought home how crucial media literacy and critical thinking are in the digital age.

How can post truth be seen in Kerala? If social or political issues or incidents occur, the rest of the battle or discussions is conducted and prosecuted through social media. At such a time, propaganda will be set by individuals or groups very quickly through social media platforms and turned from facts because there is no editor or any type of regulations there. As information related to the incident is available in the new media, the TV channels also use the social media platforms for spreading their news, therefore the digital public sphere catching the information quickly and easily. People's critical impulse has been severely affected during this post-truth period. People tend to be lazy and do not even read most of the articles they comment on, much less check the truth of the articles (Pew Research Center, 2020). The 2020 gold smuggling case that rocked Kerala politics, the 2017 attack on a film actress, fake news of Omanakuttan during the flood, and the 2019 Sabarimala women's entry are all examples of how this kind of post truth time affected Kerala politics and society.

All these cases have led to long lasting conflicts in Kerala. The legislative assembly has been adjourned several times. Various information and false information has been spread in this regard through different platforms of social media. Allegations have been made against the government and opposition parties. The mainstream media has covered it as a series. These problems should have

persisted for the capitalist media. Therefore widespread propaganda set and fake news came constantly. If we check the election results, it will be understood that all these cases have affected the elections that have come during these times. In the election that came after the flood and Nipah virus the government got a favorable result but many fake news affected some seats. The LDF overcame hostile campaigning and coalitions among its opponents to secure a significant advantage in both rural and urban areas at the 2020 local body elections. For the first time since 1977, an alliance won successive terms in the state as the LDF won 99 of 140 seats in the 2021 Kerala Legislative Assembly election. Analysts credited this triumph to the government's excellent emergency response and strong governance performance, which established new standards and gave Malayalis confidence that they were being governed effectively. (Down To Earth, 2021; People's World, 2020; The India Forum, 2021).

A diversified strategy is needed to address the politics of fake news and social media in the post-truth era: Promoting critical thinking and media literacy can make people more discerning information consumers and less dependent on false information. Social media businesses can enforce stronger regulations against false information, and fake news while maintaining transparency in their content moderation procedures. Verification of facts: Investing in reputable fact-checking organisations and highlighting their work can help stop the spread of false information.

Collaboration between social media platforms, governments, and professionals can result in more intelligent regulations and more practical solutions. Campaigns to increase public awareness of the risks of propagating disinformation and its effects on society can promote appropriate information-sharing behaviours. Schooling on digital citizenship; Teaching students about this topic in classrooms might help them better comprehend the obligations and moral ramifications of being active internet users. Addressing the politics of fake news and the role of social media in the post-truth era requires concerted efforts of conscious interference by

individuals, government, technology companies and civil society to uphold the principle of truth, accuracy and democratic debate.

5.10 Conclusion

Social media has created a huge revolution in political communication in Kerala. It has enabled positive participation, direct interaction with the people, and a space for raising opposing voices. However, every individual in Kerala society, the government, and the political parties should be prepared to assess its dark side, overcome the challenges, and create the necessary norms. Moreover, it is most important to examine how impartial and accountable all movements and their ideas are. In Kerala, where social media was widely used during floods, Nipah, and COVID-19, it was a good communication tool to get government announcements and information directly without time constraints and to make people aware. However, fake news and announcements have created various difficulties for the people and the government. The government has had to be vigilant against it many times, and even police cases have had to be taken. Another fact is that social media activity has led to questioning the ability of the traditional media in Kerala to decide what is 'important news', as well as providing a space for the people of Kerala to communicate directly in the digital public sphere.

CHAPTER 6

MASS MEDIA NEWS, SENSATIONALISM AND ETHICAL CONCERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

6.1 Introduction

The expression we become what we behold comes, by crediting it to Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher and theorist of the media, of the book *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (McLuhan, 1967). It echoes his thoughts on the use of media and technology in influencing human perception and behaviour. The Kerala media has been central to the interaction of people in its state, which has been highly literate with politically involved citizens. Since the inception of print journalism in Kerala through the emergence of broadcast and digital media, media in Kerala not only circulate information but have also shaped the political sensibility (Menon, 1979; Jeffrey, 2001). This special culture of media has played a vital role in the development of democracy and its interaction, although it has suffered considerably when it comes to the commitment to ethics under the influence of both politics and corporations (RSF, 2022).

Media ethics play a central role in maintaining the integrity of journalism. Truthfulness, objectivity, accountability, and fairness are major tenets that need to be embraced to build trust in the media institutions (Ward, 2009). These guidelines are the ethical codes of any kind of media such as print or online. But with the consolidation of media ownership and the erosion of the divide between journalism and business ethics has emerged as a burning issue. These patterns can be seen in Kerala too, where in an extremely competitive media landscape, it is only natural that there should be more sensationalism and editorial bias (Dineshan, 2019). The emergence of corporate media ownership has transformed the media environment in Kerala to a great extent. Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, large media houses, along with television networks such as Asianet, have become strong actors whose

role in informing public opinion and political discussions cannot be ignored anymore (Newslandry, 2023). Corporate ownership brings with it the scope of business interest, which in turn brings about editorial bias, preference for profit-making content, and a predisposition to manipulations in the political narration. It has brought forth qualms of the decreasing power of independent journalism to that of an agenda which complements political or corporate values (KODOTH, 2010).

Political action in Kerala is closely connected with the media and the association is very strong. Media houses, particularly the heavily sponsored ones, are indispensable in the mobilisation of individuals in politics, campaigning during elections and the determination of the voting patterns (ResearchGate, 2012). Since political parties in the state of Kerala are cognisant of the strength of the media, they have attempted to join forces or show the might of major media outlets in an attempt to push their own interests (NDTV, 2021). This is where corporate media and political action collide, and one must question the role of media in a democratic society where the free flow of information is a necessary requirement to make informed choices.

This chapter critically examines the intersection of media-transformed space, corporate media ownership, and political communications in Kerala. Analysing key case studies and exploring media ownership patterns seeks to understand how these dynamics affect public discourse, political communication and political power structures. The chapter will provide insights into the ethical challenges Kerala's media faces and the implications of corporate influence on the region's political landscape.

The credibility of the media depends on their delivering the right facts and full truths to the people. The phenomenon of 'paid news' is a big black spot on the reputation of the media houses. The Press Council of India defines 'paid news' as any news or analysis appearing in print or electronic media for consideration in cash or kind (Forum IAS, 2019). The phenomenon started in 1991 when the Indian economy was opened to the world. The corporate houses gave money to various journalists to print partial and half-truths so they could be listed in the stock market.

Today, various political parties and politicians use the phenomenon to defame their political rivals and try to influence and polarise the Indian electorate for their own benefit.

The media frequently publishes fake news, sensationalised news stories, or engages in a practice known as "paid news" and "trial by the media." The public no longer trusts the media because of the numerous excesses they perpetrate. A person's right to privacy may be violated, and the information may be manipulated and misrepresented as a result of the media outlets' use of unfair methods to obtain their data. The 'sting operation' is a somewhat popular method used by media outlets to obtain information. In order to reveal the corruption and other wrongdoings of those in positions of authority, the procedure entails installing hidden cameras. The channel frequently fabricates footage of fictitious "sting operations" in which the reporter's actions give the impression that the story is authentic in order to sell it. It is these fictitious 'sting operations' that turn the true victim into a public villain. It ruins their social lives, their dignity, their value as individuals, and their means to earn a livelihood (Sinha, 2023).

Media ethics refers to all principles and standards which control journalists and the media houses in carrying out their mandate of informing others. These ethics are vital in the presentation of news in an honest way that will make people trust the media. Truthfulness, objectivity, fairness and accountability are the most important principles. Veracity requires media practitioners to deliver quality information, misinformation discourages democratic processes and the trust of the people. Objectivity is the act of not giving biased views of the action of reporting in a manner that gives a balanced picture of every side of a story. Equitability guarantees that reporting is not biased and that it provides a platform to assorted voices. Accountability forces journalists and media houses to take responsibility for their wrongs and rectify them in time. At a time when fake news can travel far in a short amount of time on the internet, ethical journalism is the key to building trust with the population by keeping the influential people and organisations responsible.

6.2 Media and Its Ethical Role

Some significant changes have occurred in the media environment in Kerala since the 19th century due to high rates of literacy and politically conscious citizens. Malayalam journalism has its beginnings in early journals like *Rajyasamacharam* (1847) and *Paschimodayam* (1847). *Rajyasamacharam*, by Rev. Hermann Gundert, and *Paschimodayam*, by Rev. Lawrence, were their founders. The earliest newspapers focused on the aspects of education and the well-being of the people, which established moral precedents in honest reporting. Much can be said about the objective nature of media by the fact that reporters integrated their reporting with activism during the freedom struggle. Such media platforms as the *Malayala Manorama* (1888) or *Mathrubhumi* (1923) became powerful media framing the opinion of the masses in Kerala after the liberation. But the interconnections between these media houses and political parties caused difficulty in the aspect of neutrality resulting in issues to do with political inclinations in broadcasting thus giving rise to ethical issues of political inclinations in broadcasting (Jayaraj, 2013). In 1924, *Al-Ameen* newspaper began under the leadership of Muhammad Abdul Rahman at Kozhikode. EMS has made a comment that *Al-Ameen* contributed in making the national independence movement important to people. *Al-Ameen* explained to people that the civil disobedience case was a holy war. Which also published a news report that not only there were Muslims but also 5 Hindu brothers who had died in the wagon tragedy. *Al-Amin* has given religious harmony news in the situation of Hindu- Muslim polarisation of the Malabar riots (Anilkumar, 2012).

The historical development of media ethics in Kerala can be traced through significant phases. Pre-independence, newspapers played a vital role in shaping public discourse. These editorials had a firm belief in social reform and nationalism where *Kerala Patrika* (1884) which was an initiative of Chengalathu Kunhirama Menon espoused social justice and political awareness. Other than the reform promoted by *Malayala Manorama* which was founded by Kandathil Varghese Mappillai, great emphasis was on the interests of the Christian community. These pioneer newspapers showed interest in ethical journalism, thus giving first

importance to public interest, social reforms, and national integration (Rajasekharan, 2019). Kesari Balakrishna Pillai and Swadeshabhmani Ramakrishna Pillai contributed a lot to the moral conduct of journalism in Kerala. Their demand for truth, responsibility and the press as a vehicle to social change has been a reminder in the present-day media. The sacrifice of Ramakrishna Pillai for the cause of the press freedom and intellectual toughness of Balakrishna Pillai gave a precedent to stand against interference by the government and to give importance to the right of the people to have information (Nair, 2002). Collectively, these reflect the moral battle of the Kerala press to stay independent and credible against the outside pressures that continues to echo even today.

The current media is in the postmodern dynamics of fluid, and this comprises the news headquarters, the news content and the audience. The audience is no longer just readers who are waiting to get the morning newspaper in order to make informed decisions but what is present is that there are now mobile readers who use computers or smartphones to view news. Kerala has a lot of people who make it a habit to revisit what they had seen earlier on TV and this is a sign that the mode of engagement has changed. Such readers have become vocal and visible and there has been a great increase in criticism of news coverage among the people. The probing of the fundamental values and morals of the media is being put forward more than ever before. Newspapers being produced by corporate bodies have a hard time remaining as they used to. In the meantime, social media presents a contrast to traditional journalism, and it is shaking up its norms. It is the time when the world is in a state of constant change because of the achieved technological progress and the shift of how the world views the question of the truth being uncertain (Rajasekharan, 2019).

The history of Malayalam journalism is special since it is a producer and product at the same time. It was also the creator of the modernity of Kerala, which appeared together with modernism in the 19th century. This feature affected the socio-cultural and political changes existing in Kerala until the middle period of the 19th century. The history of modernity in Kerala is in many ways similar to the

history of Malayalam journalism and vice versa. The fact of journalism as a daily practice or as a profession is highly historical and easily forgotten or even non-cogitating. Malayalam newspaper work today is a specific discourse with its specific narrations and ways of life, and no longer a specific variety of modernism constitutive of the notions of nation, identity, language, secularism, scientific way of thinking, caste, and power, no longer as it used to be in the past (Ibid).

The development of media in Kerala is also associated with numerous ethical issues, especially about the political leanings of the big media groups like Malayala Manorama and Mathrubhumi. Such outlets have been accused of propagating a certain political ideology and this has become a serious issue of contention in terms of the influence of the media in the determination of political language. As an example, Malayala Manorama has been castigated as working in tandem with the Indian National Congress (INC), in an editorial board that in many cases supports particular policies and candidates of the party. The association has been cited by scholars who have described the long history of the media house to be linked to political elites and it greatly affected its reports in crucial political events such as elections and crisis in governance. Comparatively Mathrubhumi has been viewed as slightly to the congress or left camp and their ownership by the Janata Dal party and on the other hand, it will be argued that it stands with a neutralist or center position. This has influenced its editorial policy regarding the labour problems, the social justice movements and the politics in Kerala.

Such political inclinations have caused issues of serious concern as to whether the media is impartial especially at times of election when citizens of this country will expect the media to give them impartial information. Research also has revealed that when these outlets are partisan like what they are on during important occasions like during the time of elections, or on political scandals, they can do so at the expense of the opinion of the people by highlighting an issue, or by toning it down depending on how the issue relates to their political affiliations. This is a breach of the ethical mission of the media by not serving as neutral and thus obliged to play the role of an independent watchdog of democracy, which invalidates its role

of keeping the political power in check. This also creates negative values in relation to media institutions because they lose the trust of the people, and people no longer consider them to be a fair source of news.

Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) is one which runs by the accreditation regulations of the State Information and Public Relations Department. The government issued identity cards that the journalists use in accessing news facilities are renewable on yearly basis. The government at the state level is the final arbitrator of granting and removing accreditation, hence increasing the control by the government on access to media.

Kerala government has developed defined accreditation regulations that insist on the professionalism of journalists and guarantee the trustworthiness of bond between the government and the media houses. The eligibility criterion, institutional terms, the procedure of issuing and renewing their credit cards, and cancellation status are well stated. Among the provisions made to determine cleanliness and accountability in the media sector are the validity of the card, misuse-prevention, and prevention-of-fake-news provisions. Even though temporary accreditation can be rewarded in special cases, it can only afford a few service rights. These are legal mechanisms, which try to strike a balance between freedom and responsibility of the media.

6.3 The Early Influence of Doordarshan

The news channels in Malayalam, on the grounds of any amount of violation of ethics related to the news channels, have a deal of sensationalism, invasion of privacy and affiliation controlling the news production goes a long way back into the earlier version of Doordarshan to the recent times of the privately owned channels. Such issues have been aggravated by the competition which has erupted in the media, more especially with the emergence of live broadcasts and the introduction of personal TV channels. Doordarshan is a state television broadcaster of India and it had a significant contribution in the history of media in India in its initial years. Doordarshan was introduced on September 15, 1959, and at this time it was working as an offshoot of the All India Radio until it came out as an autonomous body in

1976. It had witnessed a monopoly in the field of television broadcasting in India for decades, which continued till the liberalisation of the media sector in the early 1990s. The content of Doordarshan during this period mainly reflected the state's interests and had no goals to attract audiences through sensationalism that came to be the hallmark of later privately owned channels (Kumar, 2000).

The salience of sober and restrained tone in the news programs made Doordarshan unique because it was to avoid controversy and remain within the limits of what the government considered acceptable. This was an advantage as well as a drawback to this approach. On the one hand, the lack of sensationalism and the tabloid-style news led to the fact that privacy was not violated, and there were no dramas presented in the light of the news that would form the majority of Indian television later. Conversely, this impartiality was usually achieved at the expense of journalistic standards. With no critical or investigative journalism particularly in national issues, many felt Doordarshan was a tool of government propaganda and not an independent media house (Ninan, 1995). The role of the broadcaster as an instrument of state power was also conspicuous, especially in the Emergency era (1975-77) when media censorship was in vogue. Any kind of dissent was curbed during this period and Doordarshan was used as a means of state propaganda. The channel was controlled by the government, and this gave the government the opportunity to create a constant perception among people, and this reduced the media role of watchdog further. This made Doordarshan a confirmed official or a state-controlled organisation, especially to its critics (Ninan, 1995).

The news on Doordarshan Malayalam was only 15 minutes long. There was no breaking news like we see today, no nightly discussions, all the news had to be included in the total 15 minutes. There were frequent interruptions due to the lack of signal if there was rain or wind. If any very important events happened, there would be news that lasted only one or two minutes in the middle of the program that was being broadcast. The TV antenna of that time was a sign of luxury too. Nevertheless, Doordarshan, together with these shortcomings, also contributed to building national unity in the country, especially in the rural and remote regions where it was a single

source of information and entertainment. It showed educational programs, agricultural suggestions, and cultural programs that portrayed India as a diverse cultural nation, which is why it was a powerful marketing agent toward social messaging (Kumar, 2000). Doordarshan no longer has the monopoly, and the opening up of India to liberalisation, both economically and also media-wise, came in the early 1990s. The entry of commercial Indian television channels such as Zee TV, Star Plus and Asianet in the State of Kerala signalled the dawn of a new era in Indian broadcasting in which stiff competition, business motives and sensationalism crept gradually onto the centre stage.

6.4 Emergence of Commercialization in Media

The first Kerala private satellite channel Asianet, which began operation in the year 1993 signaled a huge change in the media scenario in the state. Leaving aside the monopoly of All India Radio and Doordarshan, under the control of the government, Asianet made entry into a more market-oriented model of television programming. Started with great promise of presenting a new voice in the sphere of news and entertainment of the region, Asianet eventually entered the pattern of a more viewer-oriented approach, which resulted in the growth of the number of competitors and the rearrangement of the news ways of presentation. This change was most evident when it was seen in its news reporting, where sensationalism started to take the lead with regard to common journalistic ethics.

This commercialisation process was more evident when the channel agreed to partner with Star India in the year 2008 and saw Disney buy it later on in the year 2019. These mergers have brought up issues of corporate control and editorial independence. The participation of a corporate media giant brought about values of global entertainment to the local setting, forcing Asianet to focus on profit-driven content. It began to broadcast news stories that became increasingly sensational in content, entertainment-oriented news coverage and the demarcation of the line between journalism and entertainment began to take place. To give an example, it is often seen that tragedies that occurred in personal lives or criminal cases of big

names would be regarded as sensationalised and it did affect the privacy and fairness involved in news reporting.

There has been a recurrent criticism of the rising dependence on sensationalism. Similar to other channels, Asianet started to feed the craving of people on dramatised stories of emotions that were usually found at the cost of reporting. Privacy intrusion, deception, and over reporting of crime, celebrity, and political scandals increased. Such instances of ethical violation give rise to the role of the media in informing versus entertaining people. The change in trend of content was also the same in India, as the trend was observed where the private channels were focusing more on commercial successes rather than on being the public service broadcaster, which is also reflected in the work of scholars of media studies, such as Robin Jeffrey, among others. The development of the media in Kerala has changed, where the aggressive reporting type and sensational coverage of Asianet indicated an extended trend of media in the Indian television media. The mushrooming of other channels like the Indiavision made the competition stiffer and all channels went to the extent of compromising the journalistic ethics. In the case of Asianet, its association with Disney further paved the way to change it from a regional and only news service provider into a profit-making media company more akin to that of international entertainment networks than traditional principles of journalism.

According to scholars such as Ammu Joseph in her book *Making News: Women in Journalism (2005)*, commercialisation and the emergence of corporate interest in the media especially in India has led to serious erosion of the morals of the news reporting process in India. With Asianet, international media houses posed pressure in ensuring that the network generates large audiences through most cases of indulging in sensational contents. Such trends have provoked arguments that the fall of regional media in its duty of keeping power in check and in the interest of the people has happened. The media situation in the state is similar to that in the other part of the world and comprises the established media like the newspapers and television and also the growing one called digital. It looks at how the media coverage of socio-political issues of Kerala has affected the socio-political issues; it

looks at the area of corruption, discrimination based on the caste factor, environmental factor, abuse of political power, citizen rights or the attitude of the government or the political parties. Using important case studies and reactions of people and policy makers, the analysis demonstrates the significant role of the media in implementing accountability and spreading social change. As is the case in any other place, the media in Kerala is a watchdog that interacts with people on some crucial areas, and keeps the authorities on their toes. It should be mentioned that Kerala is characterised by good literacy and media penetration, so citizens are highly effective contributors to the use of news coverage in real-life situations of attitude and political decision-making. This presence has had a dramatic positive and negative contribution to the people's thinking and government intervention in social matters in Kerala, even though not without ambiguities. It also shows that journalism, social consciousness, and political reform have a close bond, and by doing the latter, citizens remain in charge of the development of the media.

6.5 Transformation of Media and Shift in Style

The public sphere and news methods in Kerala can be divided into three types of transformational phases: the printing press in the 18th and 19th centuries, news and literature were together. Literary activists were mostly involved in media work at that time. The public sphere during the period of radio especially after the independence, here radio under the control of Government. Later in the television era, mainly with the advent of 'Doordarshan' in the early days, the news was only 15 minutes long. Doordarshan was also a government-controlled institution, and then the public sphere with the advent of private channels in the 1990s. After the private channels arrived first they provided up to 30 minutes news bulletin then into 24 hour news channels, and then the public sphere that changed with the advent of the Internet and social media, here the traditional methods of news have been changed. The first phase was the time of British rule and monarchy, so the people had their rights vested in the king and the British government. At this stage, the people who did not have a sense of democratic social consciousness were given such a consciousness by social reformers' interventions and through publications,

education, etc. The early media, such as newspapers and radio, had a great responsibility in this phase. Since the latter two phases were the phase after the advent of democracy in Kerala or India, the media became responsible for protecting democracy by criticizing the government and criticizing political parties. But social media and technological advancements are transforming traditional media culture and operations (Rajasekharan, 2019).

At the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) state conference speech by P Rajeev (2024, October 24) until the advent of the internet and television, the only way to get news and analysis was through newspapers, so the Malayalis had little choice of media and therefore, they trusted the media. With more choices, the Kerala public and political parties got the opportunity to analyze the facts of the news. Moreover, the new era of journalism presents traditional media in Kerala in a way that does not differentiate between news and analysis. To be precise, when newspapers came to Kerala, only news was available at first, and later, through the media work of people like Kesari, news analysis began. Later, news and analysis became available together from the 1990s, and analysis began to take a stance that was not conducive to politics and capitalism. Later, it is also a fact that news stories were created, and the fact that news is called 'story' is an example of this. This means that imagination has also entered the news. This kind of transformation has taken the Malayalam media history from factual news to imaginative news. The reality of paid news is the same in Kerala as it is in the world.

The media has undergone transformation with the development of technology or it has become possible to overcome the shortcomings of one another in a technical sense. If in print media, we could understand news by reading and in picture form, with the advent of radio, we could understand news by listening to it, with the advent of television, we could understand news along with visuals, but with the advent of social media outside of all this, social media has made an indispensable impact on all traditional media. The proof of this is that not only all traditional media can be found on social media, visual media etc. have accounts on social media, similarly, cut videos of news from visual media are specially prepared

and disseminated for social media users. The recent use of social media by political parties, religious institutions and individuals has significantly changed the communication system in Kerala. The unique feature of this is that news and information can be disseminated only for themselves. Before the advent of social media, we had to rely on traditional media. However, it cannot be said that the relevance of traditional media has become irrelevant. But traditional media outlets are now in a situation where they need to be more cautious in their operations than ever before, as the use of social media is increasing day by day and it is clear that traditional media is no longer the only source of information or news (Rajeev, 2024).

TV news channels are now seen operating in the shops, salons and bus stands of Kerala. Important news is a trend in Kerala where news channels provide the same news together. This integration can be seen in the Shirur Arjun accident, the Chief Minister's press conference during Covid, the anti-K-Rail protest reporting, the death of important figures, the Wayanad landslide, when elections are held, when the results are announced, etc. We can see the infallibility of TV channels when they do such news.

The election period is a different one today as compared to the past. Newsroom operations have been made more organized and collective. Rather than using the fax machines or stacks of printed paper, journalists are now using the help of advanced software to control, revise and announce election outcomes. Various teams are engaged in various tasks starting with the follow-up of the constituency results to updating the national results. This has seen the transformation of the newsrooms to the virtual ones with the inclusion of more dynamism in election coverage. Reporters at the polling stations or counting centres can transmit live footage to the newsroom through cell phones, instead of waiting until the physical delivery of film or video. The newsroom was a well-oiled machine (Alakananda, 2024).

The new media platform merges all other media in digital mode. Newspapers become e-paper, TV channels become Youtube and application models on mobile. “Those methods and social practices of communication, representation and expression that have developed using the digital, multimedia networked computer

and the ways that this machine is held have transformed work in other media: from books to movies, from telephones to television” (Lister et al., 2008). Two factors generally define the innovation of new media. First, they change the nature of ‘mass media’ in the sense of criticizing modern media. In other words, new media is not a one-way process of communication from a centre to many people. Second, their social transmission methods are changing in terms of technology and media complexity compared to modern media. New media have characteristics such as *media convergence, immediacy, multimedia, digitization, hypertextuality, interactivity, and virtuality*. It is clear to us that not only the infallibility of technology stands in new media but also the social and cultural together (Jacob, 2016).

The movements created by new media have been pointed out on many levels that while the distance between the globes is decreasing, the distance between human minds is increasing. Book, newspaper and magazine publications, which begin in the first half of the 19th century, become active in the second half. It was primarily printing technology, literacy and reading that gave rise to the various social statements that were considered to be the areas of interaction of Renaissance modernism. However, from the point of view that the so-called mass media is narrowing down to news media only, its movements in the cultural sphere need to be evaluated. Newspapers and television are becoming old media and media with computer capability and internet technology have emerged as new media. Moreover, it can be understood that the new media has been able to modernize the entire old media and revolutionize it (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006). The advantages and disadvantages of new media should be evaluated in terms of their political communication in the public sphere. Cyberattacks, counterattacks, and countercultures may further fuel crises in the impending age of artificial intelligence anarchy. This is the world of selfies, feeds, stories, reels, and logs. Politics here is entertainment, it is art. (Premkumar, 2024).

6.6 Media in Kerala During the Pandemic

Kerala, different from the other states of India is its social, cultural and ecological structure. As in the case of the social structure, these differences are reflected in the political structure of Kerala as well. It is also worth noting that Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India (Census, 2011). It can be seen that the difference between the villages and the towns of Kerala is now diminishing from the north to the south. Therefore if an economic, political or health problem arises anywhere in Kerala, it is reflected throughout the state. One such incident is the outbreak of COVID-19 and Nipah disease in Kerala. How the media, particularly social media, handled the situation, and what kind of social changes social media brought about in Kerala society especially during the global outbreak of COVID 19 (World Health Organization, 2020).

Figure 6.1

Kerala Former Health Minister Shailaja Teacher participated in the campaign by washing her hands with an alcohol-based hand rub solution.



Source: "Break The Chain: Kerala launches mass hand-washing campaign against Covid-19 pandemic," India Today, 15 March 2020

Kerala has distinguished itself for its crisis management from the start of the pandemic. In its fight against the virus, it was extraordinarily proactive, starting a containment plan even before its first patient tested positive on 30 January 2020. In fact, the state had adopted the World Health Organisation's test, trace, isolate, and

support protocol by 27 January and had established a Rapid Response Team. On 3 February, after Kerala's third positive case was confirmed, Kerala declared a state calamity and quarantined more than 2,239 travellers from affected countries. Despite being one of the first states to be hit by the virus, Kerala didn't record its first death until 28 March, and it took the state approximately 110 days to record its first 1000 cases. The developed world was tired of rising cases, and infections in Kerala were falling (Ibid).

With the spread of the internet, new media or social media has become the fifth estate. It can be seen that the government and other public sectors have made good use of social media to deal with this kind of pandemic situation. Mainly to educate the people and take precautions, social media has made it possible to quickly convey the procedures and instructions to be followed after the disease has occurred. Similarly, it can be seen that the government has faced various difficulties through social media as misinformation has reached people through these platforms. Because of the intervention of social media, we can see both merits and demerits in many ways (The News Minute, 2020). The role of new media in a scenario where society was confined to the individual and the home and was suddenly moved from the traditional public sphere to the digital public sphere is examined here.

Social media was a crucial instrument for communication and intervention during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala, a state renowned for its outstanding public health management. During the crisis, the government and a number of organisations took a number of steps to broadcast important information, offer assistance, and counter misinformation. The efficient way Kerala handled the COVID-19 pandemic has been widely praised, therefore exploring the specific function of social media in this setting could provide insightful information. During the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala, some of the key social media efforts included information dissemination. Government agencies and health departments aggressively utilised social media channels to inform the public in real-time about updates, recommendations, and safety precautions. They exchanged data on vaccine campaigns, safety precautions, and virus spread. There were various WhatsApp

groups in the ward and panchayat including villages to pass information (Sreedharan, Thorsen, Rani, & Krishnapriya, 2022).

Initiatives by the government: The social media gave great coverage to the numerous measures Kerala's government took to battle the epidemic, including mass testing, contact tracing, and the construction of healthcare facilities, providing information on the pandemic that is current and factual. The Chief Minister's daily news conferences were extensively covered by social media, promoting accuracy in reporting. And in Kerala, people followed the social media pages of the chief minister and health minister as well as various district collectors for updates (The Weather Channel, 2020).

Crisis Communication and Awareness Campaign: In order to increase awareness of the pandemic and the importance of wearing masks, social distancing and good hygiene, social media campaigns were created. Such efforts tried to make the people responsible. The use of sanitiser, how hands and face should be washed using soaps and when to wear a mask and how to remove it could be watched through short videos that could be viewed on the pages of health officers and that of government officers too. Through different social media platforms, such videos were speedily voted to masses (Jacob, 2020). How to use sanitiser, how to wash hands and face with soap, how to wear a mask and how to dispose of it were also short videos that could be seen on the pages of health officials as well as government officials. Such videos were quickly brought to masses through various platforms of social media (Jacob, 2020). Fighting Misinformation; Efforts were undertaken to fight rumours and false information about COVID-19. Social media was used by public health officials and organisations to dispel myths and spread factual information about the virus, how it spreads, and how to prevent it (Purohit, 2020). Remote health services; During the outbreak, telemedicine and virtual consultations significantly increased in popularity. Numerous healthcare providers used social media to provide COVID-19 patients with remote medical consultations, mental health assistance, and advice, reducing the need for in-person hospital visits. Support and aid from the Community; Social media platforms were also used to help the

pandemic victims receive support and aid from the community. Social media was used by a number of volunteer organisations and non-governmental organisations to plan the distribution of necessities, including food, medicine, and supplies, to people and families in need. Promotion of vaccination; Social media was extremely important in boosting vaccination drives since vaccination became a major component of containing the pandemic. These platforms were used by public health organisations to disseminate information on the value of vaccinations, vaccination clinics, and the vaccination procedure. Challenges and Criticism; While Kerala's reaction received praise overall, there were stories and conversations regarding difficulties, including problems with quarantine facilities, holdups in testing, and the pandemic's effects on the economy.

There were unfounded speculations and reports that the number of deaths caused by the Nipah virus was much higher than what was stated by reliable sources. The people became alarmed and perplexed as a result. The virus's mode of transmission was incorrectly reported, which resulted in misunderstandings about how the virus spreads. There have been some unfounded allegations that the virus can spread by water, air, and even casual touch. Fake Remedies and Cures on social media, a number of home remedies, cures and treatments for the Nipah virus were shared. These cures had no scientific basis and might have harmed patients by deterring them from obtaining appropriate medical attention. In cases of identification, when erroneous or unsubstantiated information about potential Nipah virus cases was spread, it unnecessarily stoked panic and anxiety in some communities (Faleiro, 2020).

Kerala's approach to social media interventions during the pandemic is characterised by its commitment to transparency, fact-checking, and community engagement. The strategy has helped the state to be successful in crisis management and in receiving support by its people. But what must be pointed out is that the media role in any such case can be either positive or negative, and critical journalism is one of the components of making authorities answer to the people and also in moderating the information provided to the people correctly and in a timely manner.

Kerala government has initiated a mobile app known as GoK Direct to allow people to receive information and updates about COVID-19 disease (The News Minute, 2020). The online platform has definitely benefited the people of Kerala in such a time of crisis. Work at home, online market and food delivery have become more popularised. Due to social distancing and as part of the break the chain campaign (NDTV, 2020), people had to rely on online money transferring like Google Pay, Phone Pay, forcefully and quickly and social media has given it the education and publicity it needs (The Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 2012). Adequate encouragement has been given for this by the Kerala government. During the COVID-19 epidemic, these social media efforts in Kerala served to build an informed and responsible public sphere, lessen the impact of the virus, and promote a feeling of social resilience.

6.7 Sensationalism and News Culture in Kerala's Media

Media in Kerala has seen a proliferation of sensational material, drama frequently legitimising fact. Television outlets are in an intense race to attract an audience and often prioritise speed over accuracy when breaking a news story. The sensational element is also achieved through the use of hyperbolic language, dramatic visuals, and hypothetical commentary. These journalistic practices risk damaging the respect of media institutions and downplaying the significance of critical issues. Critics have criticised the media for prioritising entertainment over addressing real issues in journalism.

6.7.1 The Solar Scam in Kerala

Solar Scam of Kerala, a case that got into the spotlight in 2013 represents a notable instance of politics, fraud and media-hyped sensationalism being spliced together. The case involved the claims of the multi-crore financial fraud of a solar panels company which was operated by Saritha S. Nair and Biju Radhakrishnan. The twosome was charged with defrauding various investors on the basis of delivering solar panel systems and joint ventures in solar energy products (The Hindu, 2013). This scandal soon became a political maelstrom drawing into the net

powerful individuals, some aides to the then Chief minister of the state Oommen Chandy (Business Standard, 2013).

Fraud and Allegations: Allegations were brought against Saritha S. Nair and Biju Radhakrishnan of cheating on investors and abusing their political ties to earn respectability (Mathrubhumi, 2013). The allegations were worsened by the fact that it had come to light that Saritha had altered the letterhead of the Chief Minister to attract investors (The New Indian Express, 2013). The controversy was that there were allegations of bribery and sexual misconduct to the Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and his office and thus the people got outraged and started to demand his resignation (Business Standard, 2013). Other prominent people who were arrested include actress Shalu Menon and Tenny Joppan, a personal assistant to the Chief Minister (The Hindu, 2013). It got even uglier when Biju Radhakrishnan admitted that he killed his wife and that further inclined to sensationalize the issue (Mathrubhumi, 2013).

Political Fallout: There were political ramifications too as the opposition Left Democratic Front (LDF) held large scale protests and even stormed the Kerala Secretariat urging the Chief Minister to step down (The Hindu, 2013; Indiatv, 2014). A commission called the judicial commission was then constituted to probe the scam. Several years later, the Crime Branch report washed off the allegations of harassment against Oommen Chandy on the basis of insufficient evidence (Mathrubhumi, 2021). The scam got much coverage in the media. The media especially the Asianet, Manorama, Mathrubhumi and Kairali TV covered it regularly not just about the financial fraud but also about the personal affairs of the culprits (Business Line, 2013). Saritha S. Nair got arrested and her alleged affairs with high-power people were hyped and larger problems about regulatory failures and the misfortunes of the victims of the fraud were swept under the rug (Outlook, 2016). The polarization in reporting was a symptom of the larger political redistribution in Kerala media spectrum. Pro-LDF news stations increased the accusations against Oommen Chandy and the United Democratic Front (UDF); pro-UDF sources tried to create an impression that the scandal was insignificant.

Digital Media and Public Discourse: The case gained more popularity with the emergence of social media. Social networks like Facebook, Youtube, and WhatsApp turned into the locale of hot debates of the population. Internet users vended recordings of the leaked phone conversations and exchanged in ethical shortfalls by the accused and implicated officials. On-line newspapers (E-Paper), a digital news service, took advantage of this movement by posting real-time news, which was usually based on information that was unverified, allowing it to be published, and this was indistinguishable with journalism or even gossip. Solar Scam pointed at serious ethical infringements of the media in Kerala. Publication of the secret phone messages and humiliation of Saritha S. Nair were of great controversy (Santhoshkumar, 2022). Opponents claimed that the emphasis leveled on personal scandals had detracted the attention to some fundamental questions of corruption as well as the failures within the regulatory bodies. This dramatisation ruined the confidence of the population in the media, and readers and viewers could no longer identify between objective information and politically based stories (Ilayidam, 2022).

Consequences and Reflections: The Court has held that the Solar Scam has had a severe influence in the Kerala political and media scenario. Although some of the people who were charged were exonerated in later investigations by the judicial commission, the case put a blemish on how the general population views political corruption (Radhakrishnan, 2016). On the part of the media, the scandalous event reinforced the necessity that ethical journalism and prudent reporting should be conducted of greater importance on big profile cases with contentious allegations. In addition, the influence of digitalization as the altering factor in shaping the discourse among the population pointed out the opportunities to increase the transparency and the dilemmas in preserving journalistic integrity (Joshua, 2022). The presence of Solar Scam and controversies related to this scam were seen in the effect in the 2016 Kerala Assembly Elections. LDF (The opposition) campaign slogan of LDF Varum, Ellam Sheriyakum (LDF will come, everything will be set right) struck the chord with voters and it was a landslide with 91 seats. Although the UDF tried to lay emphasis on the developmental work through programs like the Jana Sambarka

Paripadi (People Direct Contact Programme), the corruption dogged its success (The New Indian Express, 2016). This election was significant in the sense of strong public opinion and media authority in Indian democracy.

6.7.2 Hema Committee Report

The Hema Committee report on the working conditions of women in the Malayalam film industry has caused a lot of controversy. The committee, chaired by former Kerala High Court judge K. Hema, also included playwright Sukumaran and actress Sharada. The report was prepared based on statements submitted by actresses and women technicians to understand the issues faced by women in the film industry. The committee, which was formed after the attack on a famous actress in Malayalam cinema in 2017, submitted its report to the Kerala government on December 31, 2019. The report (290 pages), which contains information on sexual harassment, obstacles to gender equality, Women receive less pay than their male colleagues, industry dominated by “a mafia of powerful men” and basic needs inadequacy faced by women in the malayalam film industry, is still not made public (Bar and Bench, 2024) The unprecedented seriousness of its internal information has led to serious legal and regulatory problems in its publication. Some film stars and producers have approached the court against the State Right to Information Commission's order to publish the Hema Committee report. Film star Ranjini, alias Sasa Selvaraj, pointed out in her petition filed in court that if the private information included in the report is publicly published, her right to privacy will be violated. "Concurrently, the discourse on whether the right to information, as enshrined in the RTI Act, should take precedence over the right to privacy under Article 21, gained prominence in this context

Some major media and social media posts headlines released in connection with the cases gained a lot of attention during the period. “*cinema lokathe sthree suraksha sarkar idapeduka*” “*vellithira iruladayaruth*”, etc., led to huge debates in the Malayalam community. The media, especially the three sections of print, visual and social media, took it seriously to raise public awareness about the safety and freedom of women without resorting to caste discrimination or sensationalism. The

media brought out specific recommendations in the report as an urgent reminder of the responsibility of those who maintained their rights and the government. The report was politically debated by organising discussions around the report, including "suggestions related to the life and work of actresses", and by copying the opinions of the complainants and the responses of political parties.

Social media worked on both levels in many places. Although most people may have approached the Hema Committee report seriously, some were ready to dismiss it as fake news and trolls. Many people expressed their support for the issue using the hashtag "#JusticeForVictims" on social media. The issues related to the publication of the Hema Committee report helped identify the employment rights issues faced by women and gender discrimination, as well as the internal arrangements in the Malayalam film industry. However, the move to release it, through effective media interventions, has played a major role in bringing them to light.

Although the Hema Committee report was submitted on 31 December 2019, it was made public only on 19 August 2024 (The Times of India. (2024). The report revealed the harassment and exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry. Following the publication of the report, several actresses came forward to speak out about their experiences. For example, Bengali actress Sreelekha Mitra revealed about the indecent behaviour she had experienced at the hands of director Ranjith Balakrishnan; following this, Ranjith resigned from the post of chairman of the Kerala Chalachitra Academy. Similarly, actress Revathi Sampath accused actor Siddique of sexually harassing her (Onmanorama, 2024). Following this, Siddique resigned from the post of general secretary of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA). Following the publication of the report, the entire executive committee of AMMA resigned; this included president Mohanlal. Before the report was published, the members of the committee revealed that they had personally typed the information in the report to ensure its confidentiality.

Following the report's publication, the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) issued a strong statement, declaring, "Today, we have been vindicated." In addition,

the WCC noted that some of the information in the report was not kept confidential, which has led to additional hardship for some victims of abuse (Women in Cinema Collective, 2019; The Hindu, 2024). A number of well-known faces of Malayalam cinema have come forward to comment after the report was published. The revelations have made many react including Mohanlal, Prithviraj, Siddique and Tovino Thomas and Revathi. On the whole, the Hema Committee report has led to an even broader debate about the plight of women in the Malayalam cinema industry, and this has been broadly covered by different media houses.

The crucial role of the media in such issues is undoubtedly revealed. By conducting detailed investigative reports and public discussions, the Malayalam media has succeeded in bringing fundamental issues of society to the attention of the people. But even though the discussions surrounding the Hema Committee report had the potential to transform Kerala into a more mature society, the question arises as to how much thought has gone into analysing the core of these news stories beyond just being news. Instead of discussing and analysing the discrimination faced by women and the role of society in general, who is involved in the report and who is resigning from various positions, and also focusing more on horse racing reports in order to seek the response of political parties to each other. It is clear from examining the news stories on Malayalam media platforms regarding the Hema committee that they have focused more on creating sensational content since the report's release. In the week since its release, the report has created ripples in the state, with activists and opposition leader VD Satheeshan demanding action against those accused of wrongdoing. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said if any women who testified before the committee came forward to file a petition, the government would take action. "No matter how big they are, they will be brought before the law" he said (BBC, 2024).

The report has often been criticised for its public discourse. The style of mass media propaganda and the invasion of individuals' privacy were discussed. The main debate on the issue in the media focused on the conflict between Article 21 (right to privacy) and Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of information). The question "Can

human privacy be compromised in the name of freedom of information?" was also discussed. Controversies and discussions related to the committee's report existed in the media even before its release. However, the negative approach taken by some media outlets in handling the report negatively affected the nature and importance of the report. Although the Hema Committee report covered a serious issue, some visual media and social media platforms turned the issue into sensational news. Instead of making the Hema Committee report a process of change, some print/visual media treated it as a market. There were channels that used controversies due to bad reports to boost RTP (Real-time Transport Protocol) graphs. Controversies were turned into controversies to increase advertising revenue. There were also instances where victims were subjected to personal ridicule and attacks on social media. The Hema Committee points out that discrimination against women exists in the film industry as well, as in many other sectors of society. However, the media's reporting, which only highlights revelations, resignations and arrests, often ignores the need for discussions in society to address the real problem of discrimination faced by women and find solutions, and indulges in sensationalism and horse racing reporting.

6.7.3 Caste Discrimination Against RLV Ramakrishnan

Mohiniyattam artiste and brother of late actor Kalabhavan Mani, R.L.V. Ramakrishnan has alleged that he was a victim of caste-based discrimination in the art community of Kerala. In October 2020, Ramakrishnan reportedly attempted suicide after being denied the opportunity to participate in an online dance festival organised by the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy. The secretary of the Academy insulted him while he was applying to participate, and also alleged that Chairperson KPAC Lalitha tried to help, but the secretary was obstructing her, as stated by Ramakrishnan. A sit-in protest was held in front of the Academy (Asianet News, 2020). He alleged that caste discrimination was the reason behind this incident. In March 2024, the issue made headlines again. Prominent Mohiniyattam artiste Kalamandalam Sathyabhama made controversial remarks. She said, "Mohiniyattam should be performed by only fair-skinned and handsome men," which was indirectly

aimed at Ramakrishnan. "Mohiniyattam must always be performed by someone who is like Mohini. When you see him, it's like the colour of a crow. Mohiniyattam is an art form that should be performed with grace. There's nothing wrong with a man performing Mohiniyattam if he does it with elegance. In my opinion, if men perform Mohiniyattam, they should also possess beauty. There are men who have good looks as well. Sathyabhama says in a YouTube channel interview (Manoramaonline, 2024). All Malayalam news channels reported it from March 21st onwards. This statement had led to widespread protests in the art community and the general public. Political parties held protests and demonstrations against Sathyabhama's statement, which was based on caste discrimination as well as colour discrimination (Onmanorama, 2020). Many people have reacted against this on various media platforms. Actress Mallika Sukumaran, journalist Aparna Kurup, dancer Methil Devika, dancer Mala Parvathy and many others have reacted against Sathyabhama's statement.

Such cases challenge Kerala who took the responsibility of being a progressive state. The hour has come to be an equal ground where artists and art forms are not caste and colour based. The state of affairs in the art scene in Kerala requires a serious social review and reform in the background of continuous discrimination as well as internal lapses. A peaceful and creative future can be guaranteed only by the effort to develop an inclusive art community. The government and politicians should take responsible measures and introduce equality and respect for artists, among others. In these kinds of events, the media should not only present news, but should also analyse news (The News Minute, 2024). The cases of caste discrimination faced by RLV Ramakrishnan are a timely affair that has touched the art world and people living in Kerala. Looking at the injustices meted out to Mohiniyattam dancer Ramakrishnan and the manner in which the media went about it, the series of discriminations brought out by RLV Ramakrishnan has received a great deal of media exposure. His suicide attempt got massive coverage, but the news beyond that was confined to initial meetings. The press has propagated distrust over the subject of casteism in the world of art, which has been regarded as a

social advancement indicator in Kerala, but the implication thereof has never been explored over a prolonged period (The New Indian Express, 2024).

The media often approached this issue as a story. Its discussion occasionally ended up as mere daily news. The media did not conduct a clear movement on the issue or a comprehensive, reasoned investigation. Similarly, if you look at the media reporting, it seems to see this as a character flaw of Sathyabama alone, instead, the traditional media did not present this as the latest example of caste discrimination. The media simply clamoured for Sathyabhama's apology and constantly went to her house to seek her response. The contradictions and expressions in her speech were sensationalised by the visual media. When social media made this issue a big wave, it became a movement to call out the hidden injustices in the sacred arts. However, trolls, fake news, and irrelevant discussions on social media reduced the seriousness of the issue. It is true that there were comments in favour of Sathyabhama's position, but they were a small minority. Similarly, there were widespread shouts against Sathyabhama.

The media's response to the RLV Ramakrishnan issue has a double face. The media provided a notable platform, but their efforts to pave the way for justice were limited. If the media in Kerala wants to expose caste discrimination and communalism in society without covering it up, it is imperative to take a stronger stance. The media should intervene cautiously in discrimination issues. It is their duty to raise the voices of the oppressed by conducting in-depth investigations and not turning the issues into sensational news. It should not be approached as a problem of individuals. Although progressive discussions have been made in some media, they cannot be attributed to the media's analytical stance.

6.7.4 Omanakuttan and the Spread of Misinformation

Omanakuttan, a CPI(M) activist and relief camp worker in Kerala became widely criticised in August 2019, when a video emerged of him collecting money from victims of floods at one of the relief camps in Cherthala, Alappuzha. The video soon became viral and authorities accused him of taking advantage of the people affected by the floods. Early reports indicated that he was requesting money to

compensate for basic needs of the camp whereby electricity provided should have been taken care of by the government. In the wake of such allegations CPI(M) suspended him, and a police case against him was registered (The News Minute, 2019) But, on closer examination, it was found that Omanakuttan had asked the people living in the camp to contribute a little money to the purchase of an auto-rickshaw that ferry rice to the camp and it was not an illegal commission. People in the area supported his deeds and gave clarification that he was not doing it out of selfish interest but out of helping during a crisis. It was due to this miscommunication and the way in which this first video was spread incredibly fast that such a negative coverage was present and then was reversed. It was in the visual media, the social media, the opposition parties and inside the party they also followed the news and made allegations as this was being portrayed as sensational even the CPI(M) Minister G Sudhakaran who had visited the camp scolded Omanakuttan. Finally, the Revenue Department apologised, withdrew the case, and suspension of Omanakuttan in the CPI(M) was called off.

On August 15, 2019, an explanation from Omanakuttan was released saying the collected money was a minimal amount which was utilised to procure an auto-rickshaw which delivered rice and vegetables to the relief camp. He justified his actions by saying that it was a must so that the residents get basic food supplies in the face of allocated inadequate government supplies. On August 16, 2019, the local authorities recognised the mix-up after an additional investigation. The Revenue Secretary of Kerala, Dr. Venu has said that the acts of Omanakuttan had been misunderstood. The government explained that there was no misappropriation of money and that Omanakuttan had done it in good faith, to promote the needs of the camp in unfavourable circumstances (The New Indian Express, 2019). On 17 August 2019, the Kerala Revenue Department officially withdrew the case against Omanakuttan and issued an apology. Dr. Venu directed the Alappuzha District Collector to exempt him from any action. He also asked for Omanakuttan's continued service as and when required by the camp. Taking strict action against relief workers, the Revenue Department stressed the need to verify the facts before imposing punishment (The New Indian Express, 2019). This incident demonstrated

exactly what fake news can run wild due to a lack of verification, and all the news outlets took the cue of the sensational aspect of the news since the accused man was a member of the ruling party. At this point, the party workers and media sources were found to be true in the news, and most of the visual media ended up apologising.

The approach taken by the media in this news is the method of distributing news which is against the parties, activists, or leaders without understanding the truth due to competition from the media. Through this, political arguments are created and sensationalised. The life of this news was up to 24 hours. During that time, the media used their competitive intelligence to create disrespect for the party and activists in the general society. Moreover, such news causes people to create an attitude that political parties are corrupt and people hate politics.

Figure 6.2

The caption on Mathrubhumi channel when the news against Omanakuttan turned out to be false



Source: "How fake news unfairly branded Omanakuttan, helper at Kerala relief camp, as a cheat," The News Minute, 17 Aug 2019

6.7.5 Women, Crime and Media Representation

The media's reporting on the solar case cannot be ignored for its humiliation of women because it can be said that all types of media have violated the etiquette that must be followed legally. The woman openly said that she was sexually assaulted, but if we examine their reporting, we can clearly understand that the media has suppressed it despite the Supreme Court's directive that the photos and names of women who survived such a situation should not be published. The fact that videos, images, etc., have been circulated is proof of this (Outlook Magazine, 2016). Moreover, the question is what kind of media work can be exemplified by the live broadcast of the visuals by the visual media that followed the police team that went to Coimbatore in search of the CD containing the visual content (Asianet News, 2015). Moreover, such reporting was used to divert the case from the real facts and turn it into sexually tinged news.

Similarly, the news related to the accused in the 'gold smuggling case' at the Thiruvananthapuram airport in July 2020 appeared in the media. The visual media got more prominence in the presentation of this case because they can constantly provide live news with a visual impact compared to print media. The fact that the print media can only reach people for a day is also a limitation. Since the accused in the case was a woman, it can be understood that here too, as happened in the Solar case, the media tried to give more importance to the private life of the female accused rather than the irregularities allegedly committed (Santhoshkumar, 2022).

6.8 Importance of News Dissemination and News Analysis

Regarding 'news distribution and analysis', Kesari Balakrishna Pillai is an important name in the history of media in Kerala. His statements or positions in this regard were mentioned in the 'Kesari' (newspaper name as well as the pen name of Balakrishna Pillai) editorial. It is indicated that there were two types of models for journalism at that time. One was English journalism, which focused on news distribution, and the other was French journalism, which focused on news analysis. It is also stated that the French journalism model that Kesari imitated. The reason why Kesari gave more importance to news analysis than news distribution is that he

argued that journalism focused on news analysis is necessary to fulfil the responsibility of newspapers. Although journalism aimed solely at news distribution may serve the circulation of newspapers, it alone is not sufficient to fulfill the mission of newspapers.

Another thing that Kesari indicates in this editorial is that when asked whether it is better to make existing newspapers bigger or launch new newspapers, he says that although it is better to strengthen existing newspapers for the betterment of newspapers and newspaper employees, Kesari Newspaper takes a different view. As a reason, he says that as existing newspapers become stronger, newspapers become large institutions and such newspapers can only function in a market-oriented manner. He also says that the media is more likely to deviate from its primary mission as it surrenders to market interests. We can see that this point, which was recorded in the 1930s, is becoming more and more relevant today. Because with more media outlets coming under different ownership, monopolisation can be prevented to some extent. It can be said that Kesari Balakrishna Pillai was the first to hint at the possibility of commercial interests of the media in the case of Malayalam media.

If we add to this the Malayalam journalism of the 21st century media realm, we can see that there is no shortage of 24-hour news channels, online media, news-based YouTube channels, and social media in addition to all this and visualisation replacing newspapers because of the increasing smartphone usage in Kerala. Kerala ranks second in terms of telephone and mobile phone usage, with a ratio of 121.89 Phones per 100 People, as per the Latest Data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India TRAI (Mathrubhumi, 2024). This means that Malayalis have no shortage of news distribution or availability. However, as Kesari mentioned, it can be said that news analysis is not done much because the media that operates 24 hours a day has to give great importance to even small news for its survival. Moreover, since there is a competition between media outlets to get the first place in the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) rating, it can be seen that they are trying to create news themselves. The words they use for this are 'using their

source' and 'not being able to reveal their source'. Mangalam TV Honey Trap Case Against A K Saseendran (Senior Leader National Congress Party- NCP). Many media outlets present a lot of news as entertainment. The person who brought such culture to the visual media in Malayalam is Sreekanthan Nair, a news anchor and Managing Director on 24 News Channel. His style is to present the news with humour (Pramod, 2024).

The importance of news is disseminated by the visual media in the form of 'breaking news' or 'exclusive news'. Most of the time, the importance of news is decided by the media itself, and it changes only when events like disasters or elections occur. It is also seen that some news items are constantly given priority and try to dominate. When more importance is given to some political news items, it is common in Kerala for political parties and the media to engage in arguments, and the Left is at the forefront in Kerala in this regard (Truecopythink, 2024). The media often creates a situation where political parties are forced to respond by presenting that there is a conflict situation. It is also common for news items to face criticism for ignoring basic social issues. Therefore, since the media often gives the people the opportunity to see what is important and what is not, we often see that people and political parties follow the importance of the news produced by the media. The crowd that follows this is also a product of alternative media activities. For example, we do not know how many people still do not have basic facilities in Kerala, it is difficult for us to know where unemployment is, but we get more news-based programs on how to make the home beautiful, as well as the blunders and slips of the tongue of the leaders of political parties. Here, the media in Kerala adopts the method of creating the impression of simply deciding what is important and what is not important and distributing it continuously. This is where Kesari's article becomes relevant, and the news should be taken to the masses to convey fundamental new knowledge, and it is the responsibility of the media to analyse the news in such a way.

Writer and speaker Sunil P. Elayidom, in a paper presented at a seminar held at the Chavara Cultural Centre on the topic of *Madhyamangalum Janathipathyavum*

(2022, Sep 20), explained the news presentation style of the media in Kerala, media transformation, and the ethics that the media should uphold. There are more than ten news channels in Kerala today. Apart from local channels, there are also town-centric channels and YouTube channels, so it is easy to get a variety of news in Kerala today. All the major channels discuss the important topic of the day (whether they decide it to be important or for some other reason) from the morning onwards, and they decide the panel for it. Apart from this, there are constant discussions on various topics on YouTube channels. If we listen to the discussions, we will understand that only a few people will be on the panel permanently, and they will give their opinions on every topic. There will be only a few people from politics and as observers permanently, and we can see that the people on that panel change here and there. Most of such discussions will be focused on disputes.

According to Habermas, the knowledge gained from news in society can be understood in three ways: information, interpretation, and criticism. Information is simply facts. Every citizen who has completed 18 years of age has the right to vote in India; electricity is produced from water; all this is information. This type of information is mandatory in society. The next step is to interpret this type of information. If a news item says that 'there is less rainfall in Kerala,' we can interpret it in various ways. One can say that the reason for the decrease in rainfall is the anger of God. Another view is that it is part of global climate change or due to deforestation, which will negatively affect agriculture. Both types of interpretations are related to the interpretive knowledge and implementation capacity of those who have acquired the knowledge. It can be in the media or in individuals. The last one is criticism, let us understand it through an example. Kalidasa (A Classical Sanskrit author considered ancient India's greatest poet and playwright) lived in the 4th-5th AD century but is called the 'Indian Shakespeare'. There is a contradiction that Shakespeare lived in the 16th-17th centuries. The reason for this is understood critically as colonialism and orientalism, and the concept of criticism becomes relevant (Elayidom, 2022).

The availability of information in today's society has taken a massive leap with the advent of the Internet. Be it on social media or traditional media. However, if we examine whether the information obtained in this way is helpful for healthy political communication, democracy, and critical social awareness, it will have to be assessed as limited. Because if we simply go to people in Kerala with a question about what 'politics' is, some of the answers we may get are 'I don't have politics, I am not a politician, I do not interfere in politics'. This means there are still people who do not understand the real meaning of politics or democracy. Otherwise, such exchanges of ideas are received from the media and the like in the opposite way (Thampi, 2024).

Habermas's statement about understanding knowledge in this context suggests that knowledge needs to be destabilised here. If the media and the people understand knowledge as mere knowledge, society will not progress, leading to political decline. The Indian Constitution provides for caste reservation and women's reservation. When we understand that such a law was brought because of caste discrimination and gender discrimination, and when we understand that law alone is not enough to overcome it, but rather creating awareness against it, it is essential for socio-political progress, interpreting and critically evaluating that knowledge becomes important. In other words, 'criticism' is the field of knowledge that changes the awareness of a society, which is the core of democracy.

In Kerala, apart from the news, the visual media conducts news debates at different times, from 7 pm to 10 pm. In newspapers, this is generally done in the form of editorials, discussions are uploaded at different times on YouTube channels, and live discussions are also available on YouTube. On social media, mainly on Facebook, activists and leaders of different political parties and individuals conduct political discussions on their own through making posts and Facebook live discussions. On Malayalam TV channels, discussions are conducted live with a fixed time, consistency and methods, which makes it different from other media. If we watch such discussions on Malayalam news channels, we will definitely get information on many topics. However, based on the importance of the topic, we will

understand that it is limited in helping to create awareness among the people because such discussions are mostly emotional, abusive and fighty. It is common for video clips of such discussions to go viral on social media as a form of mockery. The arguments between political leaders Sandeep Warriar and Jyothikumar Chamakala and discussions in which PC George participated have also gone viral in this way (Mathrubhumi News, 2016).

Similarly, during elections and other times, many media channels organise debates under different names on a constituency or town basis. The Latest examples include the 2024 Elections of Parliament and Assembly byelection 'Kurukshetra' conducted by Reporter TV, 'Vote Kavala' conducted by Malayalam Manorama, 'Adarkalam' conducted by 24 News Channel, etc. Similarly, many Malayalam channels have special programs to discuss different topics. Other major debate programs on mainstream television, based on the ones with the largest audience, are 'Janakiya Kothi' on Twenty-Four News Channel, 'Payathe Vaiya' on Malayala Manorama, 'Cover Story' presented by Asianet News, and 'Out of Focus' on Media One Channel. A newspaper is an editorial form, it is a separate, named program in the visual media, in addition to the news bulletin. Out of these, 'Vallathoru Katha' on Asianet News is a program that presents the content and the subject in depth. This program started in 2020 and has quickly led to millions of viewers. It is presented by a journalist named Babu Ramachandran. What is different is that it is presented by someone who studies a topic in-depth and ensures that the source of the topic presented in this way is not speculation. News debates in Kerala are often strongly criticised by political parties, especially the main criticism of journalism comes from the Left (Truecopythink, 2024).

6.9 Critical Perspectives on Media and Political Communication in Kerala

When Doordarshan was the only channel, DD news reached the people only during limited hours, and newspapers reached the people only in the morning. Therefore, even if there was a march or protest, it was not available to the people like it is today. But today, any march conducted by political parties is telecast live to the people through news channels. Similarly, if police action or a march turns

violent, political parties try to spread it all over Kerala. Such incidents are shown in various ways through media, such as breaking news, and it has become an everyday occurrence for TV news channels to present them provocatively. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has criticised the ‘breaking news’ culture prevailing in the media. He said that the current trend is to give more importance to the news instead of giving priority to reporting the news correctly. The Chief Minister said that those in the media field should examine and introspect whether the breaking news culture is lowering the media to a level where they do not have time to avoid even grammatical and verbal errors. He also suggested that it should be examined whether the criticisms levelled against the media in the state are correct. The Chief Minister also said that issues like development and welfare do not get the due importance in the Malayalam media compared to the national media. He warned that the media should adhere to journalistic ethics and not violate the personal freedom of others in the name of freedom of expression (Vijayan, 2024).

M.G.S. Radhakrishnan, in his work in Mathrubhumi (2024), criticises what the Malayalam media has become in terms of its negative bias, how the media has remained overwhelmed with news about bad things that it constantly overlooks many positive things happening in Kerala. As negativity bias in media is universal, the Malayalam media has been accused of excellence in gloom and doom journalism because of the adage, no good news is news. This forms a scary world syndrome, because it makes audiences build a distorted reality with it assuming that the bad things are more widespread than they actually are. According to Radhakrishnan, this tendency is explained by psychological characteristics of human memory which gives more attention to bad things that have occurred and media using fear and anxiety as a marketing tool to increase readership, ratings, and viewership. Nevertheless, he admits that responsible reporting is very crucial in keeping the governments in check and dealing with societal challenges as seen when the media pressured authorities in the Joy case drowning and the Arjun, who went missing, the truck driver.

He also commends Kerala's media for largely resisting the trend of becoming subservient to those in power, unlike much of the national media, often dubbed "Godimedia." This, he suggests, is an extension of Kerala's strong public pressure on governance, a factor Nobel laureate Amartya Sen credited for the state's achievements. Despite its flaws, Radhakrishnan argues, Kerala's media maintains its role as a vigilant watchdog in democracy (Radhakrishnan, 2024).

Pramod Raman, an early anchor for Asianet News, in his article *Varthayil Vinodathinte Azhimathi Kalarthiya Channel Vyaparikal* (2024), mentions his media criticism and the evolution of news broadcasting on the channel. It delves into the professional and ethical standards that defined the initial days of the channel, especially when it first began airing news broadcasts from Thiruvananthapuram in 1995. Pramod Raman shares his experiences and thoughts on the role of journalists and anchors, emphasising the importance of maintaining objectivity and neutrality while presenting news. He recalls how the early anchors, including T.N. Gopakumar and the team behind the "Kannaadi" and "Pathra Visheshha" programs, ensured that the news was presented without personal bias, and how the channel's focus was always on presenting facts without political or commercial influence (Pramod Raman, 2024).

He also looks back at the issues of news display, technical obstructions to the moral problem of having a face. Unlike in a later development, he recalls that initially the anchors were not considered as the face of the news channel. Its group responsibility was to provide fair and correct news by the news team. He observes that anchors such as him were supposed to read news and avoid making it personal. Pramod also writes his insight on the media strategy shift especially the advent of India Vision in 2002, which shifted towards the opinion-based format. This shift was different than earlier and even to Pramod this was among the factors that resulted in his leaving the channel. The article is also more personal about the pressures of work and ethical considerations that journalists undergo, particularly in an exploded media culture in which the idea that the writer has become something bigger than the things he or she is writing about may become as potentially more important than the

writing itself. Insights given by Pramod help one to provide a historic thought to how news broadcasting in Kerala was developed and also the ethical system that governed the initial years of the private news media in the state of Kerala (Ibid).

Rajagopal discusses the media coverage of the tragic landslide in Shirur, Karnataka, focusing on both the rescue efforts and the way the media presented the story. His article *Shirurile Mannidichilum Madhyamangalum; Malayaliyaya Arjunu Vendi Mathramavaruth ee Coverage* (2024) is a critical analysis of the sensationalised reporting, emphasising that the intense media attention given to the case was not unwarranted. He asserts that media outlets are responsible for bringing attention to crucial issues, especially when human lives are at stake. He admits that he is making his opinion based on videos he watched but concedes that it might not give a complete coverage of the coverage. He does not agree with the protest that much time was wasted on such a story but states that the judgment on how much a news item needed was a decision entirely by the editor and not by the viewers. Rajagopal goes ahead to maintain that the fundamental role of media is to increase awareness and generate urgency especially during times when lives are involved. He says that the media is justified in the case of whatever chaos they cause as long as they do it to save lives. The language with which such coverage is conducted must however be sensitive enough and less subjective that it puts undue suffering to the victims. This article also poses the challenge of regional biases of media coverage as regardless of whether it is a bias or the fact is that Arjun, the victim was also a Malayali, it could have played a factor in establishing extreme media attention. Rajagopal casts doubt on whether the media would have covered it with the same zeal had it happened to a person of a different state, say Maharashtra or Karnataka. This leads one to question the trend of how a story is reported due to the area or the ethnicities of those involved. Rajagopal pleads that the media should be more responsible when covering such events. He states that referring to such things should be more sensitive and the media should not only talk about the emotional factor but find ways to solve the systemic problem that led to such disasters like town planning and punishment of the officials (Rajagopal, 2024).

Sunil P. Elayidom, during his lecture on "*Madhyamangalum Janathipathyavum*" (2024, September 20) defended the idea that News debates adopt a negative environment in the society leaving people hating each other. He hinted that such environments fail to promote an appropriate exchange of ideas; in fact, the participants are likely to be shouting at each other. They may even be provoked by the host and other panellists in case the panellists do not participate in such acts usually. Moreover, social networks make this situation worse. Social media constitutes an additional platform where people and political parties provide their insights after the debate. Debating episodes, especially those instances during the debates where the spokesman of the party takes the lead due to the arguments brought by them, are usually edited in form of short clips which are shared over the internet. This has become a trend as social media is popular in Kerala especially after 2010. The media rather concentrates on information, commentary, and criticism about the news but the emerging concern is information, controversy, and entertainment. Infotainment refers to an integration of information and entertainment terminologies, and informers refers to the integration of information and commerce due to the trend that has emerged in the media industry. Debate arenas in the digital space are becoming a concept of the public sphere in the universe by Habermas. This change is most notable in the visual media in Kerala. Several approaches are used to produce consent as it is indicated by Noam Chomsky. This involves controversies, sentiment, making news and paid news is part of it. Elayidom also points out that the media, people and the political parties must be self-reflexive so that they can get out of this condition (Elayidom, 2024).

Here we should see that there is a one-day delay in the news coming to the print media and it is not printed on major holidays. Therefore, such media outlets get time to intervene with their editorial board. Therefore, they get at least a little time to decide which news to give more priority to and what the main headline should be on the first page. Since radio was under government control in the early days, they also had time to decide the importance of the news. But with the advent of 24-hour news channels, it can be seen that the visual media in Kerala has less or limited time. Because they have to keep giving breaking news or exclusive news, they only have 2

or 5 minutes of interval in between. Therefore, the word "certainly" is often used by visual media reporters during reporting time. Because of the lack of time, they are often forced to provide news that cannot be confirmed, and there is a situation where they have to confirm such news even if it is not certain. Whether such news is later wrong or true, they have to confirm the news during the broadcast because they have to provide news as 'breaking news' constantly. Similarly, most of today's media work is emotional, and if you carefully observe the style of news presentation, you will understand that facts are often subordinate to emotions. Reporting and presentation can be seen with loud noise and excitement. In newspapers, different headlines and so on are included. Ownership and editorial boards may have a role in such news or media workers may be forced to provide news in favour of their policies. Media ethics are also affected by such situations. For example, when the welfare pension was suspended in Kerala, it became big news and led to a lot of criticism and political agitations. If you examine the news of those times, you can understand that the only pension that was not suspended was the Kerala journalist pension, which was not reported in any media (Rajeev, 2024; Rajeev, 2019).

The tensions between the workings of sensationalism and ethical requirements have never been more visible in the fast-emerging world of journalism. Sebastian Paul is a former member of parliament and a veteran critic of the media who stands out among the critics of these processes because of his acute perspectives on how ethics, the law and journalism interact with each other. Paul has continuously drawn attention to the ethical conundrums and social obligations that come with being a journalist through his writings and public appearances. His criticisms, which are condensed in books like *Forbidden Zones: Essays on Journalism* (Sebastian, 2005) and other writings, offer a sophisticated perspective on the function of the media in democracies and its moral dilemmas.

He had strongly criticised the media's reporting of the fire that broke out in the Thiruvananthapuram Secretariat on August 25, 2020. He pointed out that the media was simply alleging a conspiracy. He also observed that the Malayala Manorama newspaper had given 'thee vivadham kathunnu', '*Theepidicha thalasthanam*' in the Mathrubhumi newspaper and the Keralam Kaumudi newspaper

had given ‘supradhana filukal chambalayi’ to create a controversy. The PWD department later found that the fire was caused by a short circuit in a fan. The media intervention in such a situation is no different to the controversies surrounding two key fires in history. The horrible fire in Rome lasted 6 days and devastated a great part of the city. The fire was not fully clear on its cause but the Christians were blamed by Emperor Nero. And with this, it is also called as one of the first persecutions against Christians. The events do not say clearly whether Nero caused the fire or not but the event became an allegory of too much power in the hands of Nero. Likewise, in 1933, there was a fire in the Reichstag, Germany's parliament building, which was later determined to be arson. To legitimise the oppression of political dissent and the demonisation of communists, this incident was presented as an excuse. The fire was blamed on the communists by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, who were the heads of the Nazi Party at the time. They particularly accused the Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe who was detained on the spot (Sebastian, 2020).

Damodar Prasad, a writer, political, and social commentator, says that the media is bourgeois. Today, journalism requires a huge amount of capital, so it is an industry like any other. He also questions the accountability of the media. There is a situation where politicians can be questioned about their responsibility before the people at least after 5 years. But the media is not subject to accountability everywhere, everything is only to consider situations like rating reaching. That is why the media is the one who sets the agenda and creates news and kills the news. By revealing the source of capital of the media, we can understand their submissiveness. In Kerala, the right-wing politics that lacks independence was given a special presence through discussions in the visual media, rather than the media. He assesses social media as occupied media, and professional journalists are the ones who carry out this kind of occupation. Although social media is an alternative facility, this kind of fragmentation destroys this special democratic situation. Therefore, it is argued that the distribution of information creates various crises. Political discussion in the media is predictable. The position of the person participating in the discussions can be predicted in advance. There is less self-criticism and analysis in the discussions. All this means that various ‘cultures of

submissiveness', as they affect all sectors of society, are also evident in the media, be it towards capital, political parties, or religious interests (Prasad, 2024).

For the democratisation of media, it is important for people to become media literate. Media disseminates ideas through images, sounds and texts. Therefore, people are easily persuaded to believe this. These symbols exert their influence on many people and on many stars, for example, when we hear about the 2002 Gujarat riots, the image of Qutubateen Ansari comes to mind; for some, the image of a burning train comes to mind, when we hear Endosulfan, the image of health challenges faced by young children comes to mind, and similarly, when we hear the Babri Masjid, the emotion that is evoked in the minds of religious believers and communalists is not the emotion that is evoked in the secularist. Therefore, it is better for a healthy society to analyse the media and the news. Do not be afraid to accept everything that the media gives. We should ask ourselves how the news we receive came about. Why did it come? Who did it come for? Because it is the media that controls our thoughts through social, economic, political and cultural factors. They set the agenda for this and shape public opinion through it. If we understand this and watch the media news, we can understand that we have become media literate (Isaac & Chandrasekharan, 2010).

6.10 Conclusion

The evolution of media in Kerala, particularly through the emergence of digital platforms, has dramatically reshaped the way news is consumed and political communication is navigated. Known for its high literacy rate and vibrant media sector, Kerala has witnessed a transition from traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television to the rise of social media as a powerful tool for news distribution and public engagement. In the context of political communication, social media has not only changed the flow of information but has also given rise to new forms of discourse, activism and political participation.

Traditional media in Kerala, which once played a central role in shaping political opinions and public debates, now competes with a more decentralised, fast-paced and interactive alternative – social media. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube have become primary sources of news, offering real-time updates, citizen journalism and an unfiltered stream of information. This shift has

had both positive and negative implications for political communication and the news landscape. On the one hand, social media provides a space for alternative voices and grassroots movements to flourish. The political figures, journalists and even citizens are able to exchange information, express themselves on issues and even mobilise the opinion of the people without the shackles attached to traditional media houses. This is the democratisation of information that is of special significance in Kerala, where the culture has a deep-seated politics of activism. Social media allows political happenings to be responded to very swiftly, without the editorial filtering of the media houses, and a greater contribution to the political arena with a more established personal relationship between politicians and voters. Nevertheless, increase in social media is an issue of great concern as well. Misinformation, sensationalism, and polarisation of opinion prevails owing to the pace of information spread on the Internet. Kerala is a state where the partisan loyalties are also treasured, as it is viewed that supporters of various political parties engage in a fight to bend stories to their advantage through social media. As compared to traditional media, where although it is biased yet, most of the times, an editorial policy and reporting guidelines are followed plus followed by a code of journalistic ethics, social media has no proper regulation and hence such rumours, misleading news and political propaganda is propagated unverified. The other issue raised is the impact of social media on the distrust of the old news media. All this instant dissemination of news through WhatsApp and other social media sites has made people doubt the authenticity of traditional media. This has been even heightened in the case of political campaigns, where traditional media reporting has become a subject of bias, and hence, voters turn to other news outlets telling the story online. Nevertheless, the fact is that the possibilities of social media as an alternative source of news cannot be ignored. It brought a change in the power dynamics in consuming the media, increasing the variety of opinions and voices heard, and exposing the marginalised voices to reach political rhetoric. With Kerala still on the path of media innovation, the relationship between social media and traditional media will determine the future of political communication and will compel both industries to refocus on addressing the demands of a more online and politically active society.

The role of social media in Kerala's media landscape highlights its promise and pitfalls. Although it is a strong source of information and political interaction, it is also posing the novelty of risks in the spread of misinformation and the separation of media. As Kerala media continues to change, it is important that the traditional media and the social media platforms work together, where the information flow process should be factual, all-inclusive and with accountability. Moreover, the Indian media that covered the Hema Committee Report, The Solar Case, Discrimination against RLV Ramakrishnan by means of caste, and the case of Omanakuttan makes us realise how only giving news is not adequate in the preservation of democracy, but making sense out of news as well. By way of such news, the mainstream media commercialises the news of sexual discrimination, caste discrimination, as well as bias which is present in society. And now there exists a counter system of examining the news against which everybody is able to compare. As such, changes in political communication are dynamic or continuous.

The early newspapers in Kerala have rendered selfless service in shaping the people from feudalism and British rule into democratic citizens and in spreading the importance of politics for that. Kerala is still different today as evidence of the fact that the non-profit activities of that time with limited technical capabilities have been useful in the society. But in the twenty-first century, which is technologically very advanced, the mass media often ignores democratic values such as scientific awareness, secular thinking, and political responsibility of citizens for the sake of profit. The main reason for this is that the work of the media, especially the traditional media, is being done like any other business. Similarly, another reason is that the vote bank perspective of the political parties and their addiction to power deter them from political communication for true democratic values. Moreover, as new media has turned everyone into journalists, it has also been seen as questioning the dominance of traditional media and, while beneficial to governments, political activities, political communication, and democratic values, it also poses a challenge.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The concept of the public sphere in Kerala cannot be compared to the way Habermas presented it in Europe. In the case of Kerala, people are divided economically, socially, politically and religiously. There are many reasons why Kerala is different from other states of India. Kerala has a high population density, is geographically diverse and small and the difference between villages and cities is minimal. Therefore, from the south to the north, it is interconnected. Another unique feature of Kerala's geography is that it is located in the middle of the Sahyadri Mountains on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to consider Kerala as a single big city. Due to this unique feature, there is no doubt that any socio-political events that happen in one part of Kerala will be immediately accepted or affected throughout Kerala.

When Kerala is examined from the perspective of the public sphere, another feature that should be taken into consideration is the 'Kerala model' of development. Its main feature is the rise in per capita income along with a standard of living at par with developed economies. Kerala has grown as a consumer state rather than a manufacturing state. The Kerala model has also been a factor in the evolution of Kerala's public sphere. Since the gap between Kerala's villages and cities is narrow, it is not difficult for the above-mentioned cultural and economic flow to spread to the public sphere of Kerala. Such changes naturally create movements in politics as well. The service sector is the primary source of income in Kerala. Additionally, there has been migration to the Gulf countries that began in the 1970s. There are economic and social reasons for this. This migration has economically developed the state. Migration is increasing every year. This type of migration has spread to different parts of the world including Europe, America and other Scandinavian countries. Unlike the initial migration, which was mainly for employment, many

people are now moving for business, starting new businesses, and pursuing education. This has increased the inflow of foreign exchange to Kerala and brought in the culture of other countries and consumer culture similar to that of developed countries. In Kerala, departments are set up for the welfare of expatriates for the administration. Political parties have made various promises and positions for expatriates and have even taken initiatives to create welfare schemes at the government level, which clearly shows the influence of expatriates.

The evolution of the public sphere in Kerala can be best understood through the evolution of the political sphere in Kerala. After the beginning of democracy in Europe, its importance spread to Kerala and India through trade and communication with foreign countries. Since Kerala is geographically a coastal region with its entire western part being covered, it facilitated trade with foreign countries. This led to the arrival of Arabs, Christian missionaries and other foreign entities to the state. Before independence, Kerala was divided into the regions of Thiruvidadamkooor, Thirukochi, and Malabar. Thiruvidadamkooor and Thirukochi were under the princely states (province), and Malabar was under British rule (Madras Presidency). There were calls from different quarters as early as the 1920s for the entire Malayalam-speaking region, called 'Kerala', to be united and formed into a single state. The Indian Independence Act of 1946 provided that the princely states could join India or Pakistan or remain separate or independent when India gained independence. Thirukochi joined the Indian Union, but it was decided under the leadership of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy that the kingdom of Thiruvidadamkooor would continue under the rule of the Diwan. The media of that time strongly opposed this move. The fact that Malayalam-language newspapers, their editors, and their editorial boards took a positive stance in explaining the issues of monarchy and Diwan reforms, as well as the characteristics and importance of democracy at that time, can be seen as a testament to the newspapers' ethics.

While communist rule was achieved through revolution in the Soviet Union and China, communist rule in Kerala (1957) was achieved through an electoral process. Thus, Kerala has earned the title of the world's first communist government

to come to power through ballot. During the 1957 elections, it should be noted that the Congress party had a strong electoral foundation across India. The fact that the people of Kerala did not elect the Congress party, which played a significant role in the freedom struggle and had a strong influence throughout India, also makes a different narration of Kerala politics. The communist government led by EMS, which came to power in 1957, was expelled before it completed its term based on a statewide agitation of caste, religion and political affiliation in the name of the liberation struggle.

Another illustration of the political mindset of Kerala is the national elections after the emergency. During the rule of Indira Gandhi (1975-77), when President Fakhruddin Ahmed declared a national emergency, there was a ban on the media and suppression of free thought. There were protests and different types of responses across the country; there was an intense backlash in Kerala as well. Many newspapers were subject to censorship in Kerala. Political leaders and cadres who opposed this have experienced the horror of repression from the government side. In the elections held after 21 months of a period of emergency, the country defeated the Congress party and its leader Indira Gandhi. A non-Congress government came to power in the country for the first time. However, even then, a different attitude was seen in Kerala, that is, the Congress came to power in Kerala. The election results after the emergency and the movements against emergency prove that a strong political communication system existed in Kerala.

This study attempts to explain the evolution of the media in Kerala, from the first newspaper in the 19th century to the diversity of new media in the 21st century. It shows that the media has a significant role in influencing the socio-political landscape of Kerala. There were many ways to communicate ideas in different scripts based on symbols, stone inscriptions, pamphlets, etc. However, systematic media was formed with the advent of the printing press. The printing press and its publications began with the arrival of Christian missionaries in Kerala. Although it was mainly used for religious propaganda, it later became the basis for communication. After the advent of the printing press in the 19th century,

newspapers began to be published in the form of daily newspapers as we see them today in the 20th century. Initially, they were seen as periodicals, weeklies, and magazines.

The first newspaper in Kerala is known as "Njananikshepam". Its introduction clearly stated that along with providing information, it also provided religious propaganda to Kerala society. The grammar of the newspapers of that time was different. The language used was literary. Later, Hermann Gundert published the ultimate dictionary of Malayalam. The spread of the English language for communication due to the British occupation also contributed to the spread of democratic ideas and information.

Kerala's renaissance leaders and movements have played a crucial role in guiding society, bound by the caste system, towards progress. In the earlier period, newspapers started in Kerala not with the expectation of profit, or newspapers were not a profitable business at that time. Although different communities had their own publications, it can be seen that information was exchanged through such newspapers. Due to British rule and trade with other countries, foreign news found a place in newspapers. It cannot be forgotten that there was a population that did not have access to newspapers and education at that time. Here, social reformers propagated democratic ideas and uplifted such a society. As part of such intervention, education became accessible to all sections of the people, public spaces emerged, and opportunities for communication, debate, etc., became available.

The intervention of social reformers and the presence of free press resulted in the emergence of a society, albeit not in the same sense, that Habermas had conceived of as a responsive and conscious public sphere. Although newspapers were published communally from the very beginning, the morality of newspapers under the leadership of people like Swadeshabhimani and Kesari imparted rationality, secularism, and a democratic, progressive mindset to the people of Kerala. However, since the liberation struggle began, it has been assessed differently by the caste, religious, and communal interests that came into the work of newspapers. From the twentieth century, newspapers that addressed the people as

'Prajakal' started writing as 'Pothujanam' (the public). That is, the morality of newspapers worked more or less without damage until independence. However, since the advent of democracy in Kerala, it can be understood that newspapers are gradually taking a step towards their industrial world. Caste, religious, and political interests also entered into it. Another medium that emerged during this period was radio. Since its inception, it has been used to fulfil the government's interests, and it can be assessed that radio also helped grow the information distribution system.

Although the internet became more accessible to the world in the last years of the 20th century, its potential as a medium in Kerala has only become more apparent since the first decade of the 21st century. It is also estimated that Kerala society is utilising its diverse realities. The 21st century is also a period in which the concept of 'mass media' has taken shape, and its endless realities have been continuously evolving. Kerala's unique situation, such as its Renaissance heritage, literacy, secularism, as well as its subculture and migration to foreign countries, has also embraced the possibilities of information technology.

This study examines the nature of the public sphere and the role of media in shaping political communication in the state of Kerala. The study also looks into the nature of media interventions in the shaping of new politics in the state and how it can be effectively channelised into an effective democratisation of public spaces.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of the proposed research on political communication and media changes in Kerala is that the algorithmic mechanism of digital platforms in the form of AI remains opaque and lacks a significant comprehension of it. The enormous use of social media like Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp, popular in Kerala, has complicated algorithms that filter political content, rank popular topics, and influence the discussion in society. Nonetheless, closed alleys of such algorithms deprive us of opportunities to conduct a thorough research into how and to what extent information about politics is filtered, personalised, or promoted, particularly in times of elections or in politically sensitive times. The consequence of

such opacity is that it is hard to ascertain the effect of algorithmic biases on the political opinions or voting behaviour of the state.

Additionally, there is the growing use of AI-generated content, such as automated political messaging, deepfakes, and coordinated bot activity, which makes it difficult to distinguish between genuine communication and manipulated content. Especially in Kerala, the relatively high digital usage rate can cause misinformation created using AI to spread very quickly, leading to substantial distortion of the perception of the population. Nevertheless, this study is not fully capable of measuring the extent to which it can grasp how this type of content is either filtered or reproduced as a result of a lack of data access to the platform-specific backend. Moreover, the research has limitations because rural and urban Kerala currently differ in their internet connectivity and digital participation and, therefore, better understand and process political messages informed by AI and algorithms, reducing the possibility of generalising the findings.

7.3 Major Findings of the study

1. Since the 1990s, Kerala media landscape has been expanding and there is an information deluge. The media and the number of outlets, both traditional and digital, have also grown tremendously in this case. The proliferation has led to a more pluralistic media, and this has not only enlarged the access to information but also has given birth to an opinionated and diverse society.
2. Old media is being fused with the new media. This merging helps to provide potential for such media outlets to gain wider access as well as communicate with folks in real-time, giving interactive content and various forms such as video, blogs, and live reports through their social networking platforms like websites and apps.
3. Most of the media houses in Kerala are mainly inclined to news distribution rather than news analysis. They carry out their role by providing an up-to-the-minute update but at the cost of more thorough contextualisation. The news transmission may inform the viewer about what happened, although it

will not give them the reason as to why the event occurred or what it implies. The audience will hardly perceive the meaning of the reported events in terms of their possible social, political, or economic implications unless analysis is provided.

4. Digital platforms have become prominent, leading to the rise of citizen journalism as common individuals take an active role by participating in the news creation and distribution. With the help of blogs, social media and mobile journalism, the citizens are able to report on matters of local concern, give up-to-the-minute information and provide alternative views which are not likely to be communicated by the mainstream media. Institutions and the government are now accountable due to the democratisation of the media, such that people are able to hold them accountable.
5. The public sphere became digital or virtual public sphere. With the emergence of digital and virtual environments, Kerala has changed tremendously, and the public sphere has become more fragmented. The conventional ways of engaging the populace are the print media and social gatherings, which have moved to digital platforms. The virtual space has become the main political arena, social movement and public discussion place. Nevertheless, it has caused a kind of fractionalisation as individuals are prone to creating echo chambers, which consist mostly of people who have the same sentiments as they do and therefore support their ideas by upholding the views of the majority, but isolating those with different opinions or perspectives altogether. With this balkanization of the sphere of the public, it becomes harder to reach a consensus or to develop solidified thought on relevant problems by the citizenry. On the one hand, the digital version of the public sphere helps increase the range of the actors on the stage; on the other hand, it causes some negative associations with misinformation, polarisation, and undermining some of the shared civic values.
6. Social media has transformed Kerala as an alternative platform of political

participation and has altered the nature of interaction that the political parties have with the masses, organisation and communication. Facebook and WhatsApp have become the fundamental tools to exchange party agendas, engage the supporters, address the critique firsthand and overcome the gatekeeping ability of the traditional media. This has led to political communication becoming much more punctual and interactive. Small or young political groups having no access to the leading media could use social media as a tool to promote awareness and increase their influence. The political parties, especially the Left parties, consider social media as a new platform against the corporate interests of the traditional media and their agenda-setting and bias.

7. The ever-changing media and political communication landscape is powered by technological inventions, modifications in the behaviour of the audience, and evolving political strategies. The use of digital platforms has significantly increased due to their wider reach and the ability to communicate in real time, which has become a reality today, given the current intensification of digital platforms with traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers. The relationship between media and politics is more dynamic and multifaceted than ever before, as political communication takes advantage of the current dynamic media to ensure it has a chance to influence governance, keep resources mobilised, and shape narratives.
8. The media often prefers to release sensational or scandalous material to get the audience and grow ratings over the important but less shocking issues. Such an approach to creating sensational material may misrepresent the reality by over emphasising and putting events in a context removed from it. The moral imperative to report facts and check out information takes a second seat to the hunger for breaking news.
9. Digital media firms and content creators started up in Kerala. It produces an alteration of the media environment in the state. Digital-first organisations

such as Dool News and The Cue, among others, offer alternative and investigative information, adapted to the modern consumer. To reach statewide and educated society, these media focus on regionalising international trends and civilisation, with the native language being Malayalam. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube give independent content producers the means to produce political content. Usually, in Kerala, interactivity is given much importance in digital media, which helps it engage the audience much more directly in the form of polls, live sessions, and comments, making the media more participatory.

10. The media has taken the form of a business. In that way, the corporate interests inhibit the power of the media to encourage a debate and disagree.
11. Social media is contributing to the development of a distracted society in Kerala.
12. The proliferation of fake news and fake IDs has become a widespread phenomenon in Kerala, and there is currently no comprehensive monitoring system in place to address the issue.
13. Digital platforms have become indispensable tools for political parties in Kerala. Both closed and open social media groups are actively managed by various wings of political parties to engage supporters, disseminate information, and influence public opinion. This digital engagement reflects a significant shift in political communication and organization within the state's political landscape.
14. Recent trends indicate that the importance of print media in Kerala is diminishing, especially in the wake of increased digital media usage. Many publications have responded with cost-cutting measures such as salary reductions, edition cuts, and reduced print orders. While Kerala historically maintained higher readership compared to the national average, the ongoing transition toward digital platforms has made it increasingly difficult for print media to sustain its previous influence and commercial viability.

15. Communal rivalry communication on digital platforms is prominent in Kerala. Religious groups and political parties often engage in efforts to deepen communal divisions through cyber attacks within the state through these digital channels, exacerbating social fragmentation. This highlights the urgent need for monitoring and regulatory mechanisms to address the role of digital media in perpetuating communal discord.
16. Kerala presents a favourable context for political socialisation due to its high literacy rates, strong digital engagement, and vibrant communication channels. However, despite these conducive conditions, the actual extent of political socialisation remains relatively limited.

7.4 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the analysis of political communication and media transformations in Kerala, the study offers certain recommendations to stakeholders, including the government, media institutions, academic institutions and civil society.

7.4.1. Promote Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability

Given algorithms' growing role in shaping political communication, digital platforms urgently need to adopt greater transparency in how their content-ranking systems operate. In coordination with central regulatory frameworks, efforts should be made at the government level in Kerala for digital media platforms to disclose key metrics and parameters that determine content visibility, especially during major political events and elections. Collaboration between research institutions and government institutions in Kerala can help audit algorithmic influences on political discourse.

7.4.2. Develop Regional Fact-Checking Infrastructure

The proliferation of AI-generated misinformation and politically motivated, traditional media capitalisation and fake news, especially through WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook, highlights the need for a robust local fact-checking network. Institutions including universities, media institutions and government

agencies in Kerala should create and support multilingual fact-checking units using AI tools capable of detecting artificial content such as deepfakes or bot-generated political propaganda. These services should be accessible in Malayalam and designed for mobile users.

7.4.3. Strengthen Media and Digital Literacy Initiatives

Although the overall literacy rates are very high, specific media and digital literacy interventions are still needed to teach people about the political ramifications of algorithmic filtering and misinformation. Kerala State Literacy Mission must come up with training programs wherein they can cover the topics of how to know the AI-generated content, algorithmic filtering awareness, and the evaluation of news and their sources. Such programs are supposed to aim at students and other demographic segments who consume a lot of political information on social media.

7.4.4. Encourage Ethical Journalism and Editorial Independence:

As media is an industry and the issue of media ownership and political affiliation is increasingly being raised, particularly in Kerala where there is a lot of competition in the media, news media needs to be once again committed to the landscape of journalistic ethics. Algorithms should not be used to promote a sensational agenda, whereby media outlets should oppose this type of sensationalism because it can result in the polarisation of content, poisoning of politics, and decay of faith. Editorial offices must guarantee equal political coverage, fact-checking, and potentially mentioning the creation of visuals or text done using AI with the help of labels.

7.4.5. Institutionalise Political Communication Research Units

Interdisciplinary centers in political communication, digital media studies and AI ethics should be founded at universities in Kerala. These area centers must be in a position to carry out independent research on political messaging patterns, voting age communication, media bias and proposed policy. The technical foundations of algorithmic power and AI systems should be explored through the

Department of Computer Science. Democracy and political socialisation require such systems.

7.4.6. Fostering media institutions with public participation

The importance of media in democracy and the availability of objective news should be enhanced through public participation in the media. It should also ensure that all sections of society participate in it. All political parties should come forward to expose the media institutions and activities of religiously-based media institutions, whether they are run by capital-based forces or by political partisanship.

7.5 Recommendations for Further Research

As much as the current study will provide some ideas on the changing nature of political communication in Kerala, it will provide some leads into studying the same on many key dimensions. The few recommendations for further research in the area are indicated below.

7.5.1. Study the Platform-Based Politics

Further studies should be conducted in order to comprehend how political communication occurs in Kerala, including the social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram. One should note that investigations of platform-specific behaviours, especially the Malayalam language, will give more accurate answers about the political message consumption and replication.

7.5.2. Investigate the Role of AI-Generated Content in Election Campaigns

Since the advent of AI technology, all political parties in Kerala are considering the usage of such a technology in their targeted messaging, automated response, and content generation. Ethical, social and electoral implications of such practices ought to be analysed in future research. The local body elections or an election campaign of Lok Sabha and a state assembly election case studies can be done on how the masses respond to the AI-based strategies and whether it results in knowledge-based decision-making or manipulation.

7.5.3. Analyse Regional Variations in Political Communication Exposure

Contributions of different social and geographical diversity of Kerala such as urban-rural, coastal, hilly, and comparison of how political communication varied across caste, class and religious bases, which is rich in comparison basis. We can also look at the way political awareness and politicisation can be considered in this type of Kerala public sphere. This will also assist in illustrating the relationship that exists between media consumption patterns, political relations, and socio-cultural identities.

7.5.4. Longitudinal Studies on Youth Political Socialisation

Research on youth engagement on digital platforms is essential because youth in Kerala are highly engaged with social media. This type of research can help us understand the influence of media, digital habits, and attitudes towards political communication and, thereby, the potential for youth political socialisation..

7.5.5. Interplay Between Traditional and Digital Media

Even though Kerala has undergone the digital transformation process, conventional media like television and newspapers still have a say among the population of Kerala, although not totally. This aspect warrants further study in future on how the traditional media integrates with the digital platform to determine how political communications are formulated. It ought to examine whether social media reinforces or distorts the traditional media content, how traditional media generate content in respect to social media, and how audiences negotiate and combine these two points of departure.

7.6 Conclusion

For democracy to survive, it is important to make people politically aware. Therefore, objective media and political communication are indispensable for the growth and sustainability of democracy. Criticism and critical public consciousness are essential in politics and democracy, and this is what distinguishes it from monarchy. Until the end of the twentieth century, newspapers had more influence in

Kerala because other media alternatives were not dominant at that time. However, television has slowly emerged as mainstream news media. The potential of television for news and visualisation, the possibility of knowing news through sight, has challenged the print media. Then, in the twenty-first century, new media (social media) through the internet began questioning journalism's elite nature. Since the media has become an industry, media ethics and objective journalism are becoming less of a concern in Kerala. The media that should energise and act as a driving force for social cohesion and harmony is shifting its direction to profit motive and political bias. Questioning the functioning of the media and its credibility is a daily occurrence in Kerala. The Left is the leading critic in this respect. The media industry is forced to be more ethical and democratic at the face of the developments in the arena of new media.

In the third phase of the public sphere, i.e. the digital public sphere, the fundamental nature of the media is changing. The mobile phone (smartphone) can be considered as the mass media in its complete sense. This is because the masses are at the centre of the media. Here, there is a view that the masses are all creating and receiving news. In the digital public sphere era, every individual has a role in the media. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that everyone here is a media owner, editor, and content creator. Although two-way communication was possible in print media and visual media, its use was limited. Social media can overcome such limitations in this era, and it is said that it is possible to democratise media work.

New media (social media) has brought about major changes in political communication in Kerala. It is also clear that the government utilises its potential in various ways. This diversity in media and activities can be assessed as an alternative to other media for political communication by political parties in Kerala. Television, print media, etc., are in a situation where they cannot survive without using the situation and potential of social media. Therefore, the presence of such media is also evident in social media. Just as political parties in Kerala have newspapers, television news channels, etc., they also have social media accounts, pages, groups, etc., on different social media platforms.

This study assesses that the physical space of discussions is changing into a virtual space of discussions. It is assumed that news is not just the dissemination of information and that serious political communication is indispensable for the survival of democracy. Although political communication by the media in Kerala is often beneficial to society, it is increasingly seen as apolitical and detrimental to democracy, which can be understood through news presentations. This study argues that political communication can be reflected in its true sense only if all media enable the dissemination of news and serious news analysis.

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Appendix 1

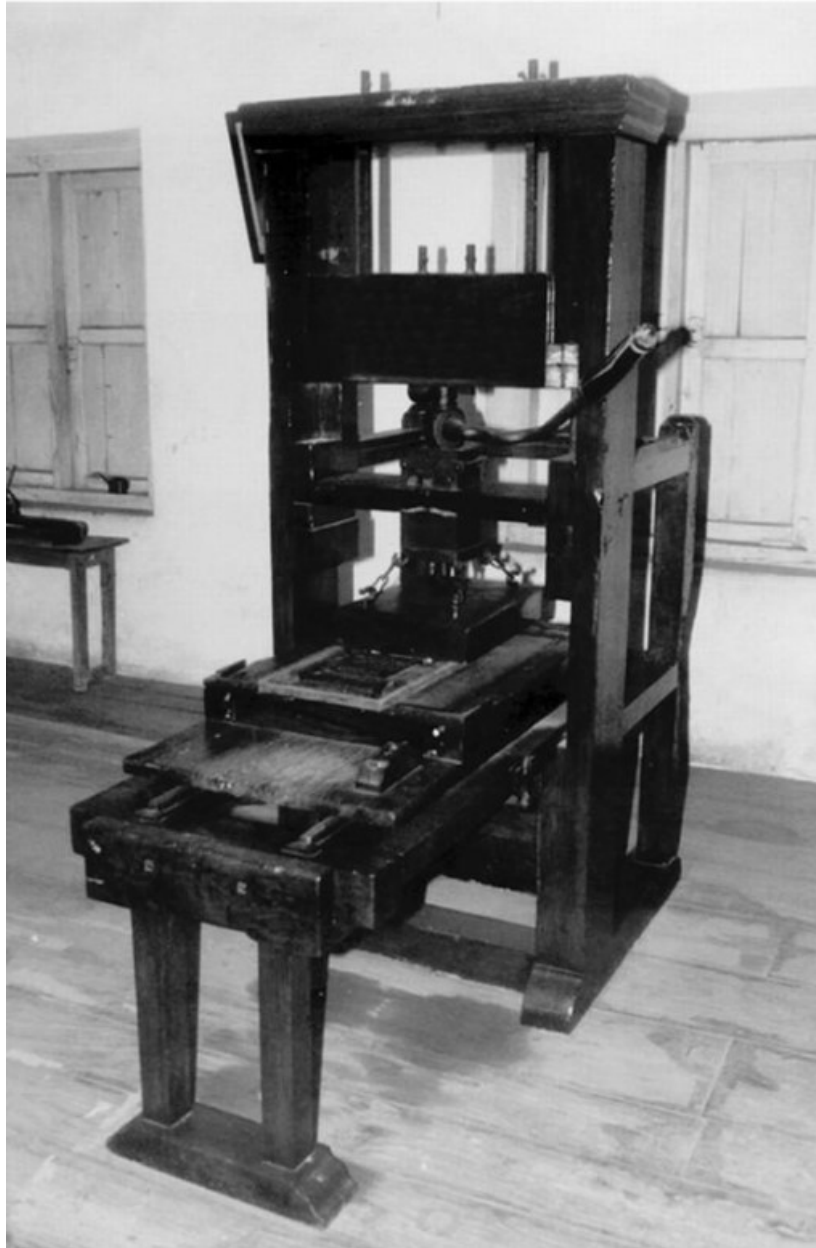
A Coffee House discussion in Palestine (1900)



(Wikipedea)

Appendix 2

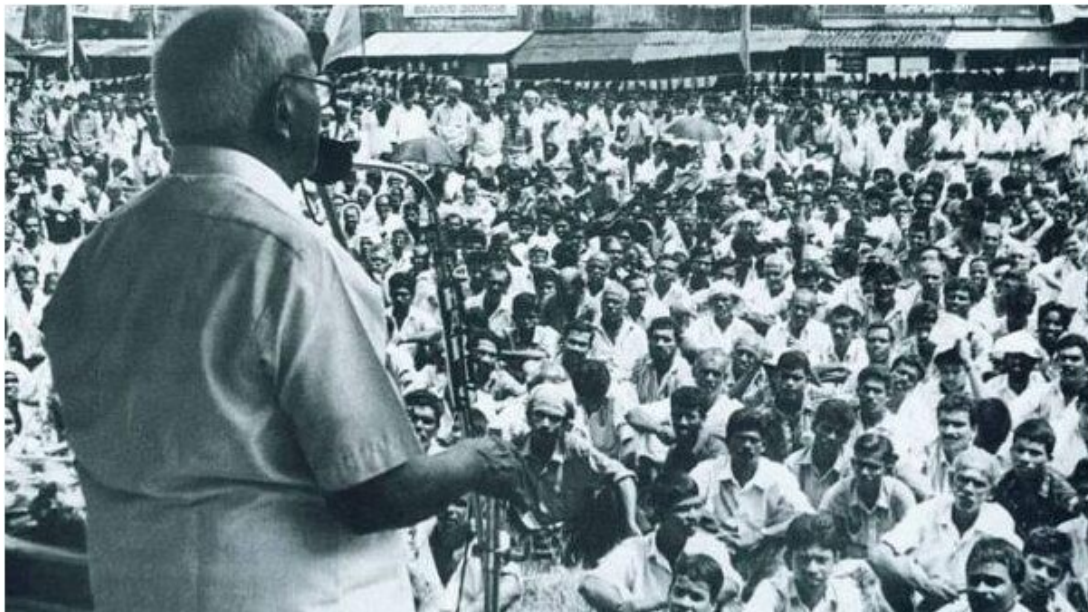
Wooden Printing Press by Benjamin Bailey



(Benjamin Bailey foundation Malayalam Research Journal)

Appendix 3

The Image Shows EMS Namboodiripad The First Chief Minister of Kerala Delivering a Speech to a Large Croud



(Wikipedea)

Appendix 4

A Reading room and Library from fort Kochi (A space for Political Discussions)



(Wikipedea)

Appendix 5

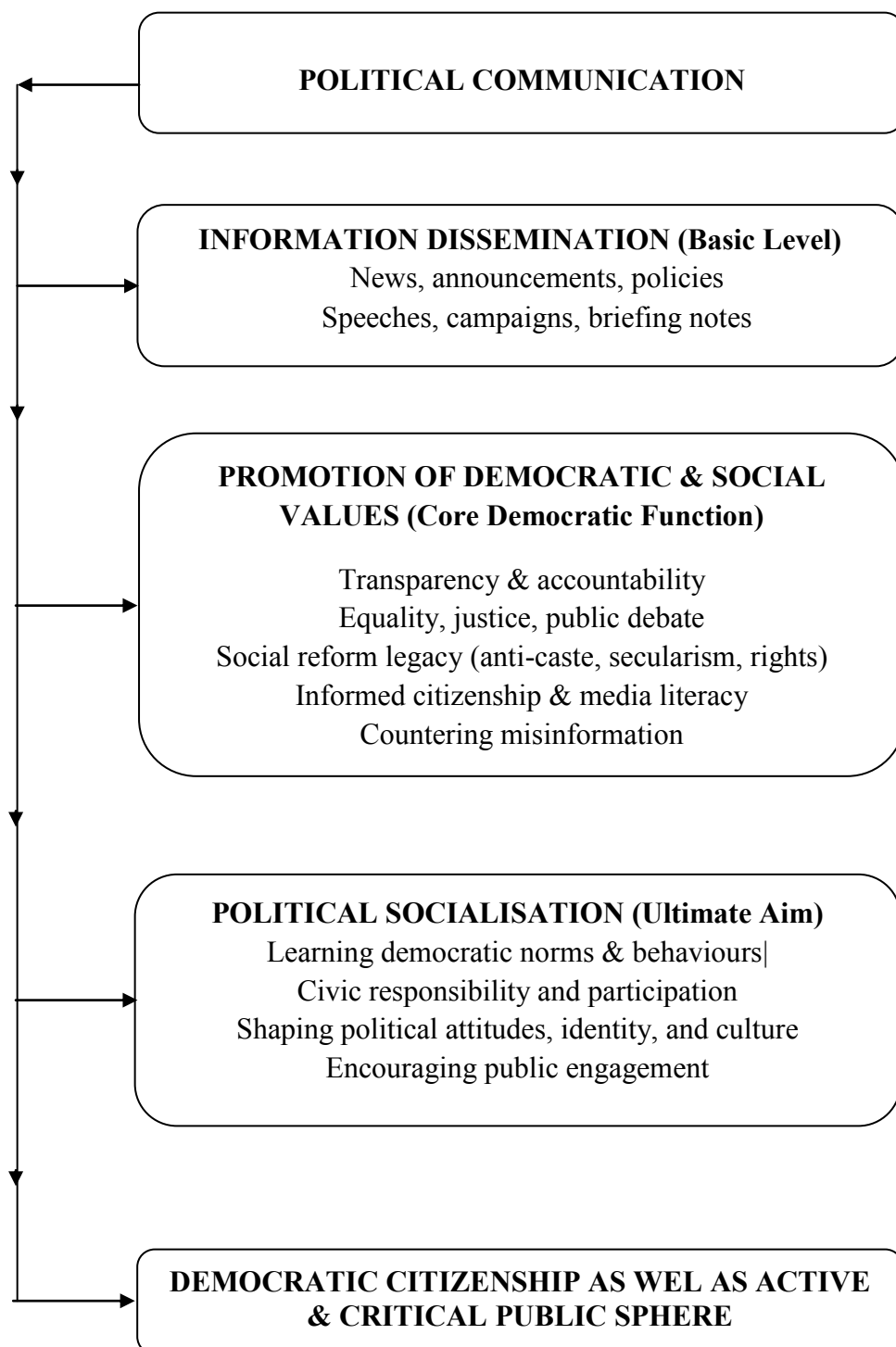
Model of an Old TV Antenna



(Pinterest)

Appendix 6

Role of the Communication in Fostering an Active Public Sphere



Compiled by Researcher