

## Television and Virtual Public Sphere: A Study on Malayali Tribes in Salem District, Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract :** Media is one of the powerful tools that manipulate the world in numerous aspects especially in the form of a communication process. For instance, the concept of the public sphere, which was earlier represented by landlords and elites has now transformed into a virtual public sphere, which is also represented by marginalized people. Unfortunately, this acquisition is still paradoxical. Though the media proliferation and its effects are humongous, still it has not been the same throughout the world. Inequality in access to media has created a technological divide among people. Finally, globalization and approach by the government towards using media for development communication has significantly changed the way in which the media reaches every nook and corner. Monarchy, oligarchy, republic and democracy together form the basis of most governments of the world. Of which, democracy is the one with the highest involvement and participation of the people. Ideally, the participation of the people is what, that keeps the democracy running. A healthy democracy is possible only when people are able to access information that makes citizens responsible and serves to check the functioning of their elected representatives. On one side the media consumption of people plays a crucial role in the formation of the public sphere, and on the other side, big media conglomerates are a serious threat to community participation, which is a goal that the media should strive for in a country like India. How different people consume these different media, differs greatly from length and breadth of the country. Another aspect of this media consumption is that it isn't passive. People usage and consumption of media are related with the gratification that they derive from the particular media. This aspect varies from person to person and from society to society according to both internal and external factors. This article sets out from the most underlying belief that Malayali Tribes have adopted television and becomes a part of daily life and a day never passes without it especially after the introduction of Free Television Scheme by the past state government. Though they are living in hilly and socially isolated places, they too have started accessing media for understanding about the people of the plains and their culture, dictated by their interest. Many of these interests appear to have a social and psychological origin. The present research attempts to study how gratification of these needs lead Malayali Tribes to form such a virtual public sphere where they could communicate with people of the plains. Data was collected through survey method, from 300 respondents on "Exposure towards Television and their perception". Conventional anthropological methods like unstructured interviews were also used to supplement the data collection efforts in the three taluks namely Yercaud, Pethanayankkanpalayam and Panamaraththuppatty in Salem district of TamilNadu. The results highlight the role of Television in gratifying needs of the Malayali Tribes.

**Keywords :** democracy, gratification, Malayali Tribes and television, virtual public sphere

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