Social Media and the Boundaries Between Work and Non-Work in a South Indian Setting

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DECLARATION

I, Shriram Venkatraman, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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(Shriram Venkatraman)

Abstract

This thesis is based on a 15-month ethnography conducted in a peri-urban area adjacent to the south Indian city of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The fieldsite comprises of a newly established special economic zone catering to the IT sector and employing over 200,000 IT workers amidst a few rural villages with a population of around 30,000.

A key consequence of the transformation of this area from agriculture to a knowledge economy is the varying scales of adoption of personal communication technologies and social media by its different socio-economic groups. As exploring the role of social media in the everyday lives of people of this area is the central focus of this ethnography, this involved an in-depth research of both their online and offline lives.

This thesis presents the impact of social media in work and non-work settings such as home and education, which in turn are influenced by factors such as caste, age, class, politics, and gender. The ethnography made clear the degree to which social media usage was deeply rooted in local traditions and practices.

This thesis explores how social media constantly undermines the modern workplace boundaries of work and non-work spaces. While taking work home is seen as a social conformance to the modern workplace expectations, managing non-work aspects at work is generally viewed as dissent. However, this thesis argues that such dissent is actually in conformance to the historical ideology of work in south India where such boundaries traditionally did not exist and constant interactions with the non-work space was considered a part of everyday sociality.

The impact of social factors led to relative continuity between offline and online spaces. For example, with respect to gender, women belonging to certain castes were either barred from accessing social media or kept low online visibility under surveillance from families and caste networks, thereby reflecting offline patriarchy. Offline hierarchies of class and age were also reflected online. Families went further in using social media to showcase ideal in-group behaviour to the outside world.

A direct reflection of the aspiration for social mobility in this area was in education. A key finding was that the symbolic interpretation of social media differed significantly based on the status and the resources that the schools possessed within the community and the socio-economic groups that the students belonged to. This also influenced the teacher-student relationships on social media. The ethnography presents evidence for these uses and consequences of social media both for villagers and the new class of IT workers.

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Acknowledgement

Note on the Thesis text

The focus of this thesis is on understanding how social media undermines the boundaries between work and non-work in a peri-urban setting in South India, however, it also discusses the impact of social media in the everyday lives of people of this area. While chapters four, five and six focus on the work and non-work settings such as home and education, chapters one, two and three provide a background to this area, its people and their social media usage.

A popular form of this thesis will also be published as a book titled 'Social Media in South India' by UCL Press. London

In order to preserve the anonymity of the individuals who graciously agreed to be a part of this research, their names and identities have been altered.

Further, the names and the identities of the organizations, businesses, landmarks and places within the fieldsite have also been anonymised. The fieldsite is also referred to only with a pseudonym.

The currency used in India is the Rupee. At the time of the fieldwork, approximately 100 Rupees equalled one Sterling Pound.

The maps presented as images in the first chapter are used under the permission guidelines for the use of Google Maps. All four maps (images 1.1 to 1.4) are screenshots from Google Earth intending to showcase the fieldsite and the scale of development. (Non-commercial use of Google Earth - https://www.google.co.uk/permissions/geoguidelines.html)

All other images have been used with the permission of the people who had posted these images on their respective social media profiles. Care has been taken to anonymise the images so as to not reveal the identity of the individual.

Chapter One - Panchagrami and its Complexities

On a blistering summer afternoon in April 2013, a 24-year-old Selva, the first graduate of his family met me at a roadside teashop to tell his tales of social media. He had first discovered Facebook four years ago while in college and since then had also explored WhatsApp. He had experimented with Twitter, but his sojourn there was short-lived. He was intimidated by the platform and said you needed to be an English 'Peteru' (a colloquial slang for a show off in English) to tweet and get followers.

Selva spoke of how much he loved Facebook and WhatsApp and boasted about how he had accumulated female friends on Facebook, some of who had become sufficiently close that their chats had moved from Facebook to WhatsApp. In all of this, he praised the positive impact of social media on his personal life.

Two months later, however, Selva had closed his Facebook account and was only chatting through WhatsApp. Meeting at the same teashop, he cursed Facebook as having spoilt his life and family honour. A few weeks ago, he had discovered that his younger sister, a 17 year old high school student, was having a romantic relationship with his college junior, the latter from a different caste[1] (Pillay, 1977) group than his. Both had met and friended each other on Selva's Facebook profile. When Selva's parents and extended family got to know of this, they blamed him for encouraging his sister to be on social media. His family viewed his sister's romance as disrespectful to the family and caste

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[1] Caste is an endogamous system, which ascribes a socially distinct group identity to an individual at birth. For more on caste system in Tamil Nadu, please refer to Pillay, K.P.K., 1977.

honour and an irate Selva for his part went ahead and closed both his sister's and his own account on Facebook.

Selva lamented that he should have listened to his kin and friends from his village that had warned him not to allow his sister to access a mobile phone or Facebook. They had told him that it was his primary duty to safeguard his sister from the 'romantic clutches' of young men from other castes who were on the lookout for such vulnerable women. They had also told him that an ideal young unmarried Tamil woman would not be seen on such a dangerous platform or with a mobile phone.

A week later, in an upmarket coffee shop just a few hundred yards away from this same tea stall, Vijaya, a software professional in her mid-twenties explained her journey on social media. She was married with a two-year-old daughter and was now five months pregnant with her second child. She was on multiple social media platforms, which included some dormant accounts on Facebook and Twitter and more active accounts on WhatsApp and LinkedIn. WhatsApp connected her family and LinkedIn took care of her professional interests. Leaving her toddler at a nursery close to her work place was a source of guilt for Vijaya, as it was against her in-laws' expectations of an ideal mother. She found out that the nursery, which was catering to the IT sector parents, offered a service of hourly WhatsApp updates on the children throughout the day for an additional fee. She had immediately opted for this service since taking note of what her daughter did throughout the day assuaged her guilt and allowed her to monitor her child through WhatsApp.

This thesis is a narrative description of a 15-month ethnography ("Ethnography", n.d.) of social media in a peri-urban area, next to the city of

Chennai, Tamil Nadu in South India. This area is undergoing a rapid transformation from a rural to an urban landscape owing to an Information Technology (IT) revolution, which started at the turn of this century when the government decided to set up a special economic zone catering to the IT sector in the midst of five rural villages. We will henceforth address this area as 'Panchagrami'[2]. The arrival of the IT sector made Panchagrami a setting where tradition met with modernity and the local met with the global. It seemed appropriate to connect a study of social media with a setting, which includes one of the iconic examples of modernisation in India, namely a new IT hub.

Panchagrami, has a populace of around 30,000, which combines a population of around 14, 000 long term resident villagers who trace their ancestry to this area along with around 16,000 newly settled population that includes people working for the IT and its associated service sector, entrepreneurs, small time traders, construction workers and a host of other unskilled labourers looking for employment opportunities. Along with the permanent residents, Panchagrami caters to a floating population of around 200,000 people, commuting to work in the IT and other service sectors.

One of the assumptions for choosing this setting was that it would enable me to understand the differences in social media usage between the two distinct populations namely the IT employees vs. the long term resident villagers. While the former was urbanized, fairly affluent and thought to be expert users of social media, the latter was rural, less affluent and novices when it came to using new technologies. However, with the start of the ethnography, it soon became apparent that the use of social media in both of these communities

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[2] A Pseudonym for a group of five villages

was actually governed by deeper layers of traditions influenced by social categories such as gender, kinship, age, caste, class, religion, etc. and not just by a superficial dichotomy of IT employees vs. villagers. These traditions are deeply embedded into the daily lives of the residents of Panchagrami and continue onto social media.

The case of Selva illustrated how he carried notions about caste, family honour, discourses about ideal womanhood and notions of hyper masculinity[3] (Parrott and Zeichner, 2003; Spencer et al., 2004) from his offline world to the online world of social media. Similarly, in Vijaya's case, she carried the expectations about ideal motherhood and tried to fulfil them by mothering through WhatsApp. The original intent behind this research might have led to these two cases being used to represent the difference between an IT employee (Vijaya) and the villager (Selva). However, there exists a deeper layer of commonality connecting both these cases. People bring their offline traditions into social media, be it in terms of gender, kinship, age, caste, religion, class etc. The tradition to a large extent is mapped onto social media and reasserted on it, thus reflecting offline social categories online as well. This is also a place, where individuals on social media, strive to bring along their social groups such as friends and kin members online, showcasing social media as a group media and perform on it for the wider world to see how they uphold normative Indian traditions.

This notion of continuity[4] between the offline and the online spaces is nothing new in the Indian context; indeed claims to continuity are themselves a

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[3] Hyper masculinity refers to an exaggerated notion of masculinity and machismo. In this case, it also refers to the attitude that women are generally weak and need to be protected from other men. Please refer to Parrott, D.J. and Zeichner, A., 2003; Spencer, M.B. et al., 2004. for further discussion on Hyper masculinity.
[4] Continuity refers to an unbroken and constant connection over time and space

fundamental part of Indian cosmological thinking. This is illustrated in the case of Nagamani, a 56 years old, owner of a hardware store at Panchagrami. Nagamani had lost his third son to the ravages of cancer six years ago and on his son's sixth death anniversary ceremony, the ritual included the common offerings of food for the departed soul called as 'Padayal' in Tamil. Next, to the banana leaf with the food, there were items such as a fancy watch, a 'Cinthol[5]' perfumed soap, sun glasses, a 'Parker' ball point pen and an 'Axe'[6] deodorant. Nagamani explained that these were his son's favourite items, which his son would need in his after life too. If a belief in continuities had an ability to transcend space and time – from this world to the after world or from rural to urban (Mandelbaum, 1970), it is no surprise that they can also be expressed as continuity between the offline and the online.

The continuity of the offline traditions and social categories into the online space of social media in Panchagrami takes various forms. One commonly observed offline tradition in social media is that of network homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) or the idea of friending people from similar backgrounds specifically with respect to caste and class. This kind of in-group behaviour automatically also gives rise to the sense of online otherness as represented by everyone else. Interactions with the latter are then seen as essentially functional rather than social.

This kind of network homophily also provides evidence for the emergence of digital inequality. One of the key findings of the entire project ("Why we post", n.d.) was that online equality does not necessarily mean offline equality and this certainly holds true in Panchagrami as well.

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[5] A popular soap brand in India
[6] A popular deodorant brand

At one level the increasing affordability of communication technologies such as smart phones and internet data plans have created a growing level of equality of access. However, access to the same media does not translate to social equality online. Merely because one is capable of `friending' people from different backgrounds doesn't mean that anyone will, especially when the other person was from a lower socio-economic background[7] (Spyer, n.d.).

The maintenance of these more traditional groups also leads to an emphasis on social conformance expressed through social media interactions, be it through postings of visuals, texts or other responses. Most people tried to conform by strategically crafting and directing their communication to the expectations of their group. Expressing dissent within such groups took place privately or was expressed through indifference and silence. People also resorted to the creation of multiple profiles or fake identities on social media to express dissent to normative expectations. As we shall see, for some people the authentic self is now comprised of multiple identities expressed through different genres of posting on different platforms.

While it may seem as if the continuity between the offline and the online spaces influenced by social categories such as caste and class leads to socially different networks, there are in fact many commonalities rather than oppositions when we look at their social media activities and responses (e.g. their visual culture, network conformance etc.), which are influenced by a deeper Tamil culture. This also explains the high degree of commonalities between the super groups of IT and villagers. The different chapters of this thesis elaborate all of this in detail with examples derived from the ethnography.

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[7] This was also observed in Brazil. Please refer to Spyer, J., n.d.

This idea of continuity is better understood by first understanding the offline and the online spaces independently. This is precisely the task of the first two chapters. Hence, this chapter introduces Panchagrami, its residents and the social categories that underpin their everyday life and also examines the complexities arising out of the radical juxtaposition of a massive knowledge economy fuelled by the IT sector in a traditional rural space dominated by agriculture.

This is followed by an exploration of the communication practices and the social media landscape in chapter two. This chapter will start by examining the history of communication at Panchagrami and will move onto detail the use of different social media platforms across diverse social groups. Chapter two will also examine how the norms associated with communication in the offline space are also reflected in their social media interactions.

With an understanding of both the offline and the social media landscape of this area, we will move onto exploring one of the most common forms of social media communication at Panchagrami i.e. the visuals[8] ("Why we post", n.d.). This chapter will showcase how these visuals are most often only a continuity of the offline visual practices. This is done by segregating the social media visuals into different categories as seen in the offline space i.e. public genres, the private visuals and the in-betweeners[9] (which are in between the public and the private). This chapter will also examine how people strategically craft

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[8] This was also one of the key finding of the bigger project Why We Post. n.d. Retrieved from https://www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post/discoveries/why-we-post/discoveries/7-we-used-to-just-talk-now-we-talk-photos
[9] The chapter introduces those visuals that actually fall in-between the public and the private spheres as in-betweener visuals in the offline space and draws parallel to them in the social media communication.

their visual communication in accordance to social norms and tend to conform (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004) to the expectations of their networks.

Central to the idea of conformance and normative group behaviour is kinship[10] (Dumont, 1953; Gough, 1956; Trautmann, 1981; Trawick, 1990; Uberoi, ed., 1993; Kapadia, 1994). So, chapter four focuses on the domestic sphere of family and kinship relationships, which also become the primary domain for much of everyday communication and therefore requires a detailed discussion of the major classes of kin relations. Indeed the most commonly cited social category in India is essentially a kin category. Caste is based on endogamy[11] (an idea that no one is married outside of the caste they are born in) (Schwimmer, 2003), making caste in effect an extended unit of kinship. This brings with it several dimensions such as social control, surveillance, gendered space (Laughey, 2007; Gottdiener et al., 2015), power, hierarchy, group performance etc. some of which are best exhibited in the idea that it is the responsibility of Selva to safeguard his sister from the clutches of social media and indirectly from the men who belong to other social groups 'prowling' on social media. Social control can range from a complete banning to allowing restricted access to social media within one's home, where one can be protected from other dangerous masculine spaces (Laughey, 2007; Gottdiener et al., 2015). Conversely, Vijaya's in-laws' expectations of ideal motherhood drive her to make WhatsApp a feminine space adapted for mothering.

Hierarchy and power within family circles are most visible when it comes to intergenerational communication and specifically those that involve the elderly

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[10] For Kinship in India please refer to Uberoi, P. ed., 1993.
 For Dravidian and Tamil kinship please refer to Dumont, 1953; Gough, 1956; Trautmann, 1981; Trawick, 1990; Uberoi, ed., 1993; Kapadia, 1994

[11] For more on caste endogamy, please refer to Schwimmer, 2003. Retrieved from
https://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/marriage/caste_endogamy.html

who try hard to dictate which platform is appropriate for communicating with them. In many families what should be conveyed through voice, what communication is considered too personal to be allowed on Facebook and what should be personally conveyed only through WhatsApp is more or less dictated by the elderly. Most commonly while private familial communication is routed through WhatsApp, Facebook is used as a platform where the entire family can perform to convey notions of the ideal family to the wider world. The intimacy as expressed by fictive kin groups on social media is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five, which is the core of this thesis, is a discussion of how social media undermines the boundaries between work and non-work spheres of life in a modern work setting. This is crucial since the IT sector and other modern work settings was what was responsible for the socio-economic transformation in Panchagrami in the first place. This chapter shows how people conform to the authority of traditional social categories by tactfully mediating the authority of the modern work places. Having been an agricultural economy until a decade ago, people never viewed work and non-work as dichotomous or as bounded areas and most often one flowed into another and the boundaries between them were constantly shuffled based on the context. This was to a certain extent true of the south Indian work culture where constant interactions with the non-work space were considered a part of everyday sociality. However, with the IT sector and its associated modern work place norms, notions of work and non-work changed and while allowing work outside the office space was considered conformance to modern work place expectations, bringing non-work aspects into the workplace was considered dissent and was frowned upon by the management of these work settings (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Reddy, 2010). Social media has helped

to circumvent such restrictions and undermines the strict boundaries of work and non-work in these settings. As such it is the older and prior forms of authority such as caste and class that now infiltrate the work places in the form of kinship[12] (Vidyarthi, 1984; Harriss et al., 1990; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2008) based recruitment and familial communication through social media. While Nippert-Eng's (1996) book is on the integration and segmentation of boundaries between home and work, and is prior to the emergence of social media, this thesis explores how people integrate non-work with work by negotiating boundaries with the help of social media.

Chapter six then looks at social media and education and describes in detail the tensions and the varying attitudes towards social media by various stake holders i.e. teachers, students, parents and the school system. In this chapter, we examine the impact of social media within education, a topic of importance given the way this field site resonates with the idea of a new knowledge economy[13] (Dahlman and Utz, 2005).

Gomathi, a 54 year old, school teacher, explained why social media was a waste of time and a distraction to students over a nice home cooked lunch. She had strong views on why students should be discouraged from using them and cited several popular media articles, which described the ills of social media. She was also against teachers friending students as she felt this could reduce the amount of control that the former wielded in the classroom.

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[12] The role of kinship in urban industries in India is common. please refer to Vidyarthi, 1984; Harriss et al., 1990; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2008

[13] At another level, if we look at Panchagrami itself as an organization (though Knox, 2010, discusses the idea of viewing a city as an organization, if we extend this idea to a peri-urban area like Panchagrami), then the organizational change into a knowledge economy is reflected in education and in adoption of personal communication technologies. This is also in a way reflected in the work and family sphere as well. Further, looking at how Chennai has developed in the past several decades, the idea of Panchagrami becoming a part of Chennai is akin to an organization being acquired by another. However, in this thesis we only look at the micro level details of change in the role of personal communication technologies, specifically social media and forsake looking at it as a change from the standpoint of Panchagrami as an organization.

As visible in the case of Gomathi, we shall see how social media contributed to an inherent tension on how to align traditional hierarchies of teacher-student relationship to a new relationship of a 'Friend' on social media. Class and the kind of school system add an additional layer of complexity to this already tenuous relationship of teachers and students on social media.

Before the chapter moves onto discuss Panchagrami in detail, it might be worthwhile to make a note of a few aspects related to the study of social media in this area.

Most aspects discussed in this ethnography might seem categorised as binary structures i.e. the idea of class, caste, public and private, ingroup and others, or even work and non-work, as opposed to the geographical space where the ethnography took place, which is under a transformation along a continuum between the binaries of rural and urban spaces. This transformation of space along with the socio-economic and cultural changes that people experience is what led them to articulate the changes they experienced on everyday basis as these binaries. Though the changes they experience is on an everyday basis, the binaries stem out of comparing changes across different time periods (which are usually set apart by years, months or sometimes days) and are dependent on the context and the people who express these. We also need to be cognizant that these could be expressions stemming out of the well-entrenched hierarchical ranking structure often witnessed in the Indian social structure and thus forms a part of people's thought processes. Another underlying trend as witnessed in these articulations of experiences as binary categorization was the idea of sociality – which explains for the contextual

interactions that people have with each other in this area e.g. in-group, private, family or public, class, caste.

Expressions of people's experiences as binaries also brings its own set of challenges when studying social media in such a complex area, as one needs to account for both the ends of the spectrum, while still dealing with all that falls in between. However, the idea of scalable sociality (Miller et. al, 2016) associated with how people's social media use can scale from one to one communication to that of groups (with different sizes and constitutions) and from the most private to the most public, which helps people determine their choice of communication based on the degree of privacy or the size/constitution of the group, became not just a theoretical construct in understanding social media use in Panchagrami, but also helped as an analytical category in helping understand how this is steeped in the local customs and practices. For e.g. the configuration of scales of privacy and group size and for that matter even the constitution of the group in Panchagrami such as family (for e.g. see chapter four for how families scale and identify constitution of these binaries even within families when it comes to social media use, e.g. when sharing pictures of a new born, the idea of evil eye is attributed to non-immediate family members though they might be from the same caste/class group) or caste (for e.g. see chapter five of how job opportunities are shared within a certain caste group over WhatsApp – once again showcasing scaling and constitution of groups) or even class (where a majority of 'Friends' on one's social media are of a certain class invariably avoiding 'others').

Thus, the idea of Scalable sociality not just fits in theoretically in situating social media in this rather complex space but acts as a method in allowing an

understanding of the dynamics of the society itself through understanding people's use of social media.

The era of liberalization in the early 1990's and the parallel growth of the IT (Information Technology) sector in India, also witnessed the growth of various special economic zones, specifically catering to the IT sector, which in a way has allowed for the Indian economy to be referred to as a rising knowledge economy, given the growth of a dynamic private sector demanding educated and skilled human capital in a democracy (Dahlman and Utz, 2005; Nisbett, 2007). Several studies such as Dahlman and Utz, 2005; Tripathi, 2006; Updhya and Vasavi, 2006 have researched the idea of a IT induced knowledge economy, specifically addressing how state led initiatives have led to the development of IT and its subsidiary sectors along with highlighting the effects that it has on the IT workforce (Updhya and Vasavi, 2006). Macro level government planning of city spaces, allocation of zones for the IT industry and how this shapes the formation of an Information society has been discussed in the works of Heeks, 1996; Madon, 1997; Heitzman, 2004; Chacko, 2007, while the urban space restructures due to state power and the growth of class politics is dealt by Fernandes, 2004.

Studies such as that of Updhya and Vasavi,2006; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Annapoorna and Bagalkoti, 2011 and Radhakrishnan, 2011 have highlighted the work based issues in the IT sector, most addressing the macro aspects of IT work culture, its merits in terms of merit based recruitment, remuneration which helps catalyse the growth of the new middle class and demerits such as taking work home and the subsequent work related pressures alongside the rising consumerism; while Nisbett, 2007 in his study addresses masculinity associated with growing up in an IT fuelled Knowledge

economy. Further, studies in the arena of ICT for development such as Kuriyan, Ray and Toyama, 2008 address the practice of consciously including the lower socio-economic class in the IT fuelled Indian economy.

This ethnography, while mentioning the transformations in the area, consciously moves away from taking this approach of a cascading model of government initiated IT sector growth, macro IT work culture or the ICT for development model and instead looks at how personal communication media such as the social media helps reconstitute relationships and sociality in a rapidly transforming space such as Panchagrami. While most of these studies mention software and IT related projects at a macro level and how it impacts people's lives, this study looks specifically at social media that people in this area use to build and maintain sociality locally and globally, thereby consequentially and intrinsically impacting the different spheres of their lives. This is specifically of significance in Panchagrami, since the explicit manifestation of the personal impact that IT has for most people across classes is connected to personal communication media and the platforms, which in a way helps them reorganize and resituate sociality across space and time. While works such as that of Fernandes, 2004, explicitly deals with class politics and urban space restructure, this study, though cognizant of such transformations in the background, pays more attention to how this is expressed on social media. While most studies look at how IT as a macro structure has impacted people's lives, this thesis looks at the not just the distributed breakdown of IT, specifically software, as a communication platform, but also looks at the agency of the people in altering IT (social media) strategically for use in their everyday lives. Further, while most studies (except the likes Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett;2007 or Radhakrishnan, 2011) look at the effect of IT as a macro structure affecting

the public sphere, this study looks at how social media as a manifestation of the effect of IT as witnessed by people in this area also affects the private sphere. This in a way brings us to the idea of social media (as a locally viable IT manifestation) through the lens of scalable sociality as discussed above.

With this introduction to the thesis, the next section moves on to describe Panchagrami, its people and their lives in detail.

1.1 Where is Panchagrami?

Panchagrami, a pseudonym for a group of five villages, is situated on the outskirts of the 375 years old (Bose, 2014) metropolis Chennai, in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India and belongs to the district of Kanchipuram[14].

These five villages which occupy an area of around 14.25 sq. kms are discrete units and do not make up an administrative whole. For the purposes of this ethnography, the boundaries of Panchagrami are artificially drawn to describe this space under rapid transition.

Image 1.1: An aerial view of Panchagrami

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[14] Kanchipuram or Kanchi, the historic city is approx. 72 Kms. (45 miles) from Chennai. However, Panchagrami belongs to the district of Kanchipuram and is further away from the city of Kanchipuram.

Panchagrami is not a single strip of land, but comfortably occupies the two sides of a major road (called the Information Technology Highway) which runs from inside the city of Chennai to areas in Kanchipuram district, with just a part of the IT Highway (the tail end) passing through Panchagrami. Panchagrami is bordered on one side by the backwaters of the famous Chennai Buckingham Canal and is just around 2 Kms. away from the Bay of Bengal, the sea that runs alongside the Tamil Nadu coastline. A few decades ago, this canal served as an important waterway, which helped boost trade in this area, however use of this waterway has since been discontinued for several reasons[15]. Though, it's been decades since this has happened, several elderly long term residents of this area, recount with fondness the days of travel on this canal and regret the closing down of a beautiful waterway. If one wants to get to the coastline, one must travel a few kilometres away from Panchagrami to get to the link road that links to another highway, which then has smaller roads connecting to the sea. On the west of Panchagrami are several paddy fields and several vacant lands, which are now being made available for real estate development catering to businesses, the IT sector and residential complexes. This west- side borders on another national highway that links southern Tamil Nadu to Chennai and to other states in India.

To the south of Panchagrami, are a chain of other villages, which go on to connect to an ancient Hindu pilgrimage centre dating to the 10th century C.E. for Lord Muruga (also known as a Tamil God), the son of Lord Shiva, one of the Gods in the Hindu trinity. Further south is the UNESCO[16] World Heritage Site called *Mamallapuram* or *Mahabalipuram* (Nagaswamy and Nakacami,

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[15] Cleaning, governance of waterways, popularity of other transport systems and so on being a few reasons.
[16] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

2008), an ancient 7th century C.E. Pallava (Dubreuil, 1917) dynasty port city celebrated for its rock sculptures and architecture. To the north of Panchagrami is the city of Chennai (also called Madras/Madarasapattnam/ Chennapattnam (Muthiah, 2011; Lakshman, 2013) in the past).

A drive on the highway to Panchagrami from the centre of the city of Chennai takes around an hour and a half. By this stage the landscape has changed from urban to peri-urban with farm lands adjacent to high-rise corporate buildings or residential complexes on both the sides of the highway. One is welcomed to Panchagrami by a discreet highway board that announces the name of one of the villages that forms Panchagrami and after that one might witness a herd of around 20 cattle right in the middle of this road, which has cars of IT workers passing at high speeds. What makes this an extraordinary sight is the contrast, the difference between the remnants of these villages and their fields right in the middle of a thriving modernity fuelled by the IT sector.

What one doesn't expect to see in typical Tamil villages are outlets of KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) and Domino's Pizza. Yet on entering Panchagrami, one can witness them occupying the ground floor of a huge multiplex cinema on one side of the road and a huge multi-storeyed apartment complex on the other side, followed by the offices of a major multinational Information Technology company. Both the sides of the road are now packed with franchisees of bakeries and hair salons, several multi storeyed residential apartments along with stereotypical Indian village houses, restaurants, small eateries, road side tea shops, upmarket coffee shops, star hotels, super markets, smaller shops (hardware, mobile accessories etc.), village market, huge corporate buildings catering to the Information Technology sector,

international schools, village schools, colleges, hospitals and dispensaries, Panchayat offices and roads that lead to paddy fields. The transportation in this area in a way reflects the transition and the growing economic prosperity. While public transport such as buses is common, one can also find personal vehicles such as cycles, mopeds, scooters, motorcycles and cars ranging from affordable to luxury sedans. The attire of the people also reflects the diversity of the landscape. The spectrum of clothing ranges from traditional sarees and dhoties to salwar kameez, jeans, formal trousers, t-shirts and shirts.

Panchagrami also plays host to a large Special Economic Zone, which caters to several Information Technology conglomerates and is under expansion, but has vast under developed plots of land that speak to the historicity of the landscape that would have prevailed in this area a decade ago. Several abstract accounts that one reads about India's current development, as an emerging economy is made visual and immediate at Panchagrami.

1.2 Does Panchagrami have a History?

The villages that constitute Panchagrami were formed when families belonging to particular caste (Thurston and Rangachari, 1909; Pillay, 1977) groups settled in this area around 150 to 200 years ago.

Being close to an ancient temple town as well as to an ancient port city, raised several questions about the historicity of Panchagrami as an area. Scholarly works on Pallava administration and Mammalapuram (Iyengar, 1929; Rabe, 2001). and oral history gathered from this area, suggested some links, which were further validated by the still visible relics of a few stone 'Mandapams' or rest houses, and the waterless tanks and lakes in this area which are now

being used for sand mining. All this accords with the policy of the Pallavas who built such huge tanks and rock/stone rest houses 'mandapams' for the travellers. There are smaller Shiva[17] and Vishnu[18] temples around this area and a 1000-year-old Vishnu temple (Madhavan, 2007) a little further to the north of Panchagrami.

1.3 Infrastructural Development- post 1990

The Information Technology sector (IT) started booming in India by mid-1990s, just after liberalisation and Bangalore and Hyderabad were the first centres that saw huge growth and infrastructural developments. Chennai was next in line, and the grand entry of the IT sector into Chennai was a bit slow but steady. The first few IT companies that were established in Chennai were quite dispersed, until a Special Economic Zone for IT services called the Tidel Park emerged and the Indian based multinational companies such as TCS (Tata Consultancy Services – the IT division of Tata group of companies) set up a huge complex in early 2000s in this road now called the IT Highway. With the establishment of the Tidel park came several other IT companies.

Thus, geographies that might merely have developed as outer suburbs of Chennai were designated for huge IT complexes. Panchagrami with its low 'land' costs provided for easy occupation. In the year 2000, a huge Special Economic Zone that catered specifically to the IT companies was planned and established at Panchagrami by the Government of Tamil Nadu. As a sector, specific Special Economic Zone this provided basic infrastructural facilities

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[17] One of the god's in the Hindu trinity
[18] One of the god's in the Hindu trinity

and the necessary tax deductions for IT/ITES[19] companies. The establishment of a well-known IT Company in this area in late 1990s laid the foundation for the subsequent and rapid transformation. Potentially this may lead to the area becoming integrated into the city of Chennai in the near future.

Panchagrami not only houses these leading Indian IT/ITES companies, but also residential apartments that are built or are under construction as a housing investment option for these IT professionals, some of whom wish to live close to their work place. With the growth of residential complexes catering to the IT population, several well–known private schools now partner with the housing construction companies to set up private schools for children of these IT workers. Several small-time traders who hail from this area and others who have moved into this area have also set up their businesses and shops to cater to this population.

Aerial view snapshots showing the infrastructural changes in Panchagrami over the last decade are provided below.

Image 1.2: Panchagrami in 2002
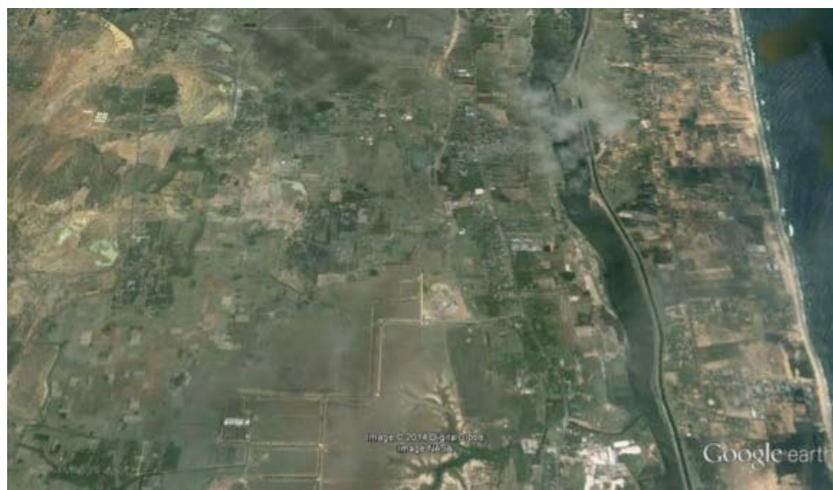
Image 1.3: Panchagrami in 2010

Image 1.4: Panchagrami in 2014

Though the long-term residents of Panchagrami acknowledge the considerable economic advantages due to the emergence of the IT economy in this area, they also voice regrets in the same breath. Very often looking at the current six lane highway, they fondly recall the days when the area had a one-way track with trees on either side, giving the much-needed shade from the scorching sun to humans and animals alike. There remain a few streets in Panchagrami, which might remind one, of the villages in 1980s. For example: Vijayan, a 43-year-old a long-term resident of Panchagrami, recalled his younger days at this place, when it didn't have so much of population and

traffic. He said it was the most environmentally friendly area. With inputs from people like Vijayan and others, an artist helped depict how Panchagrami would have looked like in the 1980s.

Image 1.5: An artist's depiction of Panchagrami in 1980s
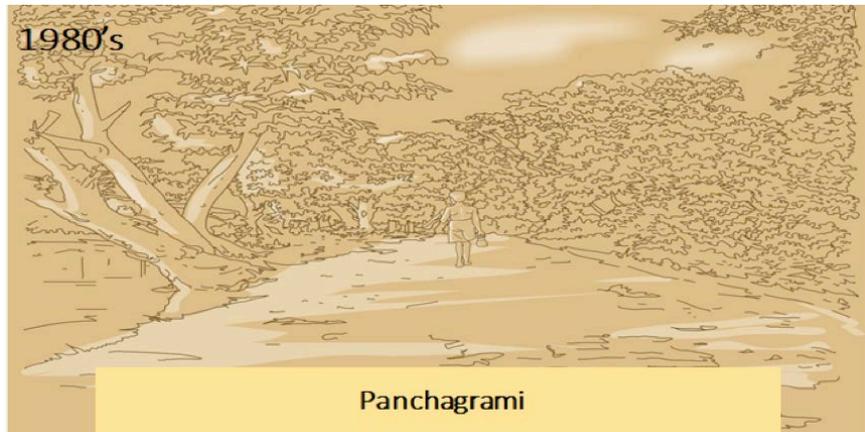
Image 1.6: Panchagrami in 2014
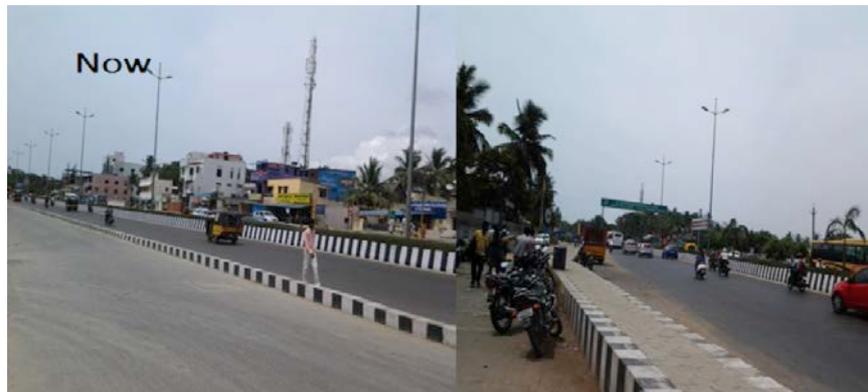
While the last couple of sections provided an overview of Panchagrami's history and the infrastructural changes that this area has undergone in the past decade, the next few sections will provide an overview of the people and social structures found in this area and will then move onto briefly discussing the built environment one encounters in Panchagrami.

1.4 People of Panchagrami

Panchagrami, though predominantly Hindu, also has a sizeable population of Christians, while, Muslims and Sikhs, are found in smaller numbers. The Hindus, Christians and Muslims can again be grouped into various economic, linguistic and caste categories. Panchagrami houses at least 10 Hindu temples of varied sizes (mostly medium to small). Annual temple festivals normally happen in the months of July and August (Tamil month of 'Aadi'), specifically well known for worship of Hindu mother goddess. Further, this area also houses a couple of small mosques and at least five churches. On Sundays one can witness groups of women and children from the villages proceeding to the churches for prayer services and mass over the entire day. Most Christians in the high-rise apartment complexes don't attend the local churches in this area and proceed to their own denominational church they have been a part of within the city of Chennai. A part of Panchagrami wakes up every morning with the early morning 'Adhan' or call for worship from the mosques. Religious festivals such as Pongal/Sankaranthi, Diwali and Christmas have more popularity in this area, given the large population of Hindus and Christians.

The complexity of this area dawns when one considers the mixture of locals and migrants of various socio-economic backgrounds. Even, with such a diverse population, it should be noted that most locals are Tamils[20] and therefore the major language spoken here is Tamil. However, with migration, there is a growing population of people who speak other Indian regional languages such as Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi and fall into various economic categories. While English is mostly the language of choice in

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[20] Speak Tamil as their native language

schools and IT companies, everyday transaction with the locals, is in a mix of Tamil and English. People form groups within their own circles to celebrate regional festivals such as Onam[21] (What is Onam, n.d.) or Tamil/Telugu New Year[22] or even Karva Chauth[23] (What is Karva Chauth, n.d.).

Local oral accounts posit that people speaking Telugu have been in this area for around half a century. The locals also don't generally differentiate the Telugu speaking population from Tamil, while people speaking Hindi as their native language or people from North India are considered as different from them.

Panchagrami houses a range of economic classes, right from the rich to the poor. Several locals are either middle class or have become wealthy in the past decade, due to the sale of lands to the real estate and the construction sector. For ease of understanding, the rich or the upper class would include the local millionaires, the top IT and corporate executives and businessmen who invest on properties here. The middle classes can be divided into the upper middle class (e.g. senior managers in IT/corporates, entrepreneurs, etc.) and the lower middle class (agriculturists, traders, entry level IT employees etc.). The lower classes or the poor are generally the agricultural labourers, hawkers etc. The poorest are the nomads (rag pickers, astrologers etc.) and the construction workers who migrate in search of jobs, given the construction boom in Panchagrami. They live in groups and occupy temporary houses that are small. There are several cases, where at least 4 people stay in houses that are just 200 sq. ft. in size.

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[21] A festival celebrated by the Malayalees. Onam, n.d. Retrieved from http://www.onamfestival.org/what-is-onam.html
[22] Festival celebrated around the mid of April
[23] A festival celebrated by North Indian Hindu women. Karva Chauth, n.d. Retrieved from http://www.karwachauth.com/

Indian society is organised around `castes', a social system which assigned a social status from the birth of an individual as belonging to an endogamous and socially distinct group. This is a derivative of the ancient Hindu varna system that categorized people based on their occupation and has been around for at least two thousand years. The occupation based varna categorization eventually became an identity bestowed at birth regardless of the occupation one chose to do. Caste system in India was organised as a hierarchy and a social order and thus movement between castes was impossible. While the varna system categorized population into four groups, the number of caste categories is innumerable and are split even further by sub castes. The ills of the caste system are manifested in the discrimination that the so-called higher castes (e.g. Brahmins) have historically shown towards the so called lower castes (e.g. Dalits). Though social thinkers like Dr. Ambedkar (Ambedkar, 1944) and Periyar (Veeramani, 2005) have argued for the annihilation of the caste system, this system still exists and is deeply imprinted in the minds of the people, so even if they change religion, they still retain their caste identity. While the castes are often identified by their local names (In Panchagrami some of the castes are Chettiars, Brahmins, Mudaliars, Vanniyars, Dalits, Irula Tribes etc.), for reasons of governance the Government[24] places these innumerable caste groups into five major categories namely Other Castes, Backward Castes, Other/Most Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This government categorisation has become almost as important as local terminology especially in the realm of policies and politics.

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[24] For example: Brahmins are categorized as Other Castes, Dalits as Scheduled Castes and Irulas as Scheduled Tribes.

At Panchagrami, caste names are mostly alluded to only when it comes to the locals who have been in this area for long. Most understand the hierarchal structure of the caste system and sometimes even refer to themselves and others based on this understanding. While caste wouldn't come up in a general conversation with most people in this area, it is not to say that they shy away from referring to their castes, when needed. While certain locals refer to their castes in the government terms, several others specifically identify themselves with their traditional caste names.

The head of each of the original families that settled at Panchagrami around 150 years ago was referred to as 'Thalakattu'. Before long this initial group expanded and were soon joined by other caste groups for trade, agriculture and other labour. The groups divided and reorganized their lands and drew their boundary and living areas to prevent people of the lower castes from settling too close to the villages of higher castes. Ideas of 'Pollution' and 'Purity' arose leading to demarcating territories as 'Ooru' (a space where the so called upper caste people lived) and 'Colony' (a space where the so called lower caste people lived). This demarcation of areas based on caste was a standard practice as documented in anthropological works on Tamil Nadu (Gough, 1955, 1969; Srinivas, 1960; Beteille, 1965; Fuller, 1996) and South India and is not specific to this area alone.

Traditionally the economic structure was such that a few so-called upper castes would own lands and others would be labourers in these lands. Wages were given out in cash and kind (often a complex system of payment through the distribution of the harvest). In the 1970s and 1980s the schools in this

area was run by the local village Panchayats[25] and a few Christian missionaries and further this area had no colleges until the 1990s. So, for reasons of education and economic mobility, several so called upper castes migrated to Chennai. Some of them sold their lands to the people who worked for them (namely the Scheduled Castes or Dalits), who in turn sold their lands to the IT sector in 2000s.

The scheduled castes or Dalits were earlier discriminated against by the so called upper castes in this area, but with time some of them have evolved to achieve social and economic mobility, while others haven't. With the increased economic prosperity, this group of Dalits can be placed in the upper middle class or can even be called rich. However, most Dalits in this area can be placed only under the lower middle class and lower classes.

Amongst the long-term residents, it is The Scheduled Tribes - Irula (Thurston and Rangachari, 1909) who are the poorest. They are locally referred to as 'pambu pudikiravanga' or snake catchers, which was their traditional occupation. They live in tribal settlements around this area. The Irulas in this settlement generally prefer their men to be educated than their women folk, but even males fail to achieve literacy, given the level of poverty that exists within their community.   The young women are sent as domestic help/domestic workers to households in this area and are the cheapest labour available at Panchagrami. The young Irula men are employed in small time jobs. The other locals in this area normally tend to visually identify the Irulas from their physical features referring to them as people with usually dark skin and a general look of poverty. Some still practise their traditional occupation of snake catching and compared to other castes, very few have jobs even in the

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[25] Village governing bodies

lower rungs of the IT sector. However, this is changing as some of the younger Irula members are starting to emerge from these traditional constraints.

Image 1.7: Irula settlement in Panchagrami

The other caste groups that exist in this area can be placed under the broad government categories of Most Backward Castes, Backward Castes and the Other Caste categories and most fall under the broad range of middle classes. Some were landowners earlier and have become wealthy selling their lands off to construction and real estate companies. They are influential in this area and own buildings and lands that they have now rented out. They are well educated and most youngsters hold at least a Bachelor's degree. Some have their own businesses while others work for IT and other corporate companies.

The gender ratio of men and women in this area is around 1.1 to 1.0. While Panchagrami's official literacy rate cumulates to around 76% and might go up by a few percentage points due to the newly settled skilled IT employees, there were cases where several men and women of the lower classes had skipped even the basic education. However, the literacy level in this area is

higher than India's average literacy rate and might even be equal to Tamil Nadu's average literacy rate[26] (Census India, 2011).

With the economic boom, Panchagrami has attracted a lot of migrants and they come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The poorer migrants are the construction workers or service providers of various sorts (e.g. they work as cleaning staff in hotels as well as in the IT companies). While, the construction workers (often the poorest) are generally low on literacy and hail from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Bengal and Orissa, the service staff in hotels are from Manipur, Mizoram and even from Nepal and are generally literates.

The construction workers who normally come in groups have a nomadic lifestyle and move from one construction site to another (Picherit, 2012). They live in each site based on the demand for labour and generally tend to move after six months to a year in each site. This group is largely unaccounted for due to their lifestyle. They live on the roads and construct temporary houses or rent temporary accommodation from the locals in this area. Similar are the cases of Nari Kuravas and astrologers in Panchagrami who hail from South Tamil Nadu and tend to be nomadic in their lifestyles as well.

The IT professionals (entry level) who migrate to this area to work in the IT companies normally tend to stay here for a period of two to three years' maximum. They are usually single and stay in hostels or shared accommodation with other such workers or rent apartments. They often move away of their own choosing or tend to go onsite (foreign countries where IT projects are being worked on) within a couple of years. They are also

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[26] Census India., 2011. Retrieved from http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf

criticised by the locals for causing inflation in this area. However, people who occupy mid-level positions and are married usually stay here longer and even invest on apartments.

Since there are at least two Universities and at least 10 colleges around Panchagrami, a student migrant population is also found here. They stay here for four years (for Engineering degrees) or at least two to three years for other degrees. Most engineering students come from all over India, specifically from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Mizoram, Assam, Manipur etc. There are several small food stalls and restaurants in this area, which cater to this group.

Small time traders migrate at different levels and tend to generally be focussed on food business. They own teashops or restaurants. Restaurants catering to specific ethnic migratory groups are aplenty e.g. Rajasthani Dhabas, Andhra Mess, Kerala mess etc. Small time hawkers selling cigarettes, chewing gums, candies and mints put up temporary shops in front of IT companies and are normally preferred points of sale for the IT employees, who don't need to walk long distances to buy cigarettes during breaks. This has encouraged several small-time hawkers to migrate into this area to specifically cater to the IT crowd. Similar is the case with the Tea stalls or the Tea 'Kadais'. Several migrants have opened Tea 'Kadais' in front of IT companies to cater to the IT crowd and cater to the construction workers. At a normal Tea stall one would see groups of employees (men and women) from IT companies hanging out together, while the temporary cigarette stalls only have men hanging around.

The boom in the construction sector for residential apartment complexes specifically catering to middle and the upper middle class has also contributed to migration. Elderly retirees who prefer to stay in the suburbs of Chennai generally prefer investing on homes in this area. Most retired people who settle down in this area have their children living abroad or working in the IT sector. One also finds people who work in mid-level and senior level positions invest on properties in this area. Wealthy businessmen from Chennai also invest on properties and tend to move here with their families. A rough estimate of non-IT people in these apartment complexes would be around 30%.

1.5 Transformation of Space

The socio-economic transformation of this area from a rural to an urban landscape, has witnessed a change in the social landscape as well. This change though fuelled by the IT sector is associated with both the real estate/construction businesses and the migration of people into this area. Though this area exhibits a huge spectrum of classes from the poor to the rich as suggested earlier in the chapter, what has changed in the past decade is that while the differences in incomes would have shown a close correspondence to the hierarchy of caste a few years ago, today the rich are not necessarily the so called upper castes and the poor are not necessarily the so called lower castes.

Yet, as noted earlier, until recently it was the caste that determined the spatial organisation of these villages (Gough, 1955, 1969; Srinivas, 1960; Beteille, 1965), which were traditionally, divided into three sectors - the Village (where Backward Castes, Most Backward Castes and Other castes live), Colony

(where Scheduled Castes live) and the tribal settlements, if at all there were any tribes around the area.

Specifically, in one of the villages that constitutes Panchagrami, on one side of the highway was the village (where Backward Castes and Other Castes lived) and the other side was where the Colony (where Scheduled Caste lived) was established with a burial ground. This is a well-established structure in village India, where people don't cross ritual boundaries of Purity and Pollution. While this prevailed right up to the turn of the last century, it has almost disappeared, due to the development of the IT industry and the real estate boom. Over the last five to eight years several new commercial centres and residential complexes have developed in the space, which was earlier referred to as the colony. Right next to the colony were agricultural lands and mango groves, which were bought and the land was reworked for bigger apartment complexes. The original inhabitants of the colony have sold their houses and sometimes their small land holdings to these newer settlers and builders.

At least 17 housing constructions (each having housing units/apartments between 170 and 800) are under way on both sides of the highway. Also 25 huge apartment complexes already exist in Panchagrami. Property builders include well-known Indian builders. A two-bed room apartment could cost anywhere between a minimum of 3.5 million Indian rupees and range up to nine million Indian rupees[27]. A 5-bedroom apartment with a reputed builder with a scenic view could cost around 50 million Indian rupees and independent villas cost anywhere between 6.5 million rupees to 70 million Indian rupees.

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[27] 1 GBP = 100 Indian rupees approximately

Though, there are constructions on the village side too, the Colony which was situated right next to a canal (back waters) had more economic value given the scenic view it would guarantee the residents of the high-rise apartments here. People living in the colony used their newly acquired financial power to move across or down the road. The previously dispersed castes have moved in together and the earlier demarcation of space has now vanished. The colony has been obliterated. The so-called lower castes, including those who were previously considered ritually impure and thus were once excluded continue to live together now.

The case of a cemetery in the midst of a posh multi storeyed apartment complex in Panchagrami can further help elucidate this merger of modern and traditional spaces. This multi storeyed apartment complex houses blocks of apartments whose starting price ranges from around Rs. 1.7/- crores – approx. 17 million rupees to around 50 million rupees. It is close to the backwaters offering a scenic view and was built a few years ago. However, since it was built on lands belonging to the scheduled castes, it also houses a cremation ground for the Scheduled castes, which is situated right in front of one of the blocks. Attempts to move it by the construction company, when the apartment complex was being built had failed.

The residents who have now occupied the apartment dislike this cremation area, which they feel spoils the landscape and offends their sensibilities. One of the residents (in his late 60s) mentioned that it reminds him of his own end. However, the area has been in use by the locals who have been living here for a very long time. Given the predominance of money and the pressure from the apartment owners and residents (who generally belong to the so called

higher castes) a `solution' seems imminent and the cremation grounds are likely to be re-positioned to the other side of the road. In effect, what would once have been largely a caste based struggle over the relative position of settlements and activities has now become a largely class and caste based conflict.

The only exception to this merger of spaces has been that of the Irula tribes. They still live in settlements specifically designated for them, and their position has been largely unaltered.

There might be a temptation to conclude at this point that class is now becoming paramount over caste-based divisions. But when we turn to the local political divisions we find that caste still plays a significant role.

1.6 Politics and Governance

The two biggest parties in Tamil Nadu are the DMK[28] (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) (DMK, n.d.) and the AIADMK[29] (Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) (AIADMK, n.d.). These parties are vehemently opposed to each other at the state level. They are found throughout the state including Panchagrami. These parties boast immense power in the state and are diversified with respect to caste and gender. Other than these major parties, parties such as the MDMK[30] (Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) (MDMK, n.d.), DMDK[31] (Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam) (DMDK, n.d.), VCK[32] (Viduthalai Chiruthigal Katchi) (VCK, n.d.) and the PMK[33] (Pattali

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[28] DMK., n.d. Retrieved from http://dmk.in/english
[29] AIADMK., n.d. Retrieved from http://aiadmk.com/en/home/
[30] MDMK., n.d. Retrieved from http://mdmk.org.in/
[31] DMDK., n.d. Retrieved from http://www.dmdkparty.com/
[32] VCK., n.d. Retrieved from http://www.thiruma.in/
[33] PMK., n.d. Retrieved from http://www.pmkparty.in/

Makkal Katchi) (PMK, n.d.) also have a great number of followers. One must note that VCK and PMK are caste based political parties. VCK is a Dalit (Scheduled Caste) based political party and PMK is a Vanniyar (Most Backward Class) based political party. A couple of these villages have a significant amount of Dalit population while some have a significant amount of Most Backward Class population. Given that this site is under transformation, it must be noted that the area's diversity has increased, however, one can still find caste based political party supporters here. Though, people owed loyalty to the parties they supported, violence in political struggle at the state or national level did not seem to affect this area. Similarly, though this area has a diverse religious population, opposition during religious festivals from the other religions never arise. One of the reasons may be the non-existence of any religion based political groups.

A couple of villages that form Panchagrami come under the affirmative action plan policies of the Government of Tamil Nadu and thus the office of the Panchayat President can only be occupied by the members of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes and therefore people here sometimes prefer to contest elections as independent candidates though they might be openly supporting a political party. For e.g. One of the Panchayat boards here has a president who belongs to the scheduled caste and the AIADMK, but contested as an independent candidate for a scheduled caste based reserved position.

Having introduced Panchagrami and its people, we will move onto the next section which details the research framework and the methodology used in this project.

1.7 The Project Framework

This thesis is the result of a 15 month online and offline ethnographic study of Panchagrami. Ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Van Maanen, 2011) as a research methodology encompasses methods such as participant observation, interviews, surveys etc. All of this was performed both offline as well as online (which involved friending people on Facebook, becoming members of various WhatsApp groups, following several on Twitter, connecting with professionals on LinkedIn and observing their online activity over this period) (Boellstorff, 2012; Hine, 2015; Pink et al., 2015). This process involved living with the people of Panchagrami, meeting them every single day for 15 months and taking part in their daily life. Hence, meeting people multiple times and having both formal interviews and informal conversations were part of the process. Over 100 formal interviews and innumerable informal and casual conversations were conducted to get a deeper understanding of the people and their usage of social media.

Ethnography at Panchagrami wasn't easy. The main challenge was to build trust and gain access to the inner circles of people, so they would give access to their personal social media interactions. This required experimentation, out of the box thinking and a lot of patience. For the first three months, owing to a portion of Panchagrami being very traditional, it was challenging to recruit young women as research participants. A change of style in the clothing and how one projected oneself mattered a lot, so while t-shirt and jeans brought about doubts on the seriousness of the research, formal wear led to being perceived as a salesman. Finally, it was only traditional wear such as kurtas, a

seemingly `Indian intellectual wear' that cemented my position as an academic and women thought that I was safe to talk to.

Over the period of 15 months, the number of Facebook respondents who agreed to be friended for research purposes was 172. While 132 were friended on a research profile specifically created for online ethnography, 40 more were friended on my original Facebook profile, as they did not wish to be friended on the research profile. Further, around 53 personal contacts were established on WhatsApp and this number kept increasing over the period of fieldwork and even after that, to around 210, which was a similar case with the WhatsApp groups as well. 41 were followed on Twitter and 67 connections were established on a separate LinkedIn profile and once again this number kept growing even after the end of the fieldwork.

Organizational ethnography (Jordan, 2012; Garsten and Nyqvist, 2013, Jones, 2014; Ladner, 2014) was also undertaken within five business organizations of various sizes (from huge multinationals to entrepreneur and family run small scale businesses) varying from 10 days to four months. While I worked as an employee in larger organizations, I was introduced as a researcher in the smaller ones. However, I made it a point to clearly state my research interests to everyone I interviewed in these organizations. Further, continuous informal conversations with employees inside and outside these organizations (coffee shops, small roadside tea shops, shopping malls, roadside eateries, their homes, employee hostels etc.) helped gain valuable insights into the complex inter-play of work and non-work aspects in their lives[34].

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[34] This ethnography was not situated only in one organization over the entire period of fieldwork and moved between different kinds of organizations and thus is different from ethnographies such as Malaby, 2011 on Linden Labs.

There were two project questionnaires[35] (Miller et al., 2016) namely Questionnaire 1 (Q1) and Questionnaire 2 (Q2), which were administered to people who were on social media. While Q1 was administered to around 130 people at the beginning of the fieldwork, Q2 was administered to 150 people at the end of the fieldwork. Other than these two project questionnaires, which were administered uniformly all through the nine sites of the larger project (Miller et al., 2016), three other smaller surveys were administered at Panchagrami to help understand certain aspects of the society in more detail. Further, the fieldwork also used social media interactions (data mined from Facebook and WhatsApp), communication diaries, communication maps, relationship circles, browsing history files and archival research to better understand social media in this area.

Signed ethics and consent forms guaranteeing anonymity were obtained from all those who agreed to be interviewed as research participants.

1.8 Conclusion

If you are not familiar with the study of Indian society then some of the details provided in this chapter may seem somewhat daunting. What is a caste and how does it relate to class? How do the government's categorisations of people fit with the ones they use to describe themselves? It would be hard enough to gain a clear understanding of all of this in a static situation. But the context for this ethnography is anything but static. What happens when simply because of changes in real-estate values, some local villagers who have remained in most respects much as before, find themselves with assets and incomes more comparable to the employees of the IT sector that caused this

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[35] These questionnaires were standard across all of the nine sites. The results of Q2 were compared and published as a chapter in the book Miller et al., 2016.

increase in property values. And how do they now relate to those who didn't benefit. The penultimate chapter runs in parallel to this point. What happens to an education system, when now everyone sees this as geared towards something called a knowledge economy which is expected to embrace both the villagers and the IT professionals. Fortunately, by looking at this context we can see two complementary properties of these changes. Clearly there are all sorts of divisions and differences that will be kept into account throughout. One of the most significant is that of gender, which cross cuts many of the others; another is the differentiation between the internal dynamics of the family and the way it faces outwards. But the larger point is that these differences are mainly traditional divisions, with categories such as caste going back thousands of years. So, in a way this also expresses what all these groups have in common, that they are all regulated by caste differences, gender differences and the rules of family life. As noted at the start of this chapter, that is the story of this thesis; how a society that seems characterised by differences, is thereby showing continuity with the long-term traditions that lie behind those differences.

Only with these things in mind can we embark on the way this narrative is expressed by and through social media. Because this thesis as with others in the same series is not dominated by evidence for how social media has transformed society, but the very opposite, how social media has itself been transformed by its adoption in this context. How we can only come to understand what social media is in South India when we appreciate that social media within a few years have become powerfully expressive of this much older and wider story of Tamil society itself.

Chapter Two - The Social Media Landscape: People, their perception and presence on social media

"Chennai has one of the largest user bases of social media in India…see…we have contributed to India being one of the top countries in adoption of new technologies"

Venugopal – A Digital Media Analyst

With the IT sector thriving in Panchagrami and the nearby city of Chennai ranking fifth in Indian cities in terms of the number of Facebook users (Arun Kumar, 2014), it would not be surprising to see Panchagrami in the vanguard of such development. The development of communication technologies at Panchagrami was not a step-by-step evolutionary process, but rather a series of rapid leaps[36] (Soete, 1985; Steinmueller, 2001; Wade, 2002; Bajwa, 2003; Vijaybaskar and Gayathri, 2003; Pentland et al., 2004; Toyama et al., 2004; Friedman, 2005; Mathur and Ambani, 2005; Mani, 2007, 2012; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013; Rangaswamy and Cutrell, 2013; Kumar, 2014), the latest of which is the advent of social media (Rangaswamy, 2012; Kumar, 2014). Hence, to better understand the social media landscape in this area, it would

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[36] This is associated with the development of ICTs in India. Leapfrogging and technology diffusion are extensively discussed in ICT for development literature for developing countries. However, the series of rapid leaps at Panchagrami is due to a combination of market penetration of affordable technologies, a socio-economic shift in the area due to the IT sector and a bridging of the digital divide. Please refer to Soete, 1985; Pentland et al., 2004; Toyama et al., 2004; Friedman, 2005; Mani, 2007, 2012; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013; Rangaswamy and Cutrell, 2013; Kumar, 2014
For discussions on further growth of ICTs please refer to Steinmueller, W.E., 2001. Mathur, A. and Ambani, D., 2005.
For the diffusion of ICT in India and its associated development please refer to Bajwa, S.B., 2003. ; M. Vijaybaskar, & V. Gayathri., 2003.; Kumar, P., ICT and Its Development in India. http://www.irjcjournals.org/ijieasr/Feb2014/2.pdf.
For a critique on bridging digital divide please refer to Wade, R.H., 2002.

be best to begin with a brief discussion of the history of communication in this area.

Traditional communication within Panchagrami always involved meeting people face to face[37] (Goffman, 2005), be it everyday communication related to mundane matters or those that involved important life events such as birth, marriage or even death. Both the nature of the message and the social status of the receiver determined who conveyed it[38] (McLuhan, 1964; Rogers and Bhowmik, 1970) and the degree of formality required in communicating such messages. For example: if a housewife cooking breakfast for the family discovered that she was missing an essential spice for an Indian curry, it was acceptable for her to send her child to her neighbour's house to borrow the required spice. However, if a family wanted to invite their neighbours for a function that was being hosted by the family, convention dictates that the adults in the family personally visited their neighbours to extend the invitation. Further, news related to deaths, temple festivals, announcements from local governing village council (Panchayat) or policies concerning the community were only conveyed through male messengers appointed for the specific tasks[39] (Damle, 1956; Rao, 1966; Marshall, 1971).

Alongside such channels of communication, gossip (Epstein, 1969) also helped in the rapid spread of social news in this tight knit rural community. For example: squabbles within a family, matters concerning romance, dowry

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[37] Face to face communication in natural settings still forms a dominant form of communication in Panchagrami. For a theoretical understanding of the ritual of face to face interactions, please refer to Goffman, E., 2005.

[38] This could in a way be related to McLuhan's idea that medium is the message. McLuhan., 1964. Also please refer to Rogers, E.M. and Bhowmik, D.K., 1970.

[39] Identifying the right messenger to communicate certain information might have been challenging at times. For example: in this paper Marshall, J.F., 1971. discusses the need for employing more women to talk about family planning programs in rural India. Though this paper is from 1971, it gives a historical sense of messengers needed to communicate certain policy information in Indian villages. For an understanding of communication in Indian villages please refer to Damle, 1956; Rao, 1966

charged by a groom's family etc. were passed along as gossip. They were always word of mouth and their carriers were as diverse as the gossip themselves. Murthy, a 27-year-old entrepreneur, remembers an event that occurred almost fifteen years ago. His distant grandaunt, who lived in a neighbouring village, had once come home confronting them with the news of his uncle's engagement and demanded why she wasn't informed of this development. This surprised Murthy's family, since the topic of his uncle's marriage and the need to look out for prospective brides had only been casually discussed the previous evening. They soon discovered that the maid who helped in their house had met with someone from his grandaunt's village at the market and had mentioned about this discussion. This then found its way to his grandaunt, but with enough spice added to it to make her feel slighted.

One would hear of numerous such stories in this area. Though men blamed women as gossipmongers, both men and women were equally invested in gossiping. While women met with each other in the alleys separating their homes to exchange news about interpersonal and family issues, the men for their part met at local teashops or in other public spaces to exchange gossip about the latest economic deals that other men in the area had struck or about local and state level politics. The younger men for their part gossiped about the young women in the area or about latest films and film stars and the younger women gossiped about fashion, cinema, issues at home and about young men. Though women of the household always updated the men on important interpersonal or family gossip, the reverse failed to happen.

People who migrated from Panchagrami, stayed in touch with their relatives through stamped post cards or inland letters. A post office in this area not only

functioned as a clearinghouse for letters, but also as a communal space where the locals met[40] (Alexander, 1968; Shah, 2006; Alex, 2008; Sooryamoorthy, 2008; Bros and Couttenier, 2010). Telegram or 'Thandhi[41]' was used to convey urgent messages. But, people were generally anxious about receiving a sudden telegram, as they immediately assumed that it carried the news of the death of someone they knew. Thus, very soon this service came to be associated with inauspiciousness. Such an association with telegrams were not unique to Panchagrami alone and was the case with several other Indian villages as well. However, the Indian Telegraphic service closed shop in July 2013 after 162 years of service (India sends final telegram, 2013), thereby ending this channel of communication. Local, national and international courier services appeared on the scene only in the early part of this century and catered to several sections of the local populace as well as to the IT sector for communicating urgent and important news.

Radio, Television (TV), newspapers and magazines[42] (Vilanilam, 2005; Kumar, 2014) conveyed international, national and regional news along with trivia and gossip about famous personalities such as cinema stars, sports persons, politicians and other regional celebrities. While the government run 'Akasha Vani' radio channel was the only radio channel until the late 1990s, private Tamil radio channels such as Suryan FM, Radio Mirchi and Big FM (Suryanfm, n.d.; RadioMirchi, n.d.; Big FM, n.d.) gained immense popularity in Panchagrami in the 2000s. Possession of radio sets of varied sizes and radio through mobile phones, have enabled the popularity of these radio channels for entertainment and local news.

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[40] At Panchagrami this public space was not socially segregated based on caste. This is important since public spaces in India was associated with caste and untouchability. Please refer to Alexander, 1968; Shah, 2006; Alex, 2008; Sooryamoorthy, 2008; Bros and Couttenier, 2010
[41] The word for telegram in Tamil
[42] For a general history of mass communication in India, please refer to Vilanilam, 2005; Kumar, 2014

In the 1980s and early 1990s, several families in Panchagrami did not own a television and almost always assembled in the local Panchayat offices to view news and the weekly Friday 'Oliyum Oliyum', a half hour program featuring Tamil film songs. The latter part of 1990s and early 2000s saw more families investing on television sets. Also, with both the leading political parties in Tamil Nadu vying with each other to include Television sets as a part of their election freebies (Acharya, 2016; Tamil Nadu's Freebie culture, 2016) to the lower socio-economic classes, almost all homes in Panchagrami now own a television set. TV channels also moved from the sole government run Doordharshan channel in the late 1980s and early 1990s to cable and private network channels like Sun TV, Vijay TV, Jaya TV (Sun Network, n.d.; Vijay TV, n.d.; Jaya Network, n.d.) and a host of other Tamil, English and other Indian language channels in the latter part of 1990s and 2000s. While most pay for their own cable connection, there were cases where such connections are illegally clustered and borrowed from one single connection. Also, as mentioned in chapters one and three, cinema is very popular in this area as in the rest of Tamil Nadu and all the above channels have dedicated programmes to cover film related news.

While Tamil newspapers like 'Dhina Thanthi' or 'Dhina Malar' (Dhina Thandi, n.d.; Dhina Malar, n.d.) are a common sight in the local tea stalls, English dailies such as 'The Hindu', 'The New Indian Express', 'Deccan Chronicle', 'Times of India' and 'The Economic Times' (The Hindu, n.d.; The New Indian Express, n.d.; Deccan Chronicle, n.d.; Times of India, n.d.; The economic Times, n.d.), find readers in the middle and upper middle classes through both print and online versions. Similarly, weekly Tamil magazines such as 'Kumudam' and 'Ananda Vikatan' (Kumudam, n.d.; Ananda Vikatan, n.d.) and their associated magazines, were a common sight in the middle class and the

lower socio-economic class households, English magazines such as 'India Today', 'Business Today', 'Femina', 'Vogue' (India Today, n.d.; Business Today, n.d.; Femina, n.d.; Vogue, n.d.) etc. were visible in the upper middle class households. Tech magazines such as 'Dataquest' and 'Digit' (Dataquest, n.d.; Digit, n.d.) were also seen in the middle-class IT employee homes. Telugu, Hindi and Malayalam newspapers and magazines were visible amongst IT workers, their families and amongst the low-wage migrant workers from other states.

2.1 The Cell Phone, Internet and Orkut

Following telegraph and postal services, the next in line was the landline phone for communicating personal news. Though the local governing council owned one in 1970s, the high demand - supply ratio of such phones and the resultant bureaucracy in their allocation (Pitroda, 1993; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013) ensured that the personal ownership of such phones was only concentrated amongst a few influential families at Panchagrami even in the 1990s and they shared this with their neighbours, extended kin or caste members[43]. Such telephone numbers were exchanged with relatives living afar as well as with the locals who had migrated from the village, to get in touch with their relatives in times of emergencies. This was followed by the development of the public telephone system called the 'STD/ISD booths', which allowed people to place local, national or international calls for an associated fee (Kumar, 2014). Though cell phones were introduced in India in 1995 (Doron and Jeffrey, 2015), people in this area equipped themselves with mobile phones only by the beginning of the new millennium. Various factors

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[43] This was on a temporary basis, where the neighbor would visit their home to make a phone call or attend to one from a close relative or friend. Placing long distance calls to other states were made through Trunk call booking.

such as rise in number of phone manufacturers, choices of telecom providers and low prices contributed to the rapid spread of mobile phones, especially non-smart phones[44] (Horst and Miller, 2006; Kavoori et al., 2006; Donner, 2008; Katz, 2008; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013). These mobile phones very soon became an affordable entity and radically changed the channels and processes of communication in this area.

Parallel to the growth of the mobile telecom in this area, the influx of Information Technology companies at Panchagrami also stimulated a general interest in acquiring a computer. This interest coincided with the rise of affluence of a section of the traditional population due to lucrative real estate deals. One of the uses of these new funds was to buy computers[45] for the younger members of the family. Ownership of a computer by a younger person in the family was to a certain extent seen as an intergenerational attainment (Nisbett, 2009) by the local residents. However, in practice these computers were used more for purposes of gaming, watching cinema and listening to music rather than for formal education by the children of long-time residents.

During this period, most skilled IT workers were still commuting from the city of Chennai by private, company owned or public transport to work for the emerging IT industry as housing in the form of multi-storeyed apartment complexes were still in the process of development. So, though IT employees might have owned personal computers, mostly desktops, they were mostly

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[44] The term non-smart phone is used alternatively with feature phones. For a detailed analysis of the general and quite radical transformation presented by the mobile phone in India, as a whole please refer to Kavoori et al., 2006; Katz, 2008; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013
However for a detailed understanding of mobile use in developing world please refer to Donner, J., 2008. and for a general idea of cell phone from an anthropological perspective please refer to Horst, H, and Miller, D. 2006.
[45] Increase in non-branded 'assembled' desktops built by local hardware technicians became popular.

residents of Chennai and not of Panchagrami. However, in the latter part of the 2000s and in early 2010, ownership of both desktops and laptops rose in this area, with the rise in the number of skilled IT workers and their families relocating to this area due to work[46]. Also, it was during this period that computers (desktops and laptops) were becoming more affordable and with the government's scheme of one laptop per child, the influx of computers in families with students in high school was rapid. There were cases where these laptops were either shared with the extended families or were sometimes even sold at a price lower than the market price. Nevertheless, computers are still a faraway dream for the lower-socio-economic classes who did not have children in high schools or couldn't afford to buy personal computers.

Access to internet in the early part of the millennium was patchy as it was still the 'Dial Up' era and required landline phones to connect to the internet. Since a majority of Panchagrami did not possess a landline phone, their personal computers (for those who owned them) were not connected to the internet. Access to internet was only through a browsing centre/cyber café (Donner, 2006; Rangaswamy and Bombay, 2007; Sreekumar, 2014) in this area, which seemed to have always been crowded with male college students or IT workers. Apart from general browsing, other popular uses of the internet in the browsing centres included online gaming, checking emails, viewing pornography and chatting through Yahoo and ICQ chat rooms.

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[46] This was close in association with the development of the housing sector

Orkut, owned by Google, was one of the first social media platforms to enter India[47] (Mahajan, 2009; Das, 2010, 2012; Mishra, 2010; Ahmad, 2011; Goyal, 2012; Pillai, 2012; Das & Herring, 2016). While it is now closed as the rest of the world has moved on to similar social media platforms like Facebook and others, it was a very popular avenue for online friending in India. It scaled up in the mid-2000s and a large proportion of traffic to the site was generated from India (How popular is orkut.com, n.d.; Peterson, 2011). Though people seem to have viewed Yahoo groups and email groups as predecessors to Orkut, the former failed to have the same impact as the latter.

Vikram, a 34-year-old Senior Consultant who has been working with an Information Technology multinational in Panchagrami ever since it was first set up in the area in 2002, said '*By late 2005, we were all into Orkut. It was fun. We used to discuss it in the office all the time. I wasn't married at that time and stayed with a group of IT friends. After reaching Chennai…you know how this area was, bad roads and all, it took almost an hour to reach Chennai…I used to get to a browsing centre and was on Orkut until late in the evening. Saturdays…Sundays…Orkut was the world for us.*"

Sujatha, 29 years old, home maker who now lives in Panchagrami, noted, *"Orkut at that time was the cool thing in my college. It was cool to be on Orkut, but it wasn't like if you weren't on Orkut you did not belong to the group. Several of my friends weren't on Orkut. They were from villages outside Chennai… there was always this peeping tom mentality on Orkut…even now people do that on Facebook, but with Orkut you knew who visited your profile…it was fun to start with, but became very irritating after sometime*"

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[47] There have been several studies on Orkut as one of the earliest and popular social media platform's in India. Please refer to Mahajan, 2009; Das, 2010, 2012; Mishra, 2010; Ahmad, 2011; Goyal, 2012; Pillai, 2012; Das & Herring, 2016

Arjun, 31 years old, a Non-Resident Indian[48](Non-Resident Indian, n.d.), who owns an apartment in Panchagrami, had moved to the USA, after his Bachelors' degree in Computer Engineering from Chennai to pursue his Masters' there. He said *"Earlier, it was only through Orkut that I could stay in touch with several of my Indian class mates. Now you have several other means, but in 2005, it seemed like the only medium after email… Orkut was definitely more fun than emailing".*

However, their use of Orkut seems to have faded away in early 2010s[49] (Orkut, n.d.). They had not cancelled their accounts, but had simply forgotten their account details when they moved onto another media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Memories of using Orkut were common amongst those who had recently migrated from the cities to settle at Panchagrami.

Unlike recent middle class and upper middle class migrants to Panchagrami (from other cities) who fondly remember Orkut, it was not popular with the locals of Panchagrami. Only a few of the long-term residents of Panchagrami were even on Orkut, as Siva, a 37-year entrepreneur dabbling in the transport business puts it *"That was the time when development in this area had just started flowing in full force…in my generation, you didn't have too many people who were educated. Further, not many had an internet connection. I think several in my generation missed out on Orkut but found Facebook. Internet cafés were popular but it was all inside Chennai. We just had one café at that time. Did you know these students from other cities who came to*

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[48] NRIs (Non Resident Indians) are Indian citizens who have lived outside India for a period of 182 days or more in a year. Though this is more of a tax status, such references have become more common in Panchagrami, owing to the IT employees constant migration and travel to foreign countries to service their clients. Non Resident Indian, n.d. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-resident_Indian_and_person_of_Indian_origin . NRI as a reference term is also commonly in Indian urban cities as well.

[49] Orkut as a service acquired by Google was dissolved in 2014 - Orkut, n.d. Retrieved from http://orkut.com/

study in these engineering colleges… they would always be in the café, they were the ones who accessed Orkut, not us. I was on it only because one of my friend's from Chennai told me about it"

Sundar, a 32-year-old local of Panchagrami said *"I was on Orkut, when one of my friend's introduced me to it in my college…it was in the city…not here…none of my area friends were on it…I told my friends about it…they were initially interested but then lost interest as they did not have computers to access it. All my Orkut connections were my friends from the city. Now…with Facebook it's all different…you can access it on mobiles… ten years ago… this wasn't the case. You needed to go to the cafés to access it. There was a friend of mine who stayed on it for some time but lost interest…now he is on Facebook…why speak of Orkut when several here did not even have an email account"*

Access to social media through personal devices had to wait until the internet infrastructure evolved and broadband became popular and affordable. The early adopters of broadband and Wi-Fi were the middle class and upper middle class families in Panchagrami. Access to Internet through USB dongles also started gaining ground with the influx of laptops. Use of such dongles is evident amongst the IT professionals and college students who live in hostels and the local lower middle classes who are unable to afford a broadband at home.

Parallel to this development, was the influx of the cheap Chinese, local and branded (e.g. Samsung) smartphones manufactured specifically for the Indian market (Kumar, and Thomas, 2006; Smyth et al. 2010; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013). This was closely followed with the rise of affordable data plans thus,

allowing the lower income groups to also connect to the Internet (Rangaswamy and Yamsani, 2011; Kumar and Rangaswamy, 2013; Donner, 2015). These cheap smart phones were pared down versions of average smart phones with lower technical capabilities. These phones to a large extent transformed and changed the communication set up in India (Jeffrey and Doron, 2013) and had its effect on Panchagrami as well. While the national average for smart phone[50] penetration in 2014 was around 21% (Smartphone penetration, n.d.), at Panchagrami, observational analysis suggests a penetration of 48% among the residents[51], but, the presence of smart phones amongst the floating population of skilled IT workers[52] might be higher and might even go up to 70%. However, the kind of smart phones that people possessed varied in brand, technical capabilities and prices. Though it was mostly the upper middle class IT workers and their families or the well to do long term residents who owned high end smart phones, there were cases of young men in their early 20s in the lower socio-economic classes, who owned such costly smart phones as well. They bought such phones, by borrowing money from their social circles and through instalment schemes offered by the phone retailers[53] (Jeffrey and Doron, 2013). For them, the size of the phone and its functionality was a status symbol amongst their peers.

Interviews with mobile phone outlets at Panchagrami revealed that the most popular smart phones were the entry level phones in the price range of Rs.3000/- to Rs.5,000/-[54]. Samsung's mobile phone models for the Indian market seemed to be the most popular choice for several consumers opting

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[50] This encompasses all kinds of smart phones, from i-phones to cheap smart phones
[51] This includes the long term residents (mostly from the villages), the middle class IT workers and others who have now settled in this area.
[52] They were not residents of this area and were travelling from other places, mostly from Chennai.
[53] A reference on a successful phone retailer in Tamil Nadu can be found in Jeffrey, R. and Doron, A., 2013.
[54] 1 GBP is approximately valued at INR 100/-

for this price range. Consumers of high-end mobile phones like i-phones, HTC, Sony and the more expensive Samsung product lines in Panchagrami preferred to shop for such phones from branded outlets inside Chennai rather than from the local shops at Panchagrami.

Smart phones here as elsewhere are used for a wide variety of services right from calling and texting to gaming, accessing emails and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, to clicking pictures or to even watching films. While gaming on smart phones was an important 'time pass' (Fuller, 2011) for those in late 20s and 30s, it was an important aspect of several teenagers' lives. In fact, several children at Panchagrami had first become members of Facebook for the purposes of gaming and used Smart phones, computers and tablets[55] for gaming[56].

A few from lower income groups possessed laptops (provided for free by the Government of Tamil Nadu under the 'One Laptop per Child' scheme) (Laptops as freebies, 2012) and tethered (Tethering, n.d.) it to a pre-paid mobile internet connection through their cheap smart phones. This acted as a channel to access newer television programmes on YouTube and watch several new pirated Tamil movies (Sundaram, n.d.). In short it was their television and to a certain extent a cinema theatre which provided affordable entertainment. The same happened with the middle classes as well, only this time they used either broadband or USB dongle to access these services over their branded laptops or assembled desktops (Anwer, 2013; Indian PC Market, n.d.). With the current ruling party announcing freebies such as mobile phones, laptops and free Wi-Fi connection (Mobile, Laptops,

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[55] Specifically seen only un the case of upper middle class families
[56] The chapter discusses this further in the section on Facebook. This will also be dealt in chapter six on Education.

Electricity, n.d.; AIADMK, n.d.) in public places, expectations are that there will be a steep rise of both internet and social media usage in the near future.

2.2 Choice between Voice and Social Media

The presence of smart phones did not necessarily mean that all communication was only routed through social media. There were several social factors, which determined communication systems in Panchagrami. For example: communication with the elderly members in a family mostly happens through voice. This could be due to comfort with a more traditional media, parental control and disapproval of the use of other media by younger people. Sometimes, factors such as literacy, absence of knowledge of a specific language such as English or even disinterest in learning newer skills also play a role in channelling communication through voice.

This is evident in the case of Ravi's mother, whose limitations force Ravi to call her over phone even for routine everyday communication[57] (Venkatraman et al., 2014).

Ravi, a 25-year-old, belongs to a lower middle class family and works as a Data Entry Operator in a medical information processing company in Panchagrami. He has a younger sister who is married and lives in Chennai. While his father is a farmer and works as a plumber to supplement his income, his mother is a homemaker. Though, all of them now own a personal mobile phone, his sister acquired one only after she got married and until then used her mother's phone. Ravi's parents' own non-smart Micromax phones,

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[57] A version of this was presented by Venkatraman et al. 2014 as a Paper for Panel, Reconstituting Marginality and Publics in the Digital Age, Annual International Conference of Media and Communication Research, July, 15-19, 2014 Hyderabad

while Ravi owns a Samsung Galaxy core smart phone. On workdays, Ravi generally packs his lunch from home. If this gets delayed, he calls his mother midmorning from his office to check if he could drop in at home for lunch. This would just involve a brief chat for around two minutes and the conversation only extends if she wants him to run an errand. Their understanding was that if he doesn't call her, she wouldn't prepare lunch for him. There was this one occasion, when due to his busy schedule at office, he wasn't able to call her and just sent her a SMS[58] to let her know of his arrival for lunch that afternoon. When he went home, he was surprised to find that she hadn't prepared anything for lunch and she shocked him further by stating that he had not informed her of his arrival. To prove otherwise, he seized her cell phone to show his message and that was when Ravi discovered that his mom never read any messages. She didn't know how to read them, specifically if they were in English. He was surprised since on an earlier occasion, he had received a response from his mother's phone to an English text of his. He subsequently discovered that it was his sister who had messaged him from his mother's phone. So, Ravi makes it a point to call her and knows that the only way to communicate with her is by using voice. He says that she was not interested in learning how to message even in Tamil. Now the mother and son duo seem to have worked out a way to communicate even when Ravi is busy at work and can't talk to her. He gives her a missed call[59] (Donner, 2005, 2007), and if the phone rings twice, the message is that he will be at home for lunch and if he doesn't call, it means otherwise. Ravi feels that for his mother a cell phone has just replaced a landline i.e. use it only to talk and do nothing else. He never calls his father from work, since his father might be busy

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[58] Short Messaging Service also known as Texting
[59] The use of missed call to convey messages is used in several other contexts as well and is not just unique to India. Please refer to Donner, J., 2005.; Donner, J., 2007.

working either in the field or on plumbing jobs. However, his father can read text messages and so he messages his father in Tamil or in Anglicised script of Tamil, most being very short ones which usually are meant to pass on information for e.g. one of his messages to his father was "Arisi vangiyachi" which means "I have bought rice" – intending not to buy rice. His father rarely replies, but Ravi knows that he reads his messages. He calls his father only very rarely. However, he is certain that if he tells his mother whatever needs to be conveyed, it will be conveyed to the entire family. He calls his mother as the "telephone exchange". Though he tends to restrict conversations with his sister when he is at work, he messages her occasionally. However, most messages to his sister are forwards and jokes (though he makes certain that he does not send her adult jokes). He calls her over phone only during the weekends or after work. His sister calls their mother several times a day to chat and their father at least once a day. Generally, chats with the entire family happen only during the weekends. Ravi says that his parents insist on hearing his sister's voice at least once a day.

The case of Ravi's mother very clearly illustrates the choice of voice over text functions due to issues with literacy and skills. Apart from literacy, emotional concerns arise especially in the relationship between parents and daughters. Consider the case of Shobana, a 22-year-old college student who is in her final year of graduation. She owns a Nokia smart phone that her uncle gifted for her birthday and owns a non-smart Nokia feature phone. While her smart phone is meant for social media activities and chats with her friends, she uses her feature phone exclusively for her family and does not exchange this number with her friends. This exclusivity in channels of communication only began after an emotional incident that involved her parents when she once got home late from college. Shobana says that she messaged her mother,

letting her know that she would be late, immediately after which her mother called her a couple of times and since there was no response, this seems to have irked and worried her mother. From her mother's perspective, all she needed to know was that Shobana was safe and hence calling her in such situations was made mandatory. Being the only child, her safety is the highest priority for her family. She feels that her mother had become touchier with the rapes (Henderson, 2015; India victim, 2015) and murders happening in the country. So, why doesn't she use the same phone for her friends and family? Because, her mother and to a certain extent her father too get irritated when their calls don't go through to her, as Shobana's mother says, her daughter has the tendency to talk to her friends for hours on end and calling her just doesn't get them through to her. Hence the need for an exclusive phone line for her parents was warranted. This feature phone doesn't have any data (internet) pack added to it, while her smart phone has a 3G internet data pack. Her parents communicate through SMS at times, but when it comes to Shobana, they seem very specific that communication should be through voice rather than through other means.

Even in upper middle class families, which had social media savvy elders, their hierarchy within family circles and expectations of respect influenced the choice of platform for intergenerational communication. They considered the use of new media for certain communication to be impersonal and disrespectful. Expectations from family elders in this direction is clearly elucidated in the case of Raghavan, a 65-years-old, retired head of training and development of a major pharmaceutical company, who prefers that people call him to inform him about life events and not just send a message over social media. He even considers an email announcing certain life events as impersonal and disrespectful to elders.

We see here both a preference for voice and for synchronous communication rather than asynchronous communication (Papacharissi, 2010; Baym, 2015). So, sending voice messages over WhatsApp to them doesn't appeal as much as having a phone conversation or Skype/Google Hangout conversations even if they are living far away. However, this perspective slightly shifts when communicating with immediate family members who have migrated for work or education to a foreign land. Chapter four on family discusses this aspect in much more detail and extends it to other forms of kinship as well.

Nevertheless, when we move from parental or elderly use of communication platforms we encounter a wider world that is now populated by social media. The first social media survey Q1 as discussed in chapter one was conducted in 2013, when the fieldwork began, on a sample of 130 respondents, all of whom were users of social media[60]. The results showed that Facebook (84%) was the most popular social networking site followed by WhatsApp (62%) and Twitter (34%) for this sample of social media users. Though sites such as LinkedIn (31%) did appear in the survey, it was specific to the IT population and people who were working for other corporate sectors. Over the course of the fieldwork there was continued evidence of this general trend of platform popularity amongst the residents of Panchagrami who used social media. Though, an exception might be that of WhatsApp, as it seemed likely that

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[60] The intent of this survey was to conceive the popularity of certain social media platforms amongst a sample of social media users. This is important as it offers a procedure to judge the relative popularity of one social media platform over another. Hence, the results of this survey only suggests the use and popularity of social media platforms within this sample of users and is not intended for extrapolation to the general public. This survey was conducted by stratifying the population into long-term residents (n=62) and newer residents living in the multistoried apartment complexes (n=68). The samples were recruited using snowball technique. While most long term residents involved in this survey fell into the lower socio-economic class and middle classes, the newer residents who were mostly into the IT sector fell into the middle and upper middle classes. While the sample of long-term residents mostly involved men in the age group ranging from 14 to 38 years, the sample of newer residents involved both men and women in the age range of 15 to 70 years.

during fieldwork, its popularity might have even overtaken that of Facebook[61] (Facebook buys Instagram, 2012; Facebook to buy WhatsApp, 2014).

Very few people had accounts on Instagram and while BBM was popular among upper middle class corporate employees who still hung onto their Blackberry phones, Snapchat or Instagram did not feature to any significant extent[62]. People were members of multiple platforms at the same time, for example: people on Facebook were also on Twitter or WhatsApp and the reverse was also evident.

Among the users of social media, who were surveyed through Q1, 83%[63] suggested that they accessed social media platforms through smart phones, though the range of smart phone brands and the associated data plans varied widely as suggested earlier. The other popular channels of accessing social media were laptops (61%) and desktops (47%). Most used broadband, USB dongles or tethered the Internet from their phones for such access.

Hence, the following sections of the chapter will introduce the presence of three important social media platforms namely Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter as they appeared at Panchagrami. LinkedIn was used more by the IT sector as both a professional networking tool as well as a knowledge resource. LinkedIn groups helped them develop professional contacts for furthering career prospects while at the same time providing news on the current developments in their respective tech domains and articles on

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[61] Though as platforms they may be different, as a business entity they are the same, as Facebook owns WhatsApp. Facebook to buy WhatsApp, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26266689.
Facebook also owns Instagram. Facebook buys Instagram, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-17658264
[62] There were stray uses of Instagram reported among the middle class teenagers and college students.
[63] This number more or less coincides with the mobile users of Facebook (socialbakers.com) accessed on April 30, 2015

leadership and development. Hence, LinkedIn, within the IT sector is both a knowledge network as well as a network that would increase opportunities in their professional life.

2.3 Facebook: class, caste and gender

Though, Facebook finds a presence amongst both the IT employees who have settled with their families at Panchagrami as well as with the long-term residents of this area, social factors such as class, caste, age and gender have an impact on the use of Facebook within these groups. Examining their influence would help us understand how Facebook fits into Panchagrami in general.

Amongst the lower middle classes and low-income groups at Panchagrami, it is the youth that are predominantly on Facebook. This group, which majorly comprises literate men, have some sort of a secured employment be it as a driver, a house keeper or even as an entry level IT support staff. They generally access Facebook through smart phones with a pre-paid Internet connection. Most female friends on their friends list are from other areas or even from other states, since single young women in this area and from these strata were restricted from using phones and consequently this restriction extended to accessing Facebook as well. The men belonging to certain caste groups in these strata perceive Facebook as a dangerous influence for women in their families. This perception of Facebook comes from their use of the platform as a tool to flirt, the fear of inter-caste romances, their communities' perception of cross-gender friendship and the fear of losing family honour within their community if they become aware that a girl was

exposed to such friendships[64](Joshi, 2016; Lewis, 2016). However, they acknowledge that several women from their respective communities in this area might be on Facebook, but they would generally discourage them when they know of their existence on the platform, since they routinely search for young women from their communities on Facebook.

Hence, the main impact of caste on Facebook is with respect to gender issues. For example: the leadership of a caste based political group (this caste claims to be higher in social hierarchy than the Scheduled Castes), had recently declared that the girls of their caste were targeted and wooed by young men from Scheduled Castes and this had to be stopped as it was leading to inter caste marriages. The young men from this caste group who fell into the lower middle class backgrounds expressed a similar opinion adhering to the thoughts of their leader and this led to even more restrictions on the younger women in their families who were barred from using mobile phones and access to Facebook. All of this was justified by the claim that they needed to be protected from the Scheduled Caste youth, and thereby the risk that they would be attracted and marry males of this caste, which would be viewed as pollution,[65] (Gough, 1955, 1973; Marglin, 1977; Fuller, 1979; Shrawagi, n.d.) could be avoided.

Interviews with young women belonging to this class and caste revealed that most of them had an account on Facebook, since they didn't want to be left

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[64] This was not just seen at Panchagrami, but was visible in North Indian villages too.
Please refer to Lewis, K., 2016. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/girls-and-unmarried-women-in-india-forbidden-from-using-mobile-phones-to-prevent-disturbance-in-a6888911.html;
Joshi, S., 2016 http://mashable.com/2016/02/22/india-villages-ban-mobile-phones/#iCfdPBCP.ZgJ
[65] Marriage and sexual contact between the castes ranking higher and lower are seen as pollution according to the Hindu caste system. For a introductory reading of the concept of pollution and purity and how it relates to different castes please refer to Shrawagi. R., n.d. Retrieved from http://rohitshrawagi.blogspot.co.uk/,
for an anthropological exploration and critique of this concept please refer to Gough, 1955, 1973; Marglin, 1977; Fuller, 1979

out of this social network that their peers from the city were a part of. However, the use of this account was not as constant or active as they wanted it to be. They normally accessed it from college through phones that their classmates from Chennai or from lesser conservative backgrounds brought along with them[66] (Steenson and Donner, 2009). This was true of several other caste groups in these economic strata as well, which normally had stricter controls over women accessing social media[67] (Miller and Slater, 2005; Gurumurthy and Menon, 2009; Doron, 2012; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013; Jouhki, 2013; Mehta, 2013; Tenhunen, 2014). The kind of controls ranged from a complete ban on accessing social media to controlling time and space of such access. For example: Manjula, a 20-year-old college student belonging to one of the lower middle class, and comparatively a less strict family, was allowed access to social media through their family desktop only until 8 PM every evening.

While Manjula's restriction was based on time of access, there is an underlying restriction based on space of access as well. For example: Archana, aged 20 years, studies in a college at Panchagrami and has a smart phone, which is barred for use outside home. This is yet another idea of using a phone and social media at home vs. outside home – most families allow their younger women to access phones and social media from home – because they are in a safe environment under the watchful eyes of the family members. The idea that the domestic sphere or the home space is secured

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[66] Though, this cannot be completely termed as sharing one mobile device as it only relates to borrowing for a specific time. However, sharing mobile devices also do happen in India, please refer to Steenson, M. and Donner, J., 2009.

[67] The use of mobile phones by women in rural areas as well as in the lower middle class and the lower socio-economic classes are varied. While some communities allow their use freely or allow for restricted use, a few others ban them completely. Please refer to Gurumurthy and Menon, 2009; Doron, 2012; Jeffrey and Doron, 2013; Jouhki, 2013; Mehta, 2013; Tenhunen, 2014

The symbolic idea of a mobile phone and its association with romance and sexual liaisons were not unique to India alone, this was also true of Jamaica, please refer to Miller , D. and Slater, D. 2005.

for women while the space outside home is dangerous and masculine (Laughey, 2007; Gottdiener et. al, 2015) came up several times in conversations with people of these communities. Archana prefers using her friend's mobile phone (though the friend belongs to the same caste group but is from a less conservative family and lives in Chennai) to access Facebook while in college. She continues accessing Facebook on her own phone once she is back home.

The restriction for these young women are usually not imposed by their mothers, but by their brothers who were within approx. three years of their age. They exercised tight control over their sisters and kept a constant check to see if their sister was on Facebook and who was she communicating with on the platform. It was normally the girl's friends at college or a cousin from the city who helped them open a Facebook account. The profiles of these young women on Facebook in a way reflected the restrictions that these women faced; for example: they would never post their own pictures and usually had the pictures of actresses, sceneries, babies or female cartoon characters. Further, they also had less than 60 friends and most were either their extended kin network or female friends from their colleges.

Shilpa, a 21-year-old college student, has a Facebook profile, which only has her immediate and extended family members (brother, cousins, uncles and aunts) as her friends. She had turned down requests from several of her male class mates as her extended family on Facebook wouldn't like it if she had male friends on her profile. The maximum leeway allowed to her was to friend her best friend Vasudha, a 21-year-old, who was both her neighbour as well as her classmate and faced a similar situation. Similar is the case with K. Preethi, a 20-year-old computer science student, who only has five friends on

Facebook of which two were her uncle and her brother. These young women never revealed that they had Facebook profiles during their first interviews, as men were nearby. It was only during their subsequent interviews that they opened on their Facebook presence[68].

However, with those women who had no male siblings, things were different and they had several of their male classmates as friends on Facebook. If one grew up in a joint family with male cousins (with the same age limit as those of strict brothers) being treated as brothers, the case reverted to one of restrictions. In families that had a much larger age difference between the girl and her brother, restrictions tended to be looser. The same exists in families with only sisters. However, marriage or employment, whichever comes quicker in a woman's life is treated as the rite of passage for owning a phone and having access to social media. While marriage is the end of a major responsibility to a girl's family, the monetary benefits of employment brings with it a certain status for these women. Though, their restrictions to accessing Facebook don't occur at these stages, a kind of soft control takes over, as most male kin members or married women from their community would start friending them now. Thus, the women must ensure their posts on Facebook don't embarrass them in front of their community members. It was natural that most married women in these groups resorted to posting socially relevant messages, religious posts or pictures with their family, which were normative and conformed to the expectations of the group on ideal Tamil womanhood.

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[68] All of them declined to friend me for the fear of being exposed to other men through my research Facebook profile.

However, when it came to the upper middle classes[69] who had recently migrated to this area, restrictions weren't very evident since most women from these classes seemed to be on either Facebook or another social media. Even if they weren't on these, it was only of their own accord and not due to any strict restrictions. Their presence on social media was in a way influenced by their offline social networks as well who were all on social media and hence such memberships were automatically warranted. Though some parents suggested that they had cautioned their daughters of dangers online when it came posting personal pictures or friending strangers, the latter weren't restrained on their access with respect to time or space. However, several young women had their parents or other family members as friends on Facebook, which in a way brings its own soft control over what they post. For example: Krithi, a 19-year-old college student, who has both her parents and her extended family on Facebook along with over 100 other college friends, noted that she only posts things that wouldn't embarrass her family. This trend was also visible amongst the married women belonging to these groups, who ensured they only posted messages that wouldn't embarrass their social networks, which also comprised of their families. It was evident that imposition of gender restrictions on accessing phones or other social media was due to a complex mix of several factors that involved caste, class, patriarchy, emotions etc. There were cases of where people belonging to the same caste but different classes perceived social media differently. Hence, in these cases pinpointing to one specific factor might be very restricting.

While this was the case with women in Panchagrami, the men, irrespective of their socio-economic strata became members of Facebook at a much younger age. There were several young men in the middle classes who had first

[69] Families of people working in the IT sector, entrepreneurs or other skilled jobs.

accessed the platform between the ages of seven and ten, while it was around twelve or thirteen for the lower-socio-economic classes. Most young men of this age group access Facebook for playing games. Networking for them only happens over games and their discussions are all centred on games rather than anything else. A few young middle class men in the age group of 14 to 15 years have cousins (mostly staying abroad or in other Indian cities) as their Friends on Facebook. While several middle-class teenagers alternate between their PlayStation and Wii to games on Facebook, for others from a lesser socio-economic background, Facebook provides access to a world of games. Illustrations 2.1 and 2.2 provide a glimpse of the age when middle class and lower – socio- economic class men tend to get introduced to Facebook along with the list of major influencers who introduced them to the platform.

Image 2.1: Social Networking Sites – Middle and Upper Socio Economic Class

Social Networking Sites – Middle Class

	Age	Use
Age of Access	7-10 years	Games
	12- 13 years	Friending, Access of other aspects on FB
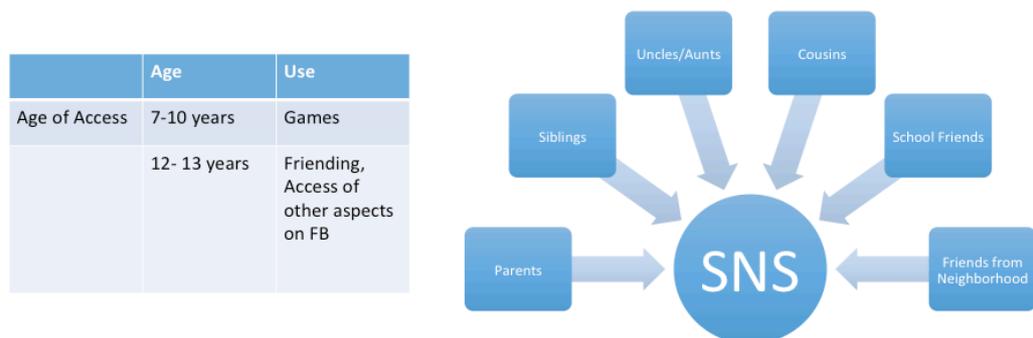
Image 2.2: Social Networking Sites – Lower Socio Economic Class

Social Networking Sites – Lr. Socio Eco Class

	Age	Use
Age of Access	12- 13 years	Games
	14- 15 years	Friending, Access of other aspects on FB

Friends from Neighborhood · Cousins · Friends from School · Siblings → SNS
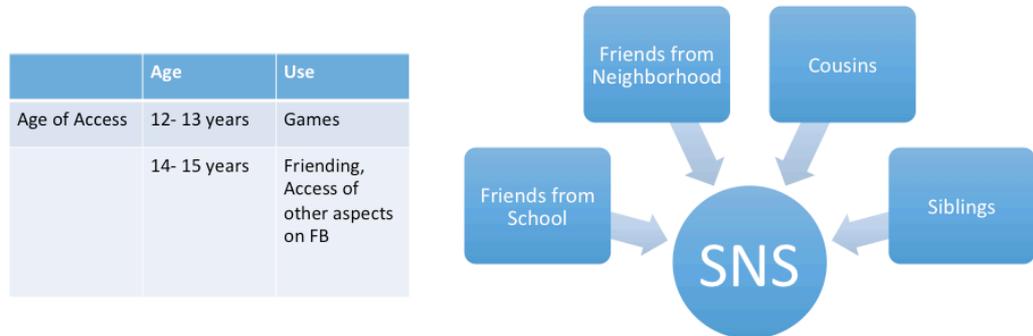
At the age of 16 or 17, focus on cinema, sports and the opposite sex takes precedence along with games on Facebook. However, with not many girls from lower socio-economic classes on Facebook at the age of 16 or 17, cross-gender friendship online for men in this stratum is more restricted. However, the younger middle class men of 16 or 17 friend girls who they know from their school or their neighbourhood.

Things change when we observe college goers. Men under the age of 22 years, who are still in college perceived Facebook primarily as a tool used to woo girls, flirt (Rangaswamy and Arora, 2015) and if possible meet with them. The young college women in this age group who were active on Facebook, noted that they would friend their male classmates on the platform, since they met them every day and knew them well. Another common usage was to share video clips of Tamil cinema comedies, film songs, film news and

political news[70](Smythe et al., 2010). Some use it for developing specific interests such as bodybuilding, fashion, music, vegetarianism etc.

Mostly Facebook was perceived as a place for fun and socializing, which might include even sending messages of everyday greetings such as good morning or good evening, which is dealt with in detail in chapter three.

There was clear evidence of competition amongst young men to accumulate maximum likes and comments for their posts, especially photographs, since they equated this to higher status amongst peers. They usually uploaded a picture or a made a post and called their friends over phone and asked them to like their latest post. They also canvassed to their friends to like a post of theirs when they met them in person or while they chatted live on Facebook, sometimes even personal messages were sent asking or requesting to like their posts. This trend was also evident with the young college going women in this age group.

In Panchagrami, the users of Facebook in the age group of 22 to 25 years, were mostly new graduates (some of whom were searching for jobs), post graduates and new entrants into companies. Irrespective of the gender and class, the new graduates used Facebook for serious purposes. Some subscribed to pages, which post about employment opportunities, job oriented skills and interview preparation tips etc. While others supported social issues, and causes and joined groups that propagated or subscribed to their viewpoints. Thus, Facebook for this group is a space for collective knowledge and information sharing.

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[70] Sharing media was also visible even with limited technical capabilities in mobile phones. Please refer to Smyth, T.N., et al. 2010.

Users between the age of 25 and 40 years in this area generally aren't as active compared to their younger counterparts. Though they still access Facebook and maintain contacts, several become passive users and prefer to Like and comment on others' posts rather than post actively on their own profile. Even when they do post, most are forwards or links to news stories or articles. Irrespective of the gender or class, this age group was active on WhatsApp groups with a tighter social network. However, it was only the middle-class IT employees, who were active on work related networks such as LinkedIn or even Twitter. While they are careful and specific on how their profile on Facebook should look like, they generally did not seem too bothered about privacy settings. Many young married couples in this age group post pictures of their children (specifically young babies) publicly and don't bother with the privacy settings. Women belonging to upper middle class families in this age group seemed more active on Facebook than their counterparts.

Users aged between 40 and 60 years seem to be clear that Facebook is for personal use only, while categorizing LinkedIn for their professional use. Segregation of media takes place based on how they segregate their lives. They generally belonged to the middle class or upper middle classes and were either entrepreneurs or skilled IT employees and their families. They actively try to get back in touch with their old college and school friends and relatives and are careful and selective about their friends list. They are more worried about privacy settings on their Facebook profile as they consider it very personal. While they set groups, they maintain them as closed groups for different reasons. Mothers, who post pictures of their children, generally are careful about privacy settings. However, there are people in this group who friend everyone who sends them a request. They only unfriend people if they witness activities that they don't normally endorse for example: posting

pornographic material, misogynistic posts etc. Anything that would undermine their reputation in the view of the public (their Facebook friend network) would be treated seriously.

Users above the age of 60 years are mostly retired from formal work. They generally belonged to upper middle class or are rich. Interviews with elders aged above 60 revealed that their perspective of Facebook differed with a range of sentiments attached to it. While some seemed to have experimented with Facebook and dropped out not liking it much after associating it with immaturity, others seemed to have loved the platform while experimenting with it. Some of the elderly female respondents post video recipes to their young daughters married and living abroad[71]. They also used Facebook to share and comment on pictures of their grandchildren or relatives living abroad or away from them. However, most expressed that Facebook has taken away the personal communication that the Indian culture[72] guaranteed earlier.

The case of Mr. Raghavan, who we had met earlier in this chapter, can help understand this sentiment and expectation about hierarchy in communication. Mr. Raghavan, 65 years old, who was on Facebook until very recently, closed his account on it, because he felt that the youngsters didn't respect the elders after Facebook's entry. A couple of incidents seemed to have irked him. First, it was his niece who invited him to her son's first birthday party via Facebook and not over phone, while the other was his nephew who let him know of the birth of his son by posting a picture on Facebook and not by calling him personally. He recounted some of these scenarios and retorted that people

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[71] Case studies of which will be discussed in the chapter four on families
[72] Several normative discourses on relationship was prevalent in this group which constituted the elderly

should know how to communicate important life events to elders. He had the perspective that Facebook was becoming a mass media rather than a platform meant for personal communication. Conversely, his wife felt that his expectations were unrealistic and that personal communication (generally through voice) could only be stressed upon and expected from the immediate family.

On the other hand, Mr. Karan, aged 66 years said that he is not averse to using Facebook as it could connect him to his nieces and nephews living abroad. He has created a Facebook page for the community that he lives in as well as for an environmental project on saving a lake close to his home. Thus, for some elderly users, Facebook helped give back to the community and stay in touch with their children and other relatives living abroad, while for others, it took away the sense of personal communication.

Fake profiles or multiple profiles on Facebook do exist in Panchagrami. Users had fake profiles for multiple reasons - from forgetting their earlier account information to strategically keeping different social networks apart and to even reasons such as watching porn, wooing women and for escaping social control. There were cases of Non-resident Indians having double profiles to maintain relationships in a foreign land as well as in India (Venkatraman, 2013a). A few anonymous gay profiles also exist on Facebook in Panchagrami to avoid social ostracization and to maintain social conformity. Though Facebook as a company might deem such multiple profiles as being disintegrated and not conforming to their policy of having a single identity online, for some people at Panchagrami, such disintegration of their personalities through multiple profiles are authentic and necessary to maintain

their identity[73](Venkatraman, 2014a.). With this general idea of Facebook's presence in Panchagrami, the chapter will now move onto discuss WhatsApp, which was gaining popularity in Panchagrami following the influx of mobile phones and affordable Internet plans.

2.4 WhatsApp

In early 2013, WhatsApp[74], at Panchagrami, was relatively a less popular social media platform than Facebook[75]. In fact, people considered it to be a natural extension to texting (one to one or groups[76]) (Miller et al., 2016). What was also clear was that the WhatsApp presence was more of a conditional presence based on Facebook, i.e. People who said they had a WhatsApp account, were almost always present on Facebook too. Only very few people were on WhatsApp without having a presence on Facebook. This was also a time when people were experimenting with WhatsApp as a viable platform for certain types of communication (Madianou and Miller, 2013).

However, in the later part of 2013, WhatsApp seemed to be rising in popularity and was sometimes even independent of Facebook. i.e. people on WhatsApp weren't on Facebook[77] (Madianou and Miller, 2013). The affordability of the mobile internet was one of the major reasons for the popularity of WhatsApp in this area. Earlier the buying pattern of the pre-paid Internet mobile cards

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[73] It was very difficult gauging the extent of multiple /fake profiles on Facebook at Panchagrami, since not everyone was forthcoming with this information. For authentic multiple profiles that a person might create to establish his identity in two different social networks, please refer to Venkatraman, S., 2014a. Retrieved from http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/global-social-media/2014/04/11/who-am-i-the-case-of-caste-related-profiles-on-facebook/

[74] The project still saw WhatsApp as a social media platform.

[75] As discussed in Q1 survey.

[76] This is closely associated with the idea of scalable sociality as discussed in chapter one. Please refer to Miller, D., et al. 2016.

[77] However, they still used other social media platforms such as Twitter or Linked In or used other media to communicate. Exclusive use of only one platform was very rare. The case for Polymedia was very strong at Panchagrami. Madianou, M. and Miller, D., 2013.

was Rs. 25/- for 200 MB of internet data in comparison to phone texting booster packs for Rs.15/- (where one can send up to 3000 messages free of cost). For the lower economic strata, given the limited social circle they could network with on the same platform, they preferred texting packages to WhatsApp. Further, if one watched any streaming online content like a video on YouTube, this reduced their data availability drastically. This consumption pattern changed with the change in prices of internet packages which was made much more affordable and users could go online for an entire month with a onetime top up of an affordable package such as 500 MB data for Rs. 20/-. One had to visit these mobile stores daily, as offers changed every day and cheap offers would be missed if one failed to update himself/herself. This was significant, since even deals on the internet was shared by word of mouth rather than through other channels except when telecom companies marketed latest offers through text messages.

With the increased affordability of Internet packages, the middle class and the upper middle class groups working for the IT sector were the earliest to embrace WhatsApp with a 3G connection. Thus, affordability, coupled with its functionalities such as text, visual and voice communication and the ability to scale it from individuals to groups[78](Miller et al., 2016), made it evident that WhatsApp was closely following Facebook because it seemed economically viable and decreased the cost of communicating with one's social circles in the long term.

But this growth wasn't isolated, as it occurred while the smart phone market in India was taking shape. This growth in the smart phone market meant cheap affordable smart phones. As seen in chapter one, the growth of India as one

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[78] This in a way refers to the idea of Scalable sociality as described in Miller, D., et. al. 2016.

of the biggest user base for WhatsApp (WhatsApp use base, 2014) was certainly connected to the parallel growth of smart phone market.

For the residents of Panchagrami, WhatsApp fell between Facebook and texting on phone. WhatsApp for them offered both the intimacy of a personal one to one communication, while at the same time offering possibilities for communicating with groups that shared similar interests[79]. When it came to group communication, where users were a part of a bigger interest group, they perceived the others in the group as acquaintances and connections that shared a similar interest, and not as strangers. On the other hand, Facebook wasn't considered as intimate as WhatsApp, since it still offered the option of friending complete strangers with no common interests. Twitter was not associated with intimacy since it was a public platform, where communication was with a faceless wider world. Further, though most them felt that WhatsApp was much more addictive than Facebook, none wanted to move away from it (Miller et al., 2016).

However, WhatsApp was still used on phones and phones as seen earlier were restricted for young unmarried women due to fear of romance and related caste transgressions. This in a way clearly restricted their WhatsApp usage. The caste, class and gender trend, which was visible for Facebook, in a way, repeats itself for WhatsApp as well.

General messages from sharing of jokes, to sharing wishes or even sharing a prayer every single morning were a common practice. Much more common were the everyday wishes such as wishing everyone a Good Day at the start of the day and a Good Night at its end, all of which are explored in chapters three and four.

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[79] These groups varied in size and form, they were personal, professional, spiritual, hobby groups etc.

Sharing of pictures, whether it be artwork or just selfies or group pictures or pictures of sceneries or of their children[80] was much more common than sharing videos. Personal video clips on WhatsApp were more related to a family function or a party. Sharing video clips of cinema comedies, songs, socially relevant messages, sarcastic clips on politicians etc. were common. They were either downloaded from the internet or were forwarded to them in the first place. Sharing video songs or audio files, which had earlier happened through Bluetooth functionality that most phones offered had now moved onto WhatsApp.

For Panchagrami residents, WhatsApp added value due to the voice messaging functionality that it offered. For example, Lakshmi, aged 33 years is now in her third job as a manager for a team of Business Analysts in a well reputed IT firm. She has a school going son aged eight years old and a three-year-old daughter. Her husband works for another IT company in Chennai. Lakshmi uses WhatsApp often and said that it was what kept her sane during intense work deadlines. *"I would love to stop working so that I can spend time with my children, my daughter is just 3 years old and I leave her with my mom or my mother-in-law who stay close by. But, it's just not the same as being with her myself".* But with WhatsApp, she sends voice messages to her mother's cell phone[81] that mostly addresses her daughter. Her messages had a sort of a cuddly tone, where she addressed her daughter as though she was right in front of her. Her mother would play this message to her daughter and record messages from her daughter and send it back to her. She does this with her son as well, asking him on his progress on homework. This she says

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[80] More on this is dealt with in chapter four which discusses WhatsApp in family circles.
[81] She doesn't do this with her mother-in-law who is already criticizing her for being a working mother and leaving her children without maternal care.

keeps her going and is the next best thing to phone calls. Her busy schedule at office does not afford her to have conversations over phone, which are synchronous in nature. A quick WhatsApp voice message helps her feel connected to her children. She admits that this saves her from a lot of guilt and lets her mother her children even from work.

Similarly, for middle class homemakers, at Panchagrami, who were mostly spouses of IT employees or entrepreneurs, WhatsApp also acts as a visual online personal communication tool. Sharing jokes and artwork is an important part of their daily active participation on WhatsApp. Circulation and collection of arts and pictures themselves becomes a sort of an electronic hobby that only takes electronic space and not physical space. The appreciation of novelty in craft assumes a different form with a ready set of audience on WhatsApp groups. Further, such circulation also speaks to the social life[82] (Appadurai, 1988) of a joke or a picture and how jokes in response to jokes assume a life beyond the original joke itself.

For couples at Panchagrami, WhatsApp offers a unique decision making capability. Decisions on buying provisions for home are collective and are sometimes made over WhatsApp. The husband might be at his office helping his wife take decisions on buying a product at a super market, just by looking at its picture on WhatsApp. This in a way helps undermine the constraints of space while still helping build intimacy.

Similarly, middle class homemakers at Panchagrami loved WhatsApp for the perceived[83] mobility that it provided. Homemakers often expressed how they

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[82] Similar to Appadurai, A., 1988.
[83] Perceived because somehow, they failed to appreciate that it was equally true that it was also their smart phone that provided such mobility and not WhatsApp alone.

could multitask with WhatsApp and even message while cooking or taking care of other priorities at home.

There were different variables that contributed to understanding why a social media such as WhatsApp became a preferred media by a certain group of people (homemakers in this case) over another media. Speed of response (though asynchronic – it's almost assumed to be synchronic), ease of access to the media (over mobile devices) and the economy of using it were a few significant variables, which speak to this preference. As WhatsApp played to these factors and particularly at being synchronous and asynchronous at the same time (based on how one perceived it), it was a preferred medium. Further, though homemakers maintained profiles on Facebook, their social media activity cycle showed that they were much more active over WhatsApp than over Facebook[84].

The idea of asynchronous communication over voice was primary not only for working mothers like Lakshmi or to the homemakers discussed above, but also to young men like Anand, striving to keep up with his long-distance romance. Anand, a 26-year-old, is in a stable relationship with a girl from his previous job. His girlfriend was transferred to Coimbatore, a city in southwest Tamil Nadu and they have been apart for almost 6 months now. He sends her pictures of himself (Selfies and posed for pictures) clicked in different settings along with a voice message that speaks of his love for her. Earlier, it was either Anand trying to call his girlfriend or her trying to reach him over phone. However, they had to slot times and plan on when they would be free to chat. But WhatsApp, he says, has transformed his relationship with her to the next

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[84] However, as stated earlier, they were comparatively much more active than men of their age on Facebook.

level as his messages are much more spontaneous. The couple share numerous messages throughout the day[85] (Costa, 2016).

A major issue that some women had with WhatsApp was the issue of sharing phone numbers. Though people perceived interest group members as acquaintances, there were cases where a few women felt that though they were not comfortable sharing their phone numbers with strangers, they still had to share it to be part of an interest group on WhatsApp. For others, the issue was more of segregating their social circles. So even a casual contact or an acquaintance who they had met offline and had shared their phone number for some reason could message them if they were on WhatsApp as well. This was considered as an intrusion into their personal space. For example: Sindhu, a 45-year-old housewife, got a message from a previous male domestic help of hers who sent in a greeting on WhatsApp. Similar was the case of Saroja, a 30-year-old housewife who was sent a greeting by a male interior designer, who had helped design her previous home. Both did not welcome such communication and felt that they were intrusions into their privacy.

But, these issues with privacy do not deter them from using WhatsApp. In fact, WhatsApp in Panchagrami is an extremely popular tool among the upper middle class housewives who used it to organize functions for their community or programmes at their local church or even kitty parties. For example: at the start of this chapter, we had seen how homemakers sent their children to borrow spices from their neighbours, in case they ran out of any while cooking. Now, with WhatsApp, homemakers in larger apartment complexes

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[85] For more on romance through WhatsApp from a woman's perspective, please refer to Costa, E., 2016.

sent WhatsApp messages to their neighbour friends when they were running out of a certain spice while they cooked and then would send their child to pick it up once they received a response. However, with the lower socio economic classes borrowing spice still meant sending their children to their neighbours' homes without requests over WhatsApp. There were also several instances in the middle classes when the husband would go grocery shopping and send a picture of a product to his wife to ask if that was the right product to purchase just like in the case of husband helping the wife with shopping decisions (which we saw earlier). A few homemakers also turned entrepreneurs with WhatsApp as their marketing channel, thereby marketing to their neighbours (Venkatraman, 2015) and viewing them as potential consumers.

In some cases, the frequency of personal photos sent over WhatsApp was higher when compared to Facebook. For example: Rangan, a 32-year-old cab driver with a popular cab company in Chennai, often travels on duty to Panchagrami and takes selfies with foreign IT delegates who he drives from the hotel to the IT companies. He sends these pictures to his friends on WhatsApp to showcase and build status amongst his peers, as a person who has international connections. Other personal Selfies while on duty are sent to his newly wedded wife. Selfies are much more commonly distributed on WhatsApp than on Facebook at Panchagrami, as it helps in privacy and controls (at least perceived to control) the audience who the user wants to send the picture to. Chapter four on Family and relationships also brings out case studies on how new born baby pictures circulate over WhatsApp to immediate and close family members rather than on Facebook to avoid '*evil eye*'.

The perception that WhatsApp was more official than Facebook was seen with some office goers sending in text messages to their bosses on WhatsApp (Venkatraman, 2014b). An added attraction was that WhatsApp was free. While in 2013, WhatsApp was said to be a paid service after a year's use[86], many Panchagrami locals professed their ignorance of this fact. A few that knew of this just reinstalled WhatsApp on their phones towards the end of the free year. This changed in January 2016 as WhatsApp announced a free service for life (Khandelwal, 2016). Nevertheless, it is doubtful that Panchagrami residents even knew of this change as for them WhatsApp was always free.

Though factors such as class, caste and gender do have an influence on the use of WhatsApp as well, there has been no detailed discussion of them in this section as in the case of Facebook. As mentioned earlier, several trends caused by these factors visible on Facebook repeat themselves on WhatsApp too. However, what is important is that these factors move into focus in public facing social media such as Facebook, which have public profiles for individuals. WhatsApp, being a more private platform than Facebook, has such factors pushed to the background and hence this section on WhatsApp in Panchagrami provided for a general discussion of the platform.

2.5 Twitter

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[86] It didn't really seem that WhatsApp users at Panchagrami were actually charged.

Twitter did not seem to be as popular or wide spread as Facebook or WhatsApp at Panchagrami. Survey results and interviews made it clear that Twitter was perceived as a platform for the educated and the rich[87] (Costa, 2016) while Facebook and WhatsApp were perceived to be democratic platforms meant for everyone. This was because Twitter was somehow associated with knowledge of English and seemed like a medium that required exertion to gather followers. Further, the communication over Twitter was non-directional and did not have a ready audience. Also, one needed to have an active participation and work to gather one's audience, even though one did not need a Twitter membership to view tweets of others, as most were public. Though many such reasons were quoted, some Panchagrami residents had signed up for Twitter, more out of curiosity on what the medium was rather than for using it. Some tried and failed like Vinoth, a 23-year-old college graduate, who signed up for twitter four times, each with a new handle and did not end up using any of it, as communication on Twitter felt difficult for him. But he read tweets of his favourite cinema celebrities. Several cinema celebrities from the Tamil film industry known as 'Kollywood' express their thoughts through their Twitter account and have a huge following[88]. Sarath, a 22-year-old college student, has a Twitter account to only follow his favourite movie star named 'Dhanush' and doesn't tweet, re-tweet or share anything on it. Early on his sojourn into Twitter, he dabbled with posting pictures of his cinema idol, but couldn't attract followers for himself. Sarath like Vinoth has multiple Twitter accounts after his failure to attract followers. His guesstimate was around 22 to 25 accounts. The reason was simple, he wanted to boost the number of followers that his star had on Twitter. He said it was the least he could do for his cine idol. He also constantly pesters a few of his friends to

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[87] This was also the case in South East Turkey, please refer to Costa, E. 2016.
[88] More on cinema is discussed in Chapter three.

sign up for Twitter accounts and follow his favourite star's page. Similarly, Priya, a 22-year-old college student, dabbled with re-tweeting tweets of her favourite film stars for some time before giving up as no one was following her on Twitter. She felt that it was much easier to garner followers if you were well known offline; else you had to sweat it on Twitter.

However, many skilled IT employees were active to a certain extent on Twitter, or at least engaged with Twitter on a passive basis. They felt that Twitter was an ideal knowledge platform if you followed someone of repute like Guy Kawasaki or Robert Scoble, both Silicon Valley Technology thought leaders. Many followed Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India on Twitter as well. Though most were sharing news and information through retweets, they said that they had to put in the initial effort of gaining followers for themselves. Suden, a 30-year-old Business Analyst with a major IT company, said that he followed several of his friends and they followed him in turn, thereby mutually boosting each other's follower numbers.

Twitter became a major tool at Panchagrami when a murder of a woman IT employee took place in the area. The IT professionals took to Twitter to express support and concern for women in IT sector. Devi, a 28-year-old IT professional said *'I tweeted saying women needed security immediately after the incident and all of a sudden I was retweeted and once the incident had died down none of my tweets received a retweet…my friends who are my followers sometime do it to share information. Now I have followers who I don't even know… I have a sense of losing control over my followers, I don't really know who they are".*

A few entrepreneurs used Twitter with a purpose to further their brand names. Most entrepreneurs preferred furthering themselves as thought leaders on Twitter like Anandhi, a 45-year-old, soft skills and communications expert, who tweeted to build her profile as a thought leader in communications. She said that her brand building presence on Twitter attracted business for her. Similar is the case of Rishi, a 40-year-old tech entrepreneur and writer, whose sole purpose on Twitter was to build a personal brand for himself. Several small businesses in Panchagrami existed on Twitter, but at least 70% have been inactive for some time now. Multinationals having a presence in Panchagrami were on Twitter, but their tweets were more global than local, as it seemed that their social media team wasn't situated in Panchagrami.

In Panchagrami, there was a clear sense of using Twitter with a purpose rather than for everyday communication. Comparing usage of Twitter to other social networking sites like Facebook or WhatsApp clearly showed that the kind of messages that were exchanged on Twitter was different from the kind that were exchanged on Facebook. Twitter was perceived to be a platform where one had to be normative and politically correct. Further, there was a fear that the internet community, would troll you if you did something stupid on Twitter. While you need to be careful, normative and neutral on Twitter, it was easy to be your own self on Facebook and even more so on WhatsApp.

2.6 Conclusion

This intention of this chapter was to introduce the social media and communication landscape at Panchagrami, beginning with the traditional

forms of communication and moving onto exploring the various social media platforms present in the area. While doing this, the chapter also presented the layers of complexities that govern social media use in this area. Further, what was also evident was that both emotional factors such as care and family concern and social factors such as age, hierarchy, social status, literacy, gender, class and caste which mutually influence each other and affect the traditional offline communication also had an impact on social media.

Even the use of voice communication over phone, within families was influenced by several factors such as age, hierarchy, position and status within kinship network and literacy as evident in the cases of Mr. Raghavan and Ravi's mother. They were further complicated with emotional concerns over children's wellbeing as was evident in the case of Shobana and Lakshmi, while it was synchronous phone communication in Shobana's case, it was asynchronous voice over WhatsApp in the latter.

Such emotional concerns when influenced by factors such as caste, class and family honour take the form of social control and surveillance of social media and makes its impact specifically felt on gender. Social control and surveillance on women which influenced their use of social media can be classified into two kinds namely the hard restrictions and the soft controls. The hard restrictions manifested in four different forms within the lower-socio-economic classes and lower middle classes

a) **Complete restriction:** As seen in the cases of male family members trying to keep a watchful eye on young unmarried women in their families and caste by barring them from accessing social media for fear of inter-caste romantic relationships that could shame them within their communities.

b) **Time restrictions:** This was seen in families, which perceived themselves as 'less conservative'[89] since they allowed access to social media. But, such access over multiple devices was timed and strict controls over a specific time limit were exerted.

c) **Space restrictions:** This was also seen in families, which perceived themselves as 'less conservative' and allowed access to social media only within their homes under the watchful eyes of the family members. The space outside home was perceived as a masculine space that could have a detrimental effect on the young women. Hence the concept of safe space vs. other space was constantly pronounced in these families.

d) **Intentional Surveillance:** This was visible in families, which allowed their younger women to be on social media, however, their friends could only be their extended family or those who the family knew offline. A strict surveillance on her profile was visible since the family monitored her social media posts. This intentional surveillance, also took place in families that imposed time and space restrictions.

Soft controls, which were generally unintentional in nature, were visible in families where the family members had been friended online along with others. Though there were no restrictions imposed on the social media activity, just the presence of these family members as friends, ensured that these women self-censored their posts. This kind of social control is also visible for men of different classes. Both teachers and students who friended each other on social media felt that such friending also led to soft controls. This scenario is explored in detail in chapter six.

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[89] It was ironical that these families described themselves as being less conservative, though they imposed restrictions such as surveillance on social media usage for young women in the family. They would argue that they are less conservative because they compared themselves with families that banned access to social media or to phones.

However, to escape such surveillance, hard or soft, multiple profiles or fake profiles are created. For several social media users at Panchagrami, this seemingly disintegrated way of expressing themselves through multiple profiles makes their identity whole.

Though, these issues were discussed in detail under the section pertaining to Facebook, several facets of these issues were also evident in the usage of other platforms.

While WhatsApp's affordability and functionality makes it popular for Panchagrami residents, it was often considered an extension of SMS/texting functionality that allowed them to scale their communication and seamlessly move between public and private spheres (Miller et al., 2016). Factors such as emotional concerns, class and gender do influence WhatsApp's usage patterns as well.

Similarly, Twitter was closely associated with class and English literacy. Twitter for them involved exerting more energy in gaining a following than what they had to put into Facebook and WhatsApp. While some correlated popularity and brand building over Twitter to offline popularity, others used it to build their brand images as thought leaders. Fear of trolls on Twitter influenced their normative and non-controversial postings.

However, the exclusive use and existence on only one social media platform was rare and there was a strong case of Polymedia (Madianou and Miller, 2013). While there were people who ensured that they posted the same content concurrently on multiple platforms and kept their contribution to their networks active (e.g. sharing news story links on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn

and WhatsApp groups in just one sweep), when it came to communicating with individuals, interactions became more personal and contextual, which is a strong case of scalable sociality (Miller et al., 2016) as well.

Irrespective of the social media platform, another significant theme that emerges due to social control by families on Facebook or group norms over WhatsApp groups or even trolls over Twitter is the expectation of social conformance. This once again has strong offline continuity. Chapter three will explore how this continuity between offline and online spaces influence social conformance and how such pressures of conformance lead to strategic presentation of the self to one's social network.

Chapter Three – Visual Postings: Continuing Visual Spaces

3.1 Introduction

Thiru, a 21-year-old automobile mechanic with his friends Vadivelu, 23 years old and Lakshmanaswamy, 19 years old, travel every alternate Sundays to locations in and around Chennai to take pictures of themselves in shopping malls and other scenic tourist spots. The trio call these tours "Photo tours". This photo tourism is specifically meant for display on their social media accounts. Though occasionally a few other friends would be invited to join them, it was mostly the trio who ventured out on such photo tours on Thiru's clients' motorcycles. At least 60% of the pictures on their respective Facebook profiles are from these photo tours. While most group pictures taken in 2013 involved a lot of posing to the camera, the later ones in 2014 moved onto become Selfies[90], but what remained constant was the trio posing as a group. Though each of them had independent pictures of themselves on their respective profiles, it was the group pictures that mattered to them. These group pictures not only showcased their "friendship" but also their life style and the way that they experienced their life through friendship (Nisbett, 2007; Nakassis, 2014). Uploading such pictures consistently on social media where their social network[91] (Mitchell, 1969; Brass, 1992; Wasserman and Galaskiewicz, 1994; McPherson, 2001; Watts, 2003; Christakis, 2010; Marin

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[90] Such a change in trend coincided with Vadivelu's purchase of an affordable Samsung smart phone with a good front facing camera.

[91] Conforming to their social network's ideals and in this case performing to the expected ideals of their social network was seen as being important. This could be happening due to the network homophily. Please refer to McPherson, M., 2001. For introduction to social networks, its research and applications please refer to Mitchell, J.C. ed., 1969; Wasserman, S. and Galaskiewicz, J. eds., 1994; Watts D., 2003; Christakis, N.A., 2010.; Marin, A. and Wellman, B., 2011; Scott, J., 2012.

For more on compliance in social networks please refer to Brass, D.J., 1992.

and Wellman, 2011; Scott, 2012) converged was very important since this showed their true bonding as friends for life to the people who mattered to them.

Friendship is a celebrated ideal in Tamil Nadu (Nakassis, 2010, 2013). A good friend or *'Nanban'* is celebrated as having a higher status than one's own family or kin and such friendships are viewed as chaste relationships. This finds repetition in public discourse through popular visual medium such as Tamil cinema. With such ideals deeply embedded in the youth ideology, following them and more importantly showcasing them to the society becomes important. The trio exactly do that through their pictures on Facebook.

Image 3.1: Photo tour

Veena, a 42-year-old home maker and a mother of two school going children lives in a posh three-bedroom apartment in a multi storeyed apartment complex. Veena makes it a point to take part in several charity and civic events such as beach cleaning, charity marathons or even cooking for charity events along with her friends Anushya, 37 years old and Gowri, 45 years old.

None of these events are complete without Selfies or posed for photographs. These are immediately shared over WhatsApp to a group of extended friends and family network as Veena believes that these are private moments in a public event and can only be shared with a specific group of people who she personally knows. Veena does not have a Facebook account and believes that showcasing these pictures of her charity participation publicly amounts to exhibitionism. However, she also supposes that these pictures could influence (Christakis, 2010) her network of friends and family to not only participate in such charities but also see the fun of coming together for a good cause. While philanthropy and volunteering for charity events and giving back to the society are considered as important ideals for women in India (Pushpa, 1996), it also forms an important aspect of the middle-class ideology[92] (Varma, 2007; Mathur, 2010). For Veena, these events also double as opportunities for creating fond memories of being together with friends and reliving them later[93] (Van Dijck, 2008).

Rathinavelu, a 42-year-old entrepreneur deals with supplying hardware materials to construction companies. Both Rathinavelu and his wife Alamelu, a 38-year-old housewife have Facebook accounts where they not only upload images of themselves, but also of their immediate family which consists of their two school going children and events and celebrations with their extended families or their closest friends with whom the couple share a close fictive kinship[94] relationship.   Even their WhatsApp messages to their respective networks would have pictures of family outings or family get-

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[92] Though, this aspect of altruism of the middle class has been debated in works such as Varma, P.K., 2007. and Mathur, N., 2010. irrespective of whether they do it to avoid the guilt from self gain or it is true altruism, this still forms a part of their ideology at least at Panchagrami and women belonging to the middle class in Panchagrami tend to participate in such philanthropic activities.
[93] With greater storage space in smart phones and by sharing them online, through WhatsApp, these photographs have a longer period of life and enable reliving memories over a longer period of time; please refer Van Dijck, J., 2008.
[94] More about fictive kinship is dealt with in chapter four of this thesis.

togethers. Other than these, they also share moralizing memes[95] (Memes have become moral police, n.d.), socially relevant forwards and jokes or pictures of Hindu gods. With their social media albums dotted with family pictures, Rathinavelu and Alamelu make it a point to showcase their family bonding to their social network, since strong family and kinship bonds are ideals in Tamil culture (Trawick, 1990). Such pictures on their Facebook page receive constant feedback and support in the form of likes and comments or personal messages from their social networks[96] (Gottlieb, 1981).

Image 3.2: Family picture

Gurunath, a 20-year-old, bio-chemistry student regularly posts pictures of his favourite Tamil film star 'Vijay', pictures of the actresses who co-star with him, posters of his star's upcoming film releases and those of his earlier films. These are done for the networks of fans on his social media and the actor's fan club page on Facebook. Fan clubs for popular male film stars are an

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[95] Memes becoming a moral police of online life was witnessed in several other fieldsites in this project as well. This is also one of Why we post's major discoveries in the use of social media. Please refer Memes have become moral police of online life, n.d. Retrieved from https://www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post/discoveries/14-memes-have-become-the-moral-police-of-online-life

[96] This could also be seen as seeking support and feedback from one's social network. Please refer to Gottlieb, B.H., 1981.

important aspect of Tamil cinema culture and has been constant in Tamil Nadu for over half a century now[97] (Dickey, 1993a, 1993b; Srinivas, 1996; Rogers, 2009; Pandian, 2015; Rajanayagam, 2015). Predominantly a male club, the fans of an actor with a membership in such fan clubs are expected to showcase their loyalty and belonging. Gurunath does this on Facebook, where his network consists of actor Vijay's fans. Likes and comments are typically from the actor's fans.

Image 3.3: Actor Vijay with a co-star

Each of the above cases is typical of a genre of visual posting by one of the many different groups of people who live in Panchagrami. What is significant in each of these cases was that this appropriation of an online platform as a space to showcase their cultural ideals, norms and their everyday values, are all in effect a means for transmitting some larger and already established aspect of collective morals such as valuing friendship, charity, family or loyalty towards a group or to a social network they deem important and identify themselves with.

This chapter on visuals will thus deal with how the online visual space on social media for the people of Panchagrami is about showcasing larger

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[97] Fan clubs for film stars particularly the Tamil film Heros are popular. A few Tamil stars have used such Fan clubs for political mileage. Please refer to Dickey, 1993a, 1993b; Srinivas, 1996; Rogers, 2009; Pandian, 2015; Rajanayagam, 2015.

established collective ideals, which have always found a representation in the offline visual culture of this area. It will provide a brief background of the offline visual culture at Panchagrami by examining the public visual culture, the visuals at home and those that fall in-between these two realms. It will then move onto exploring their replications and continuity on social media by looking at the public visual postings on cinema and politics, followed by visuals presenting their private selves. Everyday greetings accompanied by memes that help build sociality with the online network; will also be examined as a third category of visuals that fall between the public and the private. By examining the above, the chapter will show how the postings in the online visual space is in conformance to the expectations of the social networks that people build for themselves on platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

However, to do this, the chapter uses the idea of scalable sociality (Miller et. al, 2016), where social media allows for communication to scale from individuals to groups of varied sizes and constitutions and from the most private to the most public. Further, given that communication over social media is inherently becoming more visual (Miller et. al, 2016), the use of photographs in Panchagrami fits into this paradigm. While this chapter strives to showcase continuity of the offline visual culture with that of the online visual culture at Panchagrami by showcasing how replicas of offline visual culture are mirrored online on social media from the private to the public, there is a cognizance of deviation in terms of scalable publics, that the public visual culture at Panchagrami is not necessarily scalable, while that of the online visual culture specifically on social media is scalable and can move between the most private and the most public swiftly.

Hence, while the offline visual culture might be rigid in terms of defining the different kinds of participation over a spectrum from the most public to the most private, the online counterpart can witness a swifter flow between the ends of the spectrum, thus allowing for participation to reconstitute its offering based on the audience. For e.g. a private family photograph shared by Rathinavelu and Alamelu is public on Facebook for the world to see with no privacy setting in place, (though they might only receive feedback from their social networks) however, the same might not be true if the photo has an offline counterpart, where this only becomes a part of their private collection. Similar is the case of Gurunath, if the same poster had appeared offline, the offline public poster of his favorite cinema star might not be scaled down to be held as private collection in his home, while digital posters help in affording such storage. However, what is interesting in all of this is the collective idea of what constitutes public in Panchagrami, as studies on public culture and public spheres such as that of Breckenridge (1995), Kaviraj (1997) and Rajagopal (2009) show, in the case of Panchagrami, while cinema and politics might largely constitute the public, private photographs on social media which cater to the dominant expectations of the social network or even the society of Panchagrami in general could also constitute the public.

The scalable affordance that social media offers, helps people share their private moments to public and public visuals to a limited social network. For e.g. Gurunath also shares posters and pictures of his favorite cinema star over WhatsApp with his close circle of friends or avid fans, if they request him to. Similarly, the tour photographs of the trio mentioned above also have the potency to be shared over WhatsApp to a limited network while they are public on Facebook.

The scalable affordance that social media provides also provides deviation in terms of the following

1) Speed of scaling – Scaling the visuals between the most private to the most public is rapid in the online visual culture of Panchagrami compared to its offline counterparts.

2) Economy of Scaling – In the offline world, even if the visuals are to be scaled the costs can be exorbitant as compared to the negligible costs online.

3) Storage – Once the visuals on the social media is scaled, the chances of storing the scaled visuals for later retrieval is easier and economical as compared to the offline counterparts – for e.g. Storage of Public posters of cinema stars or political heads consumes space (Dickey, 1993) and incurs larger costs, while with the photos on social media can be stored indefinitely over a cloud.

4) Social Life of Photos – Retrieval and sharing of past photographs when digitalised is much easier and quicker online as compared to the offline.

There are several examples, dealt with in this chapter, where one can witness, the re-distribution of past and forgotten visuals and memes.

Despite such deviations of the online visual culture at Panchagrami, the offline categorizations of the visuals are still useful not only in analysing the online visual postings, but also in plotting the continuity between the offline and the online visual culture.

As we examine the cases related to the online visual culture at Panchagrami, through the paradigm of the offline visual categorizations, the concept of scalable publics acts as an underlying idea. Scalable publics provides agency for the people using social media to strategize communication to cater to the

expectations of a specific network. The idea of scalable sociality and specifically that of scalable publics is best reflected in the case of mixed genre of visual postings (discussed later in the chapter), where people strategically determine not just the audience, their size and constitution based on the message but also the right platform for communicating these messages.

3.2 An Overview of Offline Visual culture at Panchagrami

One of the major findings of this entire ethnographic research exercise across all nine different fieldsites was that social media has made our communication more visual (we used to just talk, n.d.; Miller, 2015; Miller and Sinanan, n.d.). While this represents a significant change, it is still possible that this change as well as the visual content is mainly derived from prior traditions and genres in each specific instance.

Tamil Nadu has been a visual society like the rest of India (Pinney, 2004, 2008; Dwyer, 2006; Jain, 2007) both in the public and private spheres, be it through still images of gods, politicians, film stars, advertisements (Mazzarella, 2003), cartoons and caricatures[98] (Khanduri, 2014; Murray, n.d.) in the form of posters, billboards or large banners (locally referred to as '*cut outs*') and moving images such as cinema in the public (Dickey and Jacob, 2008; Velayutham, 2008; Pandian, 2015;)or through religious images (Pinney, 2004), calendars, framed photographs (Pinney, 2004)and personal videos (Zeff, 1999) at home.

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[98] The Amul advertisements are examples of caricatures and cartoons on public billboards. Please refer to Murray, L.C., Advertising Amul: On Meaning, Materiality, and Dairy in India.

3.3 The Public Visual Culture

Tamil Nadu is a place where most events are celebrated in the form of public visuals be it cinema, cricket, religion, politics, birthdays, puberty related rites or 'coming of age' ceremony of women, weddings, deaths or any other life cycle ceremonies. Of these the most striking are the religious festivals, cinema and politics. Various religious festivals, depending on the seasons, tend to dominate the public visual culture of Tamil Nadu. For example: the month of Aadi[99] (July-August) (Tamil Calendar, n.d.) is a celebration for the Hindu mother goddess (Beck, 1981; Fuller and Logan, 1985; Good, 1985; Hiltebeitel, 1991), which is followed by festivals for Hindu gods such as Krishna and Ganesha (Fuller, 2001), all of which are celebrated with a public display of banners and posters that speak of celebrations in the nearby temples. Christmas and Ramzan also find posters announcing celebrations in the nearby churches and mosques. Several village festivals also follow suit with a public visual display of devotion[100] (Neve, 2000; Mosse, 1997).

Another striking genre that dominates Tamil Nadu is cinema (Hardgrave, 1975; Dickey and Jacob, 2008; Velayutham, 2008; Pandian. 2016). Several researchers have attested to the extraordinary power of local cinema (popularly called 'Kollywood'[101]) and have noted its close relationship to political success in Tamil Nadu[102] (Hardgrave Jr., 1973; Hardgrave Jr. and Neidhart, 1975; Pandian, 1992; Dickey, 1993a). Arguably, Tamil Nadu is the only state in India, which can boast of five Chief Ministers (heads of state) in

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[99] Tamil months generally tend to start on the 15th/16th of English calendar months. More on Tamil months can be found here Tamil Calendar, n.d. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_calendar
[100] To understand the role of communities and that of caste. Please refer Mosse, D., 1997; Neve, G.D., 2000.
[101] Just as Bollywood refers to Hindi cinema, Kollywood refers to Tamil cinema.
[102] To get a good understanding of cinema in Tamil Nadu, please refer to works of Hardgrave Jr., 1973; Hardgrave Jr. and Neidhart, 1975; Pandian, 1992; Dickey, 1993a

the last half century, as having had connections with cinema. In fact, the current head of state of Tamil Nadu and the head of the largest opposition party are from a cinema[103] (Hardgrave, 1973; Jacob, 1997) background.

Panchagrami is no different when it comes to exhibiting a visual culture and a drive down the main roads of Panchagrami with its brilliantly coloured posters would stand testimony to this. For example: The roads/streets are normally adorned with posters and huge banners of Hindu gods and goddesses as the villages get ready to celebrate the month of '*Aadi*' (a Tamil month occurring in July-August specifically dedicated to celebrating the village fair with offerings to the Hindu mother goddess) while a festival like Deepavali (Diwali) often witnesses a mixture of banners and posters of Gods (Pinney, 2004), new cinema releases, cinema stars and advertisements of discounted product sales. Very often, the Hindu gods and goddesses share banner space with the local politicians, caste group leaders and local businessmen who sponsor free food distribution ('*annadhanam*') or entertainment programs which could typically be a light music program (a stage show of popular Tamil cinema songs) or a '*Therukoothu*' (a staged street play) for the people of Panchagrami

Image 3.4: Mother Goddess

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[103] The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu J. Jayalalitha of the AIADMK party was a famous film star of yester years and the opposition party leader M.Karunanidhi (DMK) was a famous script and dialogue writer for films. Please refer to Jacob, P., 1997. and for the success of Mr. Karunanidhi and his party the DMK please refer to Hardgrave, R.L., 1973.

Posters of cinema stars and movies adorn the public walls and they change based on new cinema releases[104], the popularity of the star cast or the hero. While visuals in the form of 'cut outs' are mostly around cinema halls/theatres, the entire area is normally dotted with cinema posters. When it comes to elections, or a political event, the life size banners of political leaders based on the political event spring around the main roads of Panchagrami. Most often they occur with laudatory remarks or rhetoric in Tamil for the party leaders, often praising them as '*Singame*' (the lion which supposedly signifies honour), '*Thamizhane*' (the ideal Tamilian) or '*Thamizh Thaaye'* (The mother of Tamils) etc. and reflect the general oral political rhetoric in Tamil Nadu (Bate, 2013).

Most visuals in the public realm at Panchagrami have a temporal nature and keep changing based on the seasons and the events that represent the season[105]. They are meant for information and not for memorialization. Elections, political events, new cinema releases and festivals catalyse the constant change of visuals. However, visuals at home are of a different category since personal images are safe guarded for a longer period and act as artefacts that kindle memory.

3.4 Visual Culture at Home

At the homes of local residents one can find photographs of them or that of gods, national leaders, family photos, wedding photos, photos of their children in fancy photo frames and photos of dead ancestors adorning the living room

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[104] New cinema are generally released on Fridays to ensure weekend box office collections.
[105] Temple iconography and architecture at Panchagrami are of a different category and have lasted for decades.

walls or the pages of photo albums. Video recordings (normally found as DVDs) are that of functions celebrated in the family like birthday parties, puberty ceremonies, weddings, temple festivities of their family deities or even house warming celebrations. Most are professionally made either at a photo studio or a professional cameraman films these visuals (Pinney, 2008).

In Hindu and Christian homes[106], pictures of gods and saints, along with small statues of various deities adorn the altars where family worship is conducted. In Hindu homes, calendars with pictures of Gods are of two kinds; either plain monthly calendars or those with an almanac attached to them, while those in Christian homes were just monthly calendars.

The still images or visuals that move from photo albums to adorn the cabinets or the walls in the living room, where guests can see them, go through a kind of a censoring process. Only images that are 'posed' for and those that showcase a certain aspect that the family wants to display find a place in the living room. Pictures that adorn the living rooms are pictures that showcase attainment (graduation ceremonies or prize winning ceremonies), family photos that showcase unity, or that of a dead ancestor showing a strong bond towards one's lineage and remembering one's loved ones[107]. Other pictures are held in photo albums for renewing memories, when close family or friends visit. Embarrassing pictures never make it to the living room and most often stay hidden in the photo albums.

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[106] As stated in chapter one, at the time of fieldwork, there were only a handful of Muslim families both on the rural side of Panchagrami as well as in the multi storeyed apartment complexes and access was limited. This was the same case with the Sikh families as well.
[107] Remembering one's ancestors is seen as a praiseworthy ideal and is a culturally and religiously embedded process in Hindu homes. Also, there were several Christians in Panchagrami who had pictures of their dead parents or grand parents on their living room walls and offered prayers on their death anniversaries. Most often, these photos were only upto two generations (grandparents or parents).

The displayed visuals at home don't change often[108]. They are sometimes archived but are rarely destroyed and are unlike the images seen in the public visual culture at Panchagrami. They work as artefacts for passing symbolic information (such as attainment or family unity) to a guest and for memorialization within the family.

People of Panchagrami, generally don't bring life size posters inside their homes and clearly demarcate the zones for such visuals, except for those which can be classified as 'in-betweener' visuals.

Image 3.5: Personal achievement

3.5 In-betweeners

There are images, which fall somewhere in-between the home display and the public display. They are mostly large banners announcing a family celebration like a marriage or a puberty ceremony of a young girl and are most often found occupying sections of the main roads of Panchagrami. Such banners not only have the images of the bride/bridegroom or the girl who attained puberty or the child whose birthday is being celebrated; they would very often

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[108] There are of course, people in the upper middle class who sometimes changed the photographs in photo frames on their coffee tables or cabinets, to coincide with an event or a celebration.

carry the names and sometimes the images of the people (mostly close friends or kin) who wish for the event to be a grand success. These images are specifically geared towards letting their social networks (caste group members, people from neighbouring villages, distant kin etc.) know of an event in their family and the strong sense of bonding that they share with the person is demonstrated by erecting such banners. Most of these banners or posters of the events are temporary and except for a few (retained for sentimental value), most are destroyed after the event just like the political/cinema posters.

Here again, the images of the home sphere from a family event might move to the public area, but most don't make it back home as they are geared towards addressing specific messages to specific social networks after which their jobs get done.

Image 3.6: 'In-betweener' picture for marriage

3.6 How does Social Media reflect this visual culture?

Visuals and visual related functions constitute a major portion of everyday activities on social media at Panchagrami. These could range from uploading images to sharing, liking or commenting on the visuals. Affordable

technologies, especially smartphones with cameras (front and back facing) and pre-paid mobile internet connection has played a major role in the rise of visual-related functionalities becoming central to social media usage at Panchagrami.

The images that people of Panchagrami post on their social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) are not very different from what are seen offline. They generally fall into either one or more of the categories listed above i.e. public, private or the in-betweeners. The pictures that are generally considered to belong to the public visual culture of Panchagrami like pictures of religious festivals or Tamil cinema stars or even that of politicians or political issues are either deleted after an event or the season (just like their offline counterparts), else, they go down lower in the Facebook album space (chronologically) and are updated with newer ones. Such images are either shared or uploaded onto Facebook. People, who uploaded such images onto Facebook from their mobile phones, sometimes use Facebook as a cloud to store images, thereby saving on their mobile device's storage space.

The personal pictures uploaded on Facebook profiles aren't deleted when they are replaced with newer ones; they just remain archived in the albums. One can observe that it's mostly the upper middle class women who keep updating their profile with recent photos[109] as events in their lives unfold. These personal pictures are most often saved on their phones as well as on their Facebook walls. Wedding invites or greeting cards wishing people for festivals or family events or even everyday greetings with worded memes specifically targeting a social network of friends and family (just like the in-

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[109] Some women tend to post old pictures of their family/extended family showcasing family bonding and reconstituting memories.

betweeners) are saved on their phones and posted onto their Facebook walls. But only a few remain saved or archived on their phones or Facebook after the event with others deleted and space made for new updates. Most often the temporality of images on Facebook reflect the offline nature of these images as seen above in the case of saving images for memories or using it to communicate a specific information to a social network.

3.7 Continuing visual culture

To showcase how the offline visual culture continues onto social media, this section will also be divided into the three categories namely public, home and in-betweeners, which were discussed above as representing the offline visual culture. The first section would deal with the online visual postings on cinema and politics, which fall into the public visual culture category. This will be followed by visuals of themselves, which fall under the visual culture at home category and finally, we will also look at the everyday greetings that are embedded in the Tamil culture and how people bring this to social media and in a way, relate it to a cosmological understanding of the Hindu theology. Since, the latter section discusses religion; the section on public visuals will only discuss cinema and politics. But, before moving onto exploring these categories in detail, it is important to understand the scale of visual postings on social media at Panchagrami.

There are a couple of things to note with respect to visual postings that will be dealt with in this chapter. Though, video clips related to cinema and politics do float around on people's profiles, this chapter will only deal with the still images, as they occur with higher frequency than moving images. Also, visuals at Panchagrami are a mixture of both original and forwarded content.

So, while not everyone at Panchagrami produced original visual content on social media, several took an active interest in sharing and forwarding visual content that they came across on Facebook and WhatsApp.

3.8 A Snapshot of Visuals at Panchagrami

To provide a snapshot of the scale of visual postings, the following exercise was carried out using the Facebook[110] profiles of a sample of 20 Facebook friends from Panchagrami. The sample pool consisted of 10 women and 10 men on a broad age range from 15 years to 67 years. The photos included all visuals found on the person's Facebook photo albums i.e. tagged or posted of their own accord. The following statistics reflects both the original and forwarded content, for example: memes are generally forwarded/shared content.

Table 3.1: Facebook Metrics relating to Visuals at Panchagrami

Total number of visuals	1367
Min number of visuals	18
Maximum number of visuals	102
Average number of visuals	68
Average percentage of Pictures including the informant	43%
Average percentage of Pictures showing the informant alone	20%
Average percentage of Pictures having the informant within groups	23%
Average percentage of Pictures having Memes	38%

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[110] Carrying out the same exercise on WhatsApp was not possible, since most visual content on WhatsApp could not be divided as they could be for Facebook.

3.9 Section 1: Public

3.9.1 Cinema

As discussed earlier, Tamil cinema is a very popular[111] (Dickey, 1993b; Velayutham, 2008; Pandian, 2015) form of entertainment at Panchagrami. Very often one can find the Facebook profiles of young college students dotted with images of Tamil film stars. The most popular in this area seemed to be that of two male actors namely Ajith (referred to as *'Thalai'* meaning the Head or leader) and Vijay (referred to as *'Thalapathi'* meaning the commander-in-chief). Usually, people get into networks that like and support a specific actor and post images of him or share his images on their albums. A peak in such activities is normally witnessed when a film of a famous actor is scheduled to be released on a certain date or just before the star's birthday. Pictures of the films' promotional material get shared on social media through such networks.

Image 3.7: Actor Ajith in the film titled "Veeram"

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[111] One can argue that it is the most popular form of entertainment in TamilNadu. Dickey.S. 1993b, Velayudham.S. 2008., Pandian.A.2015.

Image 3.8: Actor Vijay in the film titled "Puli"

One will very often find that these are the same images that are stuck either as posters or banners across the area when the film gets released. One will also find people posting social media images of their star with his family (portrays a sense of an ideal family to aspire for), at a public event or even sharing light moments together with their co-stars, showcasing sociality of their favourite star.

Image Set 3.9: Cinema - Various faces of Actors Ajith and Vijay

Historically, such genres of pictures were always seen in Tamil Nadu. Pictures of the former Chief Minister Late Dr. M.G. Ramachandran (MGR in popular reference) (Pandian, 1992; Dickey, 2008) who was also an extremely popular film star had such images of him stuck as posters around Tamil Nadu almost forty years ago. They have been also been repeated with other film stars who have become celebrities in their own right (Rajanayagam, 2015).

Image set 3.10: Cinema - Various faces of yesteryear actor MGR

As seen in Gurunath's case in the beginning of this chapter, such images when posted by fans of the actors, indicates loyalty to the actor and thus receive a lot of likes and comments as responses from other fans on their network. However, the scale of responses to each fan posting such images is highly enhanced and visible when it is done on social media than when offline.

Pictures of Tamil film heroines also circulate on social media. While it is mostly the young men who post images of Tamil film actors, both young women and men post images of Tamil film actresses on their social media profiles. Most often the pictures of popular actors don't change, while the images of Tamil actresses (specifically Heroines) are temporal and change frequently as they do in the offline cinema posters. This in a way also reflects the temporal position that the film actresses hold within cinema itself and has a historical precedence[112] (Chinniah, 2008; Lakshmi, 2008; Nakassis, 2015).

Image set 3.11: Actresses Nayanthara, Anushka and Nazriya Nazim

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[112] Actresses, specifically a Heroine in Tamil cinema often have very few years to showcase their skills as leading lady. With Heros dominating Tamil cinema, the leading ladies change very often are are most often selected from outside Tamil Nadu. Their physical appearance and the current industrial trend influence the choice of heroines most visible since the days of MGR. Please refer to Chinniah, S. 2008; Lakshmi, C.S. '2008. Nakassis, C.V., 2015.

Both young men and women tend to use pictures of actors and actresses as their profile display pictures, though they don't create them, they download such pictures from the Internet or film websites or use forwarded pictures.

3.9.2 Politics

In Panchagrami, the offline visuals namely the banners and cut outs pertaining to politics fall into four major categories namely the local level, regional level, national level and international level. The local level would generally be the local representation of major state level or sometimes the national level political parties[113] and they play a major role in governing the local village and town councils. The offline 'cut outs' or banners are generally of the state party leader with a small image of the local representative at the bottom of the banner. One also witnesses a gender difference here – i.e. it is normally the men who are actively involved in display of party power through offline visuals. It is generally frowned upon for women in this area to display their pictures on public banners, though they might be interested in politics[114]. This would be a deviant social practice by their close networks and hence most women tend to stay away from this practice. Though there are women representatives in local party politics, unless one is well known the practice of having images of local women and especially unmarried women on the party posters don't occur often[115].

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[113] The Major players at the State level political parties are a) AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), PMK (Pattali Makkal Katchi), DMDK (Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam), VCK (Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi) and MDMK (Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam). TMC (Tamil Manila Congress – a branch of the Congress party at the national level) and BJP (The Tamil Nadu branches of the Bharatiya Janata Party) are also found here. Please refer to chapter one for more details on the political parties in this area.

[114] Their interests normally stop at home. They are only called for support during elections. Politics in this area is dominated by networks of men.

[115] This is in contrast to the pictures of AIADMK's chief Ms. J. Jayalalitha, a spinster

Posters are mostly laudatory of the party leaders and are stuck on public walls by the party workers belonging to a specific party; this has been a part of Tamil politics for a long time now. This is reflected in the social media visuals of party workers in Panchagrami too.

The following images are all examples showing support for a state level political leader. For example, the images of DMK[116] leader Dr. M. Karunanidhi and his son (the future leader of the party) Mr. Stalin are uploaded only by members belonging to this party or by members in the allied parties during elections. With a few party leaders, such as Mr. Stalin present on social media[117] (Balkundi and Kilduff, 2006; Burt, 2000; Lin et al., 2001), the images that they post of themselves in party meetings on their official social media profiles are also shared and replicated by the party workers and most tend to showcase the charismatic side of their leaders[118].

Image set 3.12: Dr. Karunanidhi and Mr. Stalin

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[116] DMK – Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – A Massive Tamil party in Tamil Nadu

[117] https://twitter.com/stalin_offl . More on the effective conversion of social networks to leadership Balkundi, P. and Kilduff, M., 2006. and on using social capital please refer to i) Burt, R.S., 2000. ii) Lin, N., Cook, K.S. and Burt, R.S. eds., 2001.

[118] More on how charisma in political leadership works in North India and Venezuela is discussed by Michelutti, 2013

Similarly, pictures of the AIADMK[119] (Perumal and Padmanabhan, 1987; Suresh, 1992; Thirunavukkarasu, 2001) supremo, Ms Jayalalitha also frequent the profiles of members who belong to this party.

One deviation from this pattern may derive from caste concerns. For example, Panchagrami has a significant population of Dalits (Scheduled Castes) and pictures of late Dr. Ambedkar, a national leader and a founding father of India who represented the Dalit struggle for social justice and equality are frequently posted on Facebook profiles of the party workers belonging to Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (Liberated Panthers Party), which is a major representative of the needs of the scheduled castes. The local party representatives, to show their oneness and identity with the cause of social justice and equality, mostly tend do this. As a political strategy, members of various other locally represented political parties now vie to post pictures of Dr. Ambedkar on their social media profiles too.

Image set 3.13: Garlanding Dr. Ambedkar's statue

As seen in chapter one, a portion of Panchagrami is a reserved constituency for the election of scheduled castes/tribes for leadership positions in the

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[119] AIADMK – All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – Another Massive Tamil party in Tamil Nadu and is the current ruling party of Tamil Nadu. Both DMK and AIADMK have been alternating as the power centres in Tamil Nadu for over forty years now i) Perumal, C.A. and Padmanabhan, V.K., 1987. ii) Suresh, V., 1992. iii) Thirunavukkarasu, R., 2001.

village council and several belong to the VCK party. Mr. Thirumavalavan, a Dalit leader, heads the party and pictures of him abound the profiles of a few informants, who belong to this party or support the cause raised by the party. Pictures with the party leaders aren't rare, as they showcase support, influence and status of the person posting the image. As noted earlier in the chapter, the area already has a strong public visual culture and sometimes it is the most prominent forms of these i.e. the offline 'cut outs' and posters of the VCK party Leader that are reproduced on Facebook[120] (Gerritsen, 2010) or WhatsApp.

Image set 3.14: Politics – VCK leader Thirumavalavan

However, this does not preclude people from sticking posters on social issues for e.g. on alcoholism, corruption etc. Posters such as these are often either sarcastic or show concern and attack only the top state or national party leadership or are sometimes even related to international issues which might affect the state or the nation. They never criticize the local representatives. This pattern is replicated on social media too. This is certainly a safer strategy since they are less likely to earn the ire of their neighbourhood friends who support a different party and are also on Facebook or WhatsApp. The issues

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[120] For more interesting information on Murals and Cut-outs of Politicians, please refer to the work of Dr. Roos Gerritsen at Gerritsen, R., 2010. Retrieved from http://www.materialworldblog.com/2010/04/the-unanticipated-city-shifting-urban-landscapes-and-the-politics-of-spectacle-in-chennai/

or the party leaders are often caricatured[121] (Khanduri, 2014) or morphed and the visuals are shared on social media.

Image set 3.15: Politics – Sarcastic and satirical memes of social issues

Though, it is usually the lower-socio economic class long-term residents (generally men who are already involved in politics) that contribute to the offline visual banners at Panchagrami, the political visuals as postings on social media transcend the class boundaries. The postings of the lower-socio economic classes are often laudatory of one party and deride others. However, the middle classes often post visuals and sarcastic memes on state, national or international issues such as the images presented above[122].

These derisions normally take the form of trolling. As everyone in one's social networks do it or don't object to it and take it as a form of humour (teasing or the social joking process called *'Kalaaikarthu'* in Tamil), this again is something that is normative and conforming to an expected pattern of behaviour[123] (Udupa, 2015). While trolling politicians by caricaturing them has always been a culture in India (Khanduri, 2014), sharing such trolls on social

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[121] The caricaturing culture in India has a history. Please refer to Khanduri, R.G., 2014.
[122] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtAmdUOfuFQ&index=14&list=PLVwGSavjGgExtI65BTxuE4CuclQqjA7fU
[123] This is in reference to trolling well known political leaders within their own Facebook profiles which has a known social network. However, on public Facebook pages, they can move onto becoming abusive, as seen in the case of political issues and party ideologies involving national level politics pertaining to Hindutva and BJP. Please refer to an Udupa., S., 2015.
Further, though caste related trolling also do occur, but most of these are seen on public pages rather than on individual profiles.

media has become more democratic. For example: Trolling of a Tamil cinema star turned political leader Vijayakanth happens over both Facebook and WhatsApp. While the younger groups of users might share this on Facebook, the middle aged tends to share them on WhatsApp groups.

Image set 3.16: An example of Trolling Vijayakanth

The next section will deal with visual postings of people on social media, which can be compared, to the visual culture at home.

3.10 Section 2: Private/Home

Social Media pictures of oneself at Panchagrami can be compared to the pictures found in one's living room. Living room photographs are open to visitors, and hence very often they tend to conform to the norms of propriety and gender expectations. Similarly, pictures of oneself in social media also tend to conform to the same norms and expectations. Normally, pictures such as these are tailored to garner as many likes and positive comments as possible from ones' network.

This section will start with the simplest and the most overt presentations of the self and will then move onto illustrate how people present themselves through association with others or the contexts that they place themselves in. Hence, this section is divided into subsections/categories for ease of understanding. This section contains images from Facebook.

3.10.1 Category 1: The focus is on me!

Starting with an overt individual portrayal of oneself on social media, there are many such images that are clearly being created for the sole purpose of being posted on social media

Image set 3.17: Private – The focus is on me!

As can be discerned from the pictures above, they don't really have anything significant in the background nor show the exact location of the person or offer clues about what one does. The idea in such pictures is to simply ensure focus on the person and not the background. Most often the person in the picture knows that their photo is being clicked and they pose accordingly. As such they are quite distinct from the ideals of authenticity and informality found in some of our other fieldsites. In addition, as posing is an important aspect of such pictures, these pictures of the individual are invariably taken by someone else and aren't 'Selfies'. Almost all pictures such as these have the individual's approval before they find themselves on Facebook and very often the subjects themselves post them on social media. Such photos are not shot/clicked in studios and neither are these pictures scanned and posted on social media. They are invariably clicked in digital formats through digital cameras and sometimes on smartphones. While men belonging to all classes

tend to post such pictures, they are mostly found only amongst the women in the upper middle classes. Men and women tend to portray themselves in modest clothing conveying diginity and respect.

Though such pictures normally go on to become the display pictures or profile pictures and tend to garner likes or positive comments from their network, there are cases where one might find friendly trolling or banter such as the one below.

Image set 3.18: Private - Friendly trolling on display picture

Profile Picture   **Comment**

Ayoooooo! (meaning OMG!)

meaning: cant bear this nonsense anymore

Such trolling is only witnessed from a friend whom the respondent knows very well offline and shares a similar relationship of friendly teasing (*'Kalaaikarthu'*) offline as well. This friendly banter conforms to the expectations of a strong friendship network. This style of commenting with images alone is of note here. They normally stop with a maximum of two to three exchanges.

3.10.2 Category 2: Its about what you do!

While a simple personal image may suffice, the first obvious extension is a portrayal of a person in association with something they do, which might refer to their occupation and work but equally could represent an interest or a hobby that the person associates himself/herself with passion.

Image set 3.19: Private – It's about what you do!

Visuals of this kind are not just simple portrayals of the individual; very often these pictures form an inherent part of building the identity of who the person is. These pictures normally find themselves in the online photo albums of the individuals and are shared in WhatsApp groups as well. They aren't tagged nor do they have a photo by-line. These images are meant to drive home a point. Very often it is not the person but the kind of material object that finds itself with the person in the picture that draws attention to the identity that the person wants to create. This could be a microphone or a computer and have a symbolic meaning associated with them as can be witnessed in the images above. Similarly, the backgrounds in such images also assume immense importance.

These are very similar to the pictures that one might encounter in the living rooms of homes at Panchagrami, where pictures showcasing oneself in some

kind of identity defining spaces or with materials signifying identify are placed. For example: lawyers at Panchagrami have a picture of themselves in black robes placed in a prominent space in their living rooms.

These identity-building images draw upon both symbolic material objects as well as the background in the picture to also help define and conform to gendered roles. For example: Singing in this area is very often associated with women and tends to enhance notions of feminity. The microphone in the picture tends to do that. Similarly, the gym and a well-built body for men are symbols of virility and masculinity. They are placed as an identity builder for the person in the picture.

3.10.3 Category 3: Background showing status

The third category is one in which the image tries to enhance the status of the individual though association with objects or backgrounds. This might be because of the social setting, for example: a foreign travel, or that of material goods that demonstrate aspiration or achievement.

Image set 3.20: Private – Background showing status

These images differ from category two by declaring the social status of the person and tend to signify an aspiration or achievement. These images tend to portray the aspirations and the expectations of the society itself and conform to the social expectations such as owning a luxury car, an apartment or even foreign travels that Panchagrami as a knowledge economy places on individuals.

3.10.4 Category 4: Self in a Group (Friends)

Young people often prefer to be photographed along with their friends rather than posing alone. At the extreme end are some young unmarried college-going women belonging to the lower middle or lower socio-economic classes who don't have any individual pictures of themselves on Facebook, but have pictures with their friends. This may be simply because the pictures in question are tagged as images shared on their profile and are not uploaded by them.

Image set 3.21: Private – Self in a group (friends)

Sometimes, profiles of young unmarried women have group photos of young men known to them offline on their photo albums. The young women themselves upload them or sometimes are tagged in pictures as discussed above. However, what one wouldn't find is a young unmarried woman posting

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pictures of herself standing with a young unmarried man and even if such a picture exists it might most probably have a social setting to it or would be a picture of a close male relative of hers. Very often, one only finds group pictures of young women posing with other young women or young men posing with other young men. Whenever a picture with mixed gender exists, it is always a group picture and never that of a couple. They could take the form of both Selfies or are posed for pictures. This can change in the cases of young unmarried women from upper middle classes, where posing with young men is not necessarily seen as social non-conformance.

3.10.5 Category 5: Self in a Group (Family)

Once people are married, it is generally thought more appropriate that the public representation should no longer focus upon the individual but be orientated to their new status as part of a family. This is seen in the case of married people and especially in the cases of married women.

Image set 3.22: Private - Self in a group (family)

While pictures of children, showcasing ideal motherhood is a common recurrence in social media profiles of mothers in Panchagrami, pictures with the immediate family members also occur with high frequency. Also, while the background of the picture sometimes does achieve prominence; it is most

often the image of the family that is more important. The intimacy that exists in the family tends to be shown in the pictures that are uploaded onto social media. These pictures draw upon the institution of family; mostly nuclear (with husband and/or children) in these cases, rather than the background to show who they identify themselves with. Hence these pictures find themselves taken both inside homes and outside homes equally. These pictures show a sense of belonging and are sometimes scanned from old printed copies or those found in offline photo albums. They are intended for both showcasing familial intimacy and memorialization.

In conclusion, while these pictures express different aspects of self that the users want to portray, they are often in conformance to the social norms and expectations of the society and the social networks they belong to. Even aspirational pictures tend to be that of a collective aspiration that the society sets for itself and wouldn't showcase anything that can be considered deviant. It is a kind of a social contract that the responses to such pictures are always positive and teasing if any is gentle and showcases the strong offline bonding.

With the above five categories illustrating the representations of the self in various forms, the chapter moves onto the next type of visual postings at Panchagrami, namely everyday greetings, which is a category that is like the idea of in-betweeners, things that generally tend to fall in-between the public and the home realms. The everyday greetings most often tend to be followed by a meme, which also indirectly acts as a moral police (Miller et al, 2016). Memes are very popular at Panchagrami and are of various kinds. As exhaustively examining all kinds of memes is not possible in this chapter, the next section examines only those associated with everyday greetings, as they are posted frequently (even up to five times a day) by people belonging to all

classes. While personal photographs tend to showcase the relationships with their immediate family or friends circle to a larger network that they maintain on social media, the everyday greetings help to acknowledge this larger network on a daily basis. They also act as a way of maintaining and reaffirming the sociality that is a part of the everyday offline culture of this area.

3.11 Section 3: In-Betweeners

3.11.1 Everyday Greetings

Rajappa, a 67-year-old retired postmaster, was introduced to WhatsApp through the senior citizens' club (formed with members aged over 60 years) that functions in his residential complex. The group has around 45 members and most have at least one of their children working abroad. There are several recurring themes underlying the messages in Rajappa's WhatsApp group namely, everyday greetings with prayers, forwarded visual messages about health, exercise and diet, forwarded picture puzzles and visuals about nature. Everyday messages in this group start at around 4:30 AM with a "Good Morning" message, which is often accompanied by a meme with a prayer. By 6:00 or 6:30 AM, almost all members would have wished each other with just a "Good Morning" message or with a visual accompanying this greeting. Most prayers are generic and even if they do have a Hindu god's image, it is always that of Lord Ganesha[124] (Ganesha, n.d.). Most of these are either forwarded messages or are replications from Google Images.

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[124] Ganesha, n.d. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganesha . Lord Ganesha, is a symbolic representation in the Hindu theology for victory. So, wishing everyone with an image of Lord Ganesha here signifies a wish for good day with no obstacles.

Image 3.23: Image of Hindu Lord Ganesha on Rajappa's WhatsApp group with a 'Good Morning' greeting
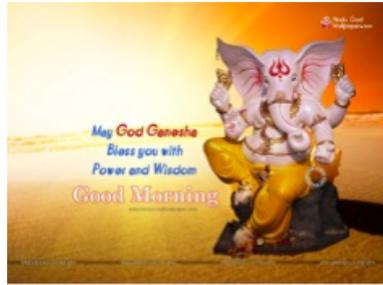
Rajappa, is quite sentimental about what he reads on his WhatsApp every morning. He feels that his day will be positive only if he reads something positive and for Rajappa (and several others in his senior citizens' network) an important aspect of sociality is greeting everyone with a smile (which for them is a positive sign to start a day) and since this group does not treat a 'Smiley' symbol on WhatsApp on par with an original smile, a prayer or a positive message is necessarily seen as a compensation for the smile.

Everyday greetings are an important form of sociality at Panchagrami. One can witness this in the "Good Mornings" heard during the daily morning exercise walks of the middle class, in the friendly "*Vanakkams[125]*" of the milk man, or the humble salutation of a student. Such greetings are seen not only as something that builds sociality but also as a positive way to start the day. This is given yet another dimension when it is further expanded to accompany inspirational quotes of famous people and is displayed on the exterior walls of schools, panchayat offices and a few other public spaces. Such greetings are also very often extended onto social media platforms where they are in the form of everyday greetings accompanying visuals that are pleasing to the eye or have inspirational messages.

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[125] Vanakkam is a Tamil greeting akin to saying Hello in English. It is a greeting, used to recognize and respect the other person. http://test-ie.cfsites.org/custom.php?pageid=363

Images that portray a motivational, philosophical or a religious message are designed in a way that they can be forwarded and shared with others. These visuals can have words embedded in them or sometimes can occur along with captions and can be categorized as memes. These memes tend to be positive and have a feel-good factor associated with them. Such messages are often accompanied by temporal greetings ('Good Morning', 'Good Evening', 'Have a nice day' etc.). Such everyday greetings are also seen as an effective way to keep in touch (through an on-going conversation) with the social network one might have built on one's social media.

These visuals can be categorized into a few major sub-genres such as motivational quotes, religious quotes etc. At Panchagrami, these wordy images normally are followed with a textual everyday salutation such as these

Image set 3.24: In-betweeners – Wordy images

Gud mrng frnds ☺☺☺

Wake up...

Gud mrg guys...

Some of these images are generally only words, aesthetically put together using different colours or creative fonts. They usually constitute a famous person's quote or are images that are randomly picked up online. However, a few people specifically download images, which have philosophical or motivational words from the Internet through Google Image search and send it along to their social media contacts.

Some people consider it as one of their primary duties to share such images to their network on Facebook or WhatsApp, every morning. They regard this gesture of sharing positive messages as a gift to the wider society to balance the amount of negativity that exists all around them. Housewives tend to practise this on WhatsApp while college students often do this both on WhatsApp and Facebook. For example: Kanna, a 21-year-old student majoring in Business Administration and from a lower socio-economic background, started this practice a couple of years ago as a final year school student to help his classmates and friends (specifically those from other lower socio economic backgrounds who were studying and working to help make their families meet economic ends). He has continued this practice religiously and has expanded to his college circle too. His classmates endorsed this and noted that they wait to see what quotes he would post every morning on his Facebook profile. This practice was also geared towards building sociality within ones intended network.

There are several others who post motivational or religious quotes (which also tend to be motivational) everyday. They usually contain a religious symbol that indicates the religion it originates from. However, these tend to follow the everyday salutations of Good Morning! Good Afternoon! or even just a generic Have a Great Day!

Image set 3.25: In-betweeners – Images with motivational/ religious quotes
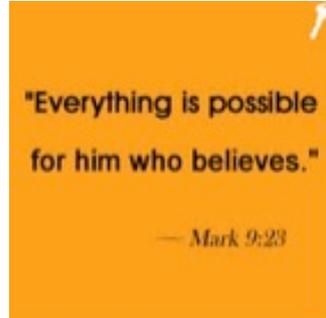
GOOD MORNING!   Have a grt…dy
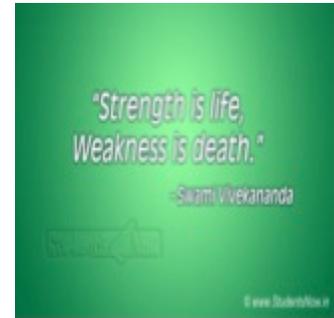
Some images such as these are simply words without a background image. But for other everyday salutations the words are complemented by an appropriate visual as well.

Image set 3.26: In-betweeners – Salutations with visuals

Hope u hd a grt day   Good Evening☺☺
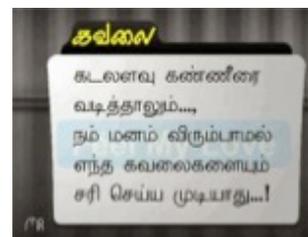
Good Evning…
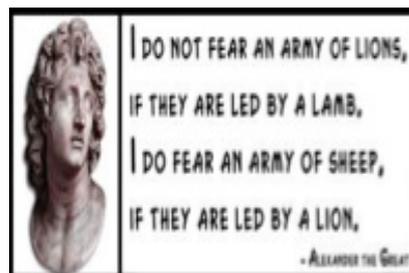
Have a good Day…   Good Evening Friends

It isn't rare to see scenic pictures used as everyday salutations. They very often occur with religious or motivational quotes and are intended to not only showcase the beauty of nature, but to also hint that the world is a much larger space and the creator who created this would also take care of the recipient or the reader of the message.

Thus, everyday salutations, in a way, are used to keep in touch with an already established group of friends. Interviewing informants revealed that once they have a set group of Facebook or WhatsApp friends, keeping in touch with everyone becomes an important part of the process. Else, the question of what to do with an accumulated capital of friends on social media arises. To circumvent this, everyday salutations become a major practice (Bourdieu, 1980) through which the feeling is that everyone in their friends list is actively being engaged in a positive and non-confrontational way. Some even remarked that people who are generally non-communicative on their networks tend to become communicative when such a practice is established with them.

However, these kinds of messages are not only seen as a practice of building sociality and maintaining touch with an accumulated group of friends. They are also used for accruing positive karma points, which have a religious

connotation. Several middle-aged informants from Panchagrami participate in activities that can be related to some form of religion on Facebook and even if they don't categorize it as a religious activity, it was always related to building good Karma (Sivananda, 2004), which again stems from a religious belief that what goes around comes around and good actions lead to good outcomes. Participation can range from posting pictures of Gods, posting religious messages as a positive message for self-development, sharing inspirational poems, stories etc. as a way of providing positive reinforcement to the society, which can then build good Karma for the giver/poster. People even follow this as an everyday routine like what Vidya Shankar does.

Vidya Shankar, a 47-year-old architect, is one such active good Karma builder on Facebook. He feels that since most of his social circle is on Facebook, he can use his social circle as a ready set of audience to build good Karma for himself. He sticks to an everyday routine of posting an image of a Hindu god (mostly that of Krishna or Ganesha) on Facebook before 6 AM.

Image 3.27: In-betweeners - Vidyashankar's image of Lord Krishna here
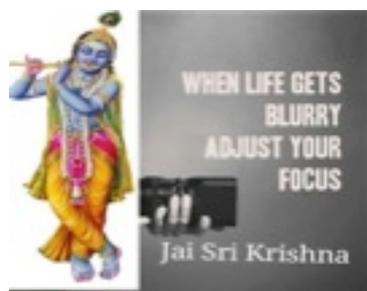
Vidya Shankar sticks to this practice, since he knows that most of his middle-aged Facebook friends follow a routine of checking Facebook the first thing every morning. So, to ensure that they wake up to an auspicious symbol every

morning, he posts an image of a Hindu god on his time line just a little before 6 AM.

During an interview with Vidya Shankar, he noted *"I know people have checked it, when I start receiving 'Likes' immediately after I post…its mostly the same set of around 40 to 45 friends of mine, but receiving immediate feedback is effective, since I know that I have built the necessary good Karma for the day and I am sure that as they 'Share' it with others, it will not only help build their Karmas, but also mine, as I help build theirs".*

Sudhasri, a 39-year-old housewife, builds her Karma points by posting positive messages every morning on a WhatsApp group, which has around 35 members. She posts a positive saying adapted from a religious book along with a Good Morning message to this group. Sudhasri believes *"My messages can help people start their day on a positive note, since even getting up in the morning is a miracle and I don't want people to waste their god given day…a positive start can help have a joyous day…I have done something good for the day then".*

Image 3.28: Sudhasri's prayer on a WhatsApp group
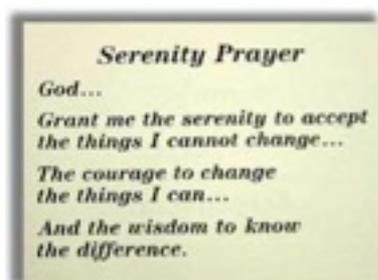
Vidya Shankar and Sudhasri aren't alone, as several informants believe that routinely participating in giving goodness to the society (their immediate social circle) can help reap good Karma.

A majority of these visuals are not produced (creatively made), but shared. These may be shared through Facebook or WhatsApp. For Sandeep, a 31-year-old, software engineer, the recipients of such images have God-given opportunities to build good Karma falling on their laps and all they must do is to share it with others. With such sharing, it was no wonder that some of these images have a social life[126] (Appadurai, A., 1988) of their own, doing the rounds and transitioning between media – email to Facebook to WhatsApp and repeating itself in cycles within these platforms.

3.12 Mixed Occurrences

The categories of visual posting described above are not exclusive. The case studies of Jyotsna and Sagayam will show how people at Panchagrami use a mix of genres to strategically craft and present an image of themselves to the different networks they communicate with to confirm to the dominant expectations of those networks.

Jyotsna is a 33-year-old housewife who lives with her husband Samuel, 39 years old, and their two children in a hi-rise residential complex in Panchagrami. She hails from a small town in South Tamil Nadu and had moved to Chennai only after her marriage to Samuel around 10 years ago. They decided to settle in Panchagrami and bought a two-bedroom apartment

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[126] Similar to Appadurai, A., 1988.

in 2011, since Samuel worked as systems architect in a major IT company at Panchagrami.

A devout Christian, Jyotsna attends prayer services at a church close to Panchagrami. To keep in touch with the regular members of the church and to plan events, a WhatsApp group was set up and very soon Jyotsna became a regular contributor to this group. In this group, her posts are only visuals with images of Jesus Christ and memes with prayers, most of which are forwards that she receives from her other contacts or are downloaded from Google images.

Image 3.29: Mixed - A picture of Jyotsna's image of Jesus Christ on her church's WhatsApp group

Her residential complex has a Facebook group for formal apartment maintenance issues and an informal WhatsApp group intending to bring in sociality between residents. In the latter group, Jyotsna's contribution is a meme with a positive message every morning. None of these messages are religious in nature. They are only positive phrases and can be classified as 'motivational'. The responses from the group members to such memes have always been encouraging.

Image 3.30: Mixed - A motivational meme from Jyotsna's residential complex WhatsApp group

Jyotsna is also member of another WhatsApp group with just four of her close friends, Priya, a 38-year-old housewife, Devi, a 37-year-old housewife and Vasanthi, a 33-year-old Tamil lecturer at a local college. Jyotsna constantly forwards humorous memes, shares family pictures or that of her children from school functions or pictures of dishes she cooked at home. Such messages elicit similar visual responses from the group members as well.

Image 3.31: Mixed - Jyotsna's 'Poondu Pulikulambu[127]' dish cooked at home shared with friends group

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[127] A tamarind gravy normally eaten with steamed rice.

Sagayam, a 21-year-old, commerce student from a local arts and sciences college, has around 110 friends on his Facebook account. The friends group is a mix between his college friends and women whom he had only met on Facebook. Sagayam's Facebook timeline just has pictures of beautiful sceneries (which he had downloaded from Google images and had posted on his Facebook wall) or that of babies. These images are often accompanied by a greeting of Good Morning or Good Evening and several of them have high response rates from his friends (especially the female friends). Responses are typically comments wishing back with a greeting of Good Morning or Good Evening along with a 'Like'. His albums have pictures of his posing for the camera, a couple of Selfies and several pictures with his friends. In contrast to the scenic and baby pictures, his personal photos were only liked by his college mates or by those with whom they were clicked.

Image 3.32: Mixed - Sagayam's scenic meme posted on his Facebook wall
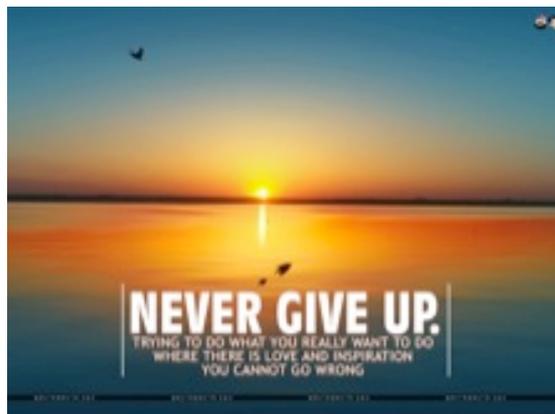
Sagayam is also a member of a Facebook group dedicated to his favourite Tamil film star "Dhanush". He regularly posts pictures with news updates of Dhanush, downloading them from Google images or from other film websites. Responses from other group members have always been that of admiration,

not only for their favourite movie star, but also for Sagayam recognizing his contributions to the group.

Image 3.33: Mixed - Sagayam's picture of his favourite film star "Dhanush"

Sagayam is also an enthusiastic WhatsApp user. With his part time job as a sales assistant at a super market in Panchagrami, he keeps in touch with his colleagues and his supervisors outside work hours through WhatsApp. Though he hasn't digitally categorized them into a WhatsApp group, he constantly forwards humorous and socially relevant memes to a select network of his work colleagues.

Image 3.34: Mixed - Sagayam's forward to his work colleagues

Jyotsna's and Sagayam's profiles revealed that over 70% of their communications to their network of contacts were visuals. But, what is more important is the underlying trend in their visual communication. The genres of visual communication changes based on the network they are communicating with. Jyotsna's communication with her church group was different from her communication with her residential group or with her close friends. Jyotsna was clear that she wouldn't want to send in pictures of Jesus Christ to her residential complex group, as it had members belonging to different religions. This was also the case with her close friends group, where two of her friends were Hindus. So, she was careful not to include religious posts in these groups. Sending positive messages to her friends group was considered fine, but sending pictures of her home-made food to her church group or her residential complex group was something she wouldn't do, as that was not the expectation in these groups. But, in her close friends group, the expectation was that members would exchange family pictures.

Similar was the case of Sagayam, who sensed that uploading scenic pictures or that of babies along with a greeting almost always triggered a universal response of liking and commenting on his profile. The messages also kept the conversation flowing and his profile active. This wouldn't have been possible if a picture of Dhanush accompanied those greetings to this specific network of friends. Similarly, pictures of sceneries on a fan page for the film actor Dhanush wouldn't have had too many favourable responses. Sagayam always thought that a humorous or a socially relevant meme forwarded to his work colleagues elicited positive responses both on WhatsApp as well as when he met them offline at work.

Both in Jyotsna as well as in Sagayam's case what is significant is that the genres of visual communication were different in different networks and were consciously crafted to cater to the dominant expectation of the network. This is all done strategically and is thought to influence the network they communicate with irrespective of the size of the network.

As discussed earlier, in Jyotsna's case, there was an overlap of home and in-betweener visuals and in the case of Sagayam; there was an overlap of public and in-betweener images. Both of their profiles are typical of how social media profiles at Panchagrami usually cluster categories of images and make them as mixed occurrences.

3.13 Conclusion

The intent of this chapter was to show that there exists continuity between the online and the offline spaces with each influencing the other in multiple ways and neither can be studied as a discrete component of people's lives. Visuals have always played a significant role in the popular culture of Tamil Nadu and these traditions have clearly had a huge impact on the way people communicate on social media (Miller et al., 2016), leading to the emphasis within this chapter upon continuity.

This chapter explored the most frequently occurring genres of visuals at Panchagrami namely the visual postings on cinema and politics, postings of self and everyday greetings. These were compared to the visual culture embedded in the public, home and the realms in-between. The appropriation

of the visual space of social media was also used to express the offline cultural ideals.

At the outset, it might seem as if we were only observing their public personas as expressed on social media and not their private selves. But at a fundamental level, in a society such as Panchagrami[128], the question of what is public and what is private for these users of social media does arise. Most visual communication online or offline, as we have seen above, is the case of transactions with their social networks, which could vary both in size and form. The idea in such communications was to conform to the expectations of the network that one was a member of. Privacy is relative. Complete privacy exists only for an individual and their thoughts. But there are key differences between communication intended just for more intimate circles of relatives and friends, and those intended for wider circles along a spectrum of scalable sociality (Miller et al., 2016). Far less self-censoring was required for the more intimate group where trust is strong. For wider circles people felt they had to conform (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) unless they used alternative strategies such as fake profiles to express dissent.

For example: If someone posts Selfies or other pictures of themselves on their profile, it is rare to find a direct criticism of such pictures as being overtly narcissistic in the comments section. Dissent in these cases is expressed by not liking it i.e. by being silent. An intimate friend might express his/her opinion through an alternate channel of communication, but once again their relationship offline matters before such comments are made.

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[128] Though Panchagrami has a diverse population, the networks within each population group are tightly meshed as seen in chapter two.

This is often seen even on postings connected to cinema or politics. They are once again in conformance with the network they maintain on their social media profiles. Even if someone posts a picture of his/her favourite movie star, their network even if they favoured a rival star, wouldn't oppose such postings. This does not necessarily mean that people in a network don't express opposing views at all; it was just that even when expressed, they are always done within a safe threshold.

Similarly, when someone posts controversial visual such as a pornographic clip, his or her relationship is just cut off by unfriending them, rather than explicitly expressing dissent. However, there were cases where pornographic clips were exchanged between intimate circles of friends on WhatsApp rather than on Facebook. Nevertheless, once again, these were just cases of conformance to the networks that one belonged to.

But, these expressions are not something that are visible online alone, they have strong correlations with prior patterns of offline traditions which encourages such conformance to avoid conflicts within their networks, all of which were seen earlier in this chapter.

Hence, regardless of public or private spheres or the size of networks, the dominant expectations of the networks influence visual communication at Panchagrami and most often people seek to be conforming to these expectations. Even the in-betweener visuals, namely the everyday greetings that tend to take the form of memes seek to conform to the normative expectations of the larger network. They help maintain online sociality, thus reaffirming the sociality that is a part of the everyday offline culture of this area and indirectly act as a moral police.

What this chapter has demonstrated is that on the one hand there is considerable continuity between traditions of visual expression in offline spaces and those of online spaces. But for online visual posting there are the additional issues of the audience this is intended for and the degree of privacy required. This then sets up some of the issues of the later chapters, since the next chapter is concerned with the relatively private domain of the family and close friendships while the later chapters deal with the wider and more public spheres such as work and education.

Chapter Four – Relationships: Kinship on Social Media

On a quiet afternoon in December 2013, Govindan, a 33-year-old, hardware goods trader invited me to discuss his Facebook profile over tea in his already crammed 200 sq. ft. office space at Panchagrami. Very soon the discussion turned to his Facebook 'Friends' (around 130 people at the time of the interview). He soon started identifying his Facebook 'Friends' either with a kinship term such as '*mama'* (uncle), *'annan'* (elder brother), *'machan'* (brother in law), sister, *'bro'* (shortened version for brother – Govindan specifically used this term for younger men), *'pangali'* (co-brother), etc. or with a respectable 'sir' or 'madam', though, the use of the latter terms was less frequent. At first glance, it looked as if a majority of Govindan's family (extended family) were online, however, very soon, it became clear that the group he was identifying with kinship terms was a mix of Govindan's actual extended family members and several of his friends, who he referred to with fictive kinship (Freed, 1963; De Neve, 2008; Nakassis, 2014) terms.

Though, he referred to at least 17 of his friends as *'machan'*, the actual *'machan'* he had was just one and this *'machan'* wasn't even on Facebook. He referred to almost nine of his friends as *'pangali'*, though in actual life he had none. Similarly, segregating his 'sisters[129]' (actual sisters vs. his cousin sisters[130] (Dumont, 1953; Trautmann, 1981) vs. his women friends) was again another exercise. However, it soon became clear that he identified only those people with whom he had professional relationships and who were of a higher

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[129] Though sister in Tamil could mean 'akka' (elder sister) or 'thangachi' (younger sister), Govindan's use of this term was generic.
[130] It was very common for people to refer to their female cousins as cousin sisters in Panchagrami. For a general idea about Kinship in Tamil Nadu, please refer Dumont, 1953; Trautmann, 1981

socio-economic class as 'sir' or 'madam', else the others were addressed as if they were related to him in some form[131].

Govindan's example is typical of several others in the area who tend to use kinship terminologies to address relationships (Trawick, M., 1990; Chithiraputhiran, 1999). Though people like Govindan clearly know the system of addressing their relationships, this system of addressal could at first seem daunting and confusing to an outsider[132].

To understand Panchagrami we need to understand the nature and form of these relationships that exist within and between the different layers of social structure. Relationships of various kinds govern Panchagrami, be it within a family, between extended families or even within caste groups. Likewise, an examination of how these relationships migrate onto social media will be central to understanding the use and consequences of social media in this region.

The basic social group in Panchagrami could be a family or a caste[133] (Gough, 1956; Mayor, 1960; Rudner, 1994; Uyl, 1995; Parry, 2013) an organization or an institution, a neighbourhood or even a residential complex. Each of these social groups brings its own form of relationships (kinship, employer-employee, peer-peer, friendships, romantic relationships etc.) some governed by hierarchy and power and others more egalitarian. If we are to understand such a complex pattern of intertwined relationships it is best to

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[131] These Facebook friends came from different socio-economic classes
[132] For example: Sometimes, even strangers are addressed as 'anna' or 'akka' – a fictive kinship term for elder brother or elder sister. This is sometimes thought to give the bonding required to talk to strangers.
[133] There are several works on Caste and Kinship in India, for a general understanding, please refer to Mayor, 1960; Uyl, 1995; Parry, 2013. For examples of Tamil specific notions of caste and kinship please refer to Gough, 1956; Rudner, 1994

follow the example given above, which shows how the dominant idiom for most relationships starts with the most basic, namely kinship.

Hence, this chapter will specifically deal with relationships that can be majorly classified as kinship, while relationships within an office space will be dealt with in chapter five and relationships in educational institutions, particularly in schools will be dealt with in chapter six. But, as we have seen from Govindan's example, friendship also needs to be included here as it is incorporated in the form of fictive kinships at Panchagrami. Therefore, the use of social media within kinship circles will be the overarching theme of this chapter.

4.1 An introduction to kinship in Panchagrami

The family system in Panchagrami, as we have seen in chapter one is typically patriarchal[134] (Dube, 1988, 1997; Kapadia, 1994) in nature and can either be classified as nuclear or extended. A typical nuclear family in Panchagrami consists of four or five members, usually the husband, wife and two/three children. However, this basic unit will differ based on several factors (Kolenda, 1967) such as the marital status of the children or a husband's close relative (a widowed sister/mother) living with the family etc. Often this nuclear family setup is merely the base for an extended family, with grandparents and uncles and aunts living together in the same house (Kolenda, 1968). This kind of setup is more visible with the long-term rural residents who retain this traditional system of South Asian kinship (Karve, 1965; Shah, 1973, 1998). Take the example of Ganesh, a 23-year-old college

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[134] For Gender and kinship in Tamil Nadu please refer to Dube, 1988, 1997; Kapadia, 1994

going resident of Panchagrami, who lives in an independent house with his parents, his widowed paternal grandaunt, his two young unmarried sisters and three brothers (all elder and married) and their families. They can be classified as an upper-middle class family consisting of 15 members, all living under one roof and cooking in one large kitchen. Another example would be Sangeetha, a 32-year-old housewife with a son and a daughter, who lives with her husband Gangadharan and her in-laws (parents-in-law) in Panchagrami. Her family lives in a modest one-bedroom house and can be classified as being from a lower-socio-economic class. But, this is not to say that nuclear families with just the husband, wife and children don't exist here. Mathew, a 30-year-old married plumber, lives in a rented house with his wife and one-year-old daughter, close to his brother's house. He moved to the present location two years ago, when he got married. Though they meet each other every day, cooking is still independent.

Hence, while the long-time residents (middle and lower-socio-economic classes) either live in a joint (Säävälä, 2014) family system or have their kin close to them, typical nuclear families with no such kin are visible in the cases of migrants in the lower socio-economic classes.

Given that on an average the IT sector professionals get a higher pay than their counterparts in other industries, the multi storey residential complex dwelling IT professionals and their families are the new middle class (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007). Though, one can classify the family system for several such residents in these apartment complexes as typically nuclear, what is also visible is that the family system[135] (Uberoi, 1993, 2005) for these

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[135] For a deeper understanding of Family systems in India please refer to Uberoi, P. ed., 1993.; Uberoi, P., 2005.

residents is slowly changing into a pattern which is not entirely nuclear but isn't completely joint either. Most middle-class families living in these apartment complexes seem to be nuclear families when viewed as a separate unit. However, a trend of siblings and parents investing on apartments in the same complex is now gaining ground. For example, if a married daughter or a son has invested in an apartment[136] in a residential complex, their parents or siblings invest in an apartment in a neighbouring block of the same complex. They tend to cook in one household if they are in adjacent apartments or exchange food as and when needed. The elderly staying with their sons is also not uncommon given the patriarchal setup. Further, with grandchildren having the highest priority in such households, and with the grandparents substituting care of the grandchildren when parents, typically IT professionals or entrepreneurs are away at work; an interesting dimension to the joint family system is being witnessed in Panchagrami. This arrangement is not entirely unprecedented in a traditional village life as sometimes people of an extended family might apparently be living in different houses but the extended family comes together to cook around a single hearth of a house.

For example, consider Shanti, a 28-year-old married IT employee, whose husband Sundaram works in the IT field too. They have a five-year-old son and live on the 12th floor of a multi storeyed apartment complex. Shanti's parents (Shanti being their only child) have moved to the same apartment complex and occupy a two-bedroom apartment on the eighth floor of the same building. This allows them to be near their daughter, take care of their grandson and at the same time not intrude into the privacy of Shanti's family.

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[136] Based on the size of an apartment complex, it can consist of several blocks and each block consists of several individual apartments, usually running from four to close to a hundred.

Similar is the case of Bhuvana, a 36-year-old IT employee, whose parents-in-law have moved to the apartment right next to hers. Cooking is done by her parents-in-law and meals are either sent to Bhuvana's house or all of them eat together in either of the houses. This is not just a one-off case, as scores of other cases in Panchagrami indicate the same pattern, where the cooking is normally done in one house (normally in the elders' house) and the families of the younger generation eat with the elders or the food is packed and sent to the other house for consumption[137]. Hence, if the kitchen hearth is what defined families, then families such as the above are interesting given that, at the outset they might look like two nuclear families living in two independent houses, but they are just one joint family living independently.

But, once again, this is not to say that nuclear families with no other kin living with them or closer to them don't exist here. In fact, they exist in large numbers owing to the influx of IT migrants and other investors in Panchagrami. Ravindran, represents the growing model of entirely nuclear families[138](Abbi, 1969). Ravindran, a 44-year-old, IT entrepreneur lives in a three-bedroom apartment with his wife and three school going daughters in a large apartment complex at Panchagrami, while his brother is in Kolkata (a city in north east India) and his sister is in Punjab (north west India) owing to her husband's career in the Indian army.

Similar is the case of Madan and his wife Poorvi, a middle-aged couple in their late forties, who both work for a family business they own. Poorvi's sister is settled in the USA and Madan's sister is in Australia. This couple live with their golden retriever in a three-bedroom apartment in Panchagrami.

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[137] There were cases, when the younger generation sometimes would opt to dine in a restaurant and might prefer going out alone instead of inviting their parents/parents in law to dine with them.
[138] For a general idea of urban families in India and the change in family structure please refer to Abbi, 1969

As seen earlier, a significant trait seen at Panchagrami is that of extended families living close to each other, either in an apartment complex or in independent houses in the villages. However, when the extended families stay in independent houses in a specific area, with enough family members acquired in the process through birth or marriage, the area has a potency to become dominated by a certain caste group formed by kin (Ramu, 1977; Stern, 1977; Ishii, 1995). For example: In one of the villages that make Panchagrami, the long term original residents of the village are all related to each other. They belong to the same caste group and trace their origin to the 12 initial settlers in this area, who belonged to one caste group. Each of these 12 settlers was called *'Thalakattu'* or the patriarchal head of the family, all of which we have also explored in the introduction. Although, oral history records this group as an endogamous group, marital agreements from other villages did happen (still maintaining caste endogamy). So, now, 120 years later, the natives of this entire village will always address each other in kin terms (Freed, 1963, Vatuk, 1969), although not all of them know how they are related to each other. Thus, use of fictive kin terms as a substitute to original relationships also abounds in this area.

At this point we can see how understanding the family set up helps us in turn understand some of the other key organisational principles. Castes and sub-castes are closely related to family, and can be seen like an extended family, partly because most marriages are endogamous. Such an endogamous system in this area first ensures marriages within one's own sub-caste group, which already comprises of families networked through kinship relationships. This is further emphasised by associating one's identity since birth within such a system. This enables one to map a network of traceable relationships, be it with respect to one's own lineage or even an extended kin twice or thrice

removed. Several such endogamous sub caste groups go onto make a caste group in this area[139].

To understand the patterns of communication and that of social media in Panchagrami, one needs to follow this cross pollination of family with class, caste, gender and age[140]. Hence, with the family as an overarching category, we will focus upon inter-generational communication (parent-child and grandparents-grandchildren), communication between couples, communication between siblings, between extended families, and that of friendships as fictive kinships.

A key component of this chapter is to understand how these different relationships map onto different social media platforms and the possibilities that arise within each. Communication within a close-knit family or within a specific social network (extended families or fictive kin) usually takes place only over channels that provide privacy and almost always Facebook is not a preferred platform in these contexts. However, WhatsApp is increasingly seen as the platform that accommodates such family based personal communication. For families, Facebook is a demonstrative platform, where there is a certain level of performance by the different family members but directed to the outside world. This happens in cases of parent-child or grandparent- grandchild relationships and specifically occurs in upper- middle class families.   This is less true in lower middle class or low-income environments due to the absence of family members of these classes on Facebook.

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[139] Most subcastes identify themselves as castes. However, in this context a caste group is seen as a bigger group of people belonging to several sub castes. See chapter one for more details on this.
[140] Gender and age are important factors that influence communication, along with class and caste in a patriarchal family, which have hierarchical structures.

4.2 Inter-generational Communication

The role of social media in understanding the filial relationships at Panchagrami and its influence in changing communication patterns provide us with a better understanding of the relationships themselves. A striking feature within a family at Panchagrami is the significant role played by a mobile phone. Though, we have dealt with the importance of mobile phones in Panchagrami in chapter two, a brief overview of it within the context of a family is provided before examining the role of social media in the inter-generational communication framework.

A mobile phone[141](Doron and Jeffrey, 2013) is the major networking tool for intra- family communication. It has surpassed and in some cases replaced the landline phone. Though, mobile phones offer voice and text communications, the elderly members of most families at Panchagrami have retained their perception of phones as basically a voice only medium. Further, even amidst a host of other communicative media including the Internet and a plethora of social networking sites, communication within a family mostly happened through voice. Parents, very specifically mothers, almost always seem to prefer hearing the voice of their children rather than receiving a text from them. The members of a family communicated with each other by calling and not by texting. Generally, the kind of parental insistence on the mode of communication that their children had to adopt while communicating with them demonstrates how age acts as a principle of hierarchy in determining the media to use. Education and literacy skills also impacted the choice of one media over another in the case of lower-socioeconomic classes. This pattern

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[141] For a greater understanding of the role of mobile phones in India please refer to Doron, A. and Jeffrey, R. 2013.

of trying to keep family communication entirely within the realm of voice was irrespective of the socio-economic status that the family belonged to.

At Panchagrami, a typical nuclear family from a lower socio-economic background normally has access to at least three mobile phones – a phone for each of the parent and the son, while the daughter was not allowed access to a mobile phone.

The mobile phone owned by the mother will mostly be treated as a landline (as though collectively owned by the entire family) and becomes a shared object. The mother is normally a homemaker [142](though in certain cases she might end up helping her husband with agriculture a few months of the year). The daughter is not normally given a mobile phone until she starts attending college or is employed or in some cases until she gets married[143] (Lewis, 2016). There were several instances at Panchagrami where marriage or employment created the appropriate status for the daughter to own a mobile phone. Young men in such families have no such restrictions placed on them. In a typical family, communication normally takes place between the father, mother and the son over a mobile phone and the daughter normally tends to use the mobile phone owned by the mother to communicate with the rest of the family as was visible in the case of Ravi's family which was discussed in chapter two. Mobile phones thus become shared devices among the women in the family. While a daughter might have restrictions on phone use, even in her early twenties, a son might get to own a phone when he is around 15-years-old. Age disparity within gender when it comes to owning

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[142] In a few cases, the mother might work as a construction worker/house-maid or in a factory/shops nearby.
[143] Trends of unmarried young women not being given access to mobile phones also exist in north Indian villages as can be seen from this article Lewis. 2016

communication devices does affect the social media use in the lower middle classes and the lower socio-economic classes in Panchagrami.

The illustration below indicates the general trend in the use of mobile phones in typical lower socio-economic class nuclear families in Panchagrami. In the kinship diagram below, the blue triangles indicate men and the pink circles indicate women. An equal to symbol indicates marriage and the vertical/horizontal lines indicate the offspring.

Image 4.1: Kinship diagram on phone usage in lower socio-economic classes
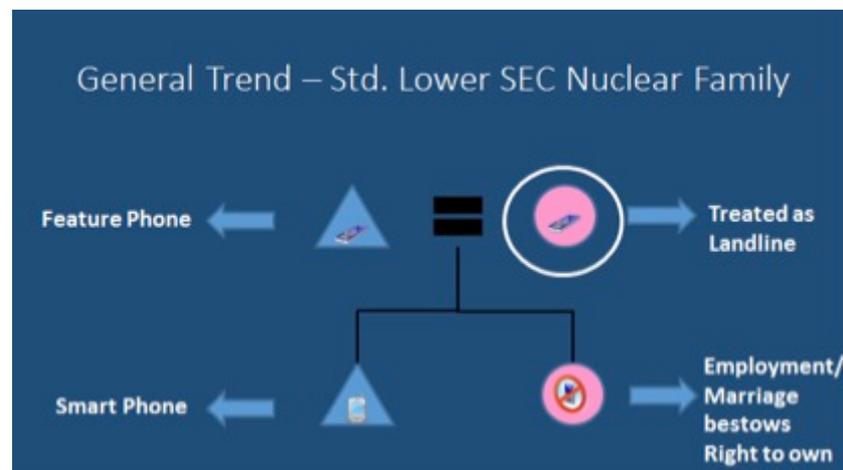
Once again, in chapter two, the case of Ravi's mother indicated this pattern of continuity between the mobile phone and landlines as voice only media. Also, such biases based on gender (unmarried young women not being allowed a mobile phone), is sometimes visible even in middle class families (more so in the lower middle class) that live in the villages, where caste based tradition binds the families in making such decisions.

Hence, while there exists a gender bias in the use of mobile phones in the lower socio-economic class and lower middle class families, such biases

based on gender is not normally visible in the upper middle class families that tend to live in large apartment complexes.

At Panchagrami, filial relationships come with a stress on emotional bonding. The constant need to ensure the wellbeing of their children becomes a priority and specifically if it is a daughter, precaution takes precedence over all others factors as seen in the case of Shobana's parents described in chapter two. Though, Shobana's case is that of a middle-class family in the village, the same applies to upper-class families which have school going children.

For example: Sukrithi is a 14-year-old studying in the ninth grade at an affluent international school in Panchagrami. Her after school programs include swimming, singing, karate and tennis other than her tuitions. Given that both her parents work, she is driven in a Honda city sedan to her various after school programs by her driver and is also accompanied by a lady caretaker throughout the evening. To make sure that her status is always updated to her parents, she was gifted with a Samsung smart phone after she promised to inform them of her whereabouts. Last year, it was her caretaker who was given a Nokia feature phone to keep Sukrithi's parents informed of her schedule. Sukrithi, was embarrassed being followed by a caretaker and had demanded that she would attend to her schedule alone. To keep her tracked, her parents had gifted her a smart phone, but only on the condition that this does not have an internet connection (3G or 4G). The smart phone was mainly intended to be used to call her parents and in case they don't pick up, then she had to text them letting them know where she was after school. This emotional bonding on hearing the voice of their children to ensure their wellbeing isn't gender specific and happens with young boys too. Rahul's case would be a typical example

Rahul, a 15-year-old is also a ninth-grade student studying in another affluent international school located very close to Panchagrami. He stays in a multi storeyed apartment complex located in the field site. Both his parents work for IT companies and are normally back home only at around 7 pm or sometimes even later. So, he stays with his maternal grandparents who have bought themselves a home in the same apartment complex. Once he gets home after school at around 4 PM, he normally stays with his grandparents until his parents arrive from work. The ritual that is stressed is the need to call one of his parents' letting them know that he has arrived at his grandparents' house. They call him on his mobile phone (a Samsung smart phone) at around 7 PM to let him know when they are home. They also ensure to call his grandparents to let them know of their arrival.

Though, all the above refer to parent-child communication that includes an unmarried child, at this point it seems suitable to re-introduce Mr. Raghavan, who was spoken of in chapter two as well. He is a diligent planner when it comes to communicating with his sons. In his case neither marital status nor the distance matters. Here even married sons who live in different cities retain traditional voice communication with him.

Raghavan, who is a 65 years old upper middle class Brahmin (Heesterman, 1964; Pandian, 2007; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2010), retired as the Head of Training and Development of a major pharmaceutical company. He invested in a posh two-bedroom apartment at Panchagrami immediately after his retirement and lives here along with his wife, who has trained herself as a Montessori school teacher and is also a specialist in a traditional Indian art form called the Tanjore painting (Tanjore painting, n.d.). One of his sons lives in Bangalore and works for an IT company, while the other lives in

Connecticut, USA. Raghavan and his wife own iPads and Samsung tablets along with a Blackberry (for Mr. Raghavan) and a Samsung smart phone (for Mrs. Raghavan). Other than these they also own two landline phones. Further, they have a post-paid connection with Airtel (Airtel, n.d.) India's biggest privately owned telecom service), through which they have a CUG (Closed User Group), where calls within this group are free. They have their son and (DIL) daughter in law (who live in Bangalore) within this group. They normally chat with their son and DIL over phone during the weekdays and catch up with them over Skype from their tablets over the weekend, so they have a chance to see their granddaughters too. Other than this Mr. Raghavan also owns a VOIP[144] telecom service called Magic Jack, where calls to the US are free of cost with the subscriber being assigned a US number in India. Once in a month the entire family (US/Bangalore and Chennai) try to get together for at least an hour, so that Mr and Mrs Raghavan can see all their grandkids and the grandkids can also see each other. However, before getting on Skype over the weekends, Mr. Raghavan follows a mini ritual:

Step1:   Call[145] both his sons asking them if they are free on a weekend

Step2: Call them individually just before the call to confirm

Step 3: Call them over phone once again, if at all they have not turned up within a certain time.

 Step 4: If financial matters are discussed over Skype, then send a follow-up note on the discussion.

His wife says that he tends to formalize discussions and loves setting up these kinds of calls. Mr. Raghavan noted that he was disappointed to see his

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[144] Voice Over Internet Protocol
[145] Very rarely he sends an email to confirm their availability.

grandkids using mobile phones at the age of nine and 10. So, whenever he calls his grandkids, he reaches them only on their home phone and not on their mobile phones. His wife added that the grandchildren now understand their grandfather's preferences that when they must talk to him, it is to call him over landline or over Skype. Further, he uses his age and relationship as principles of hierarchy and power to determine channels of communication with his granddaughters. Mr. Raghavan also considers whether his DIL's parents are in Bangalore (staying at his son's place) before setting up Skype calls. If they are present, Mr. Raghavan calls his grandkids only over phone and talks to them and ends his conversation early. He does not send or receive text messages with his family. His attitude towards media use with his immediate family can be best summarised in his own words "if one is alive, why not hear their voice than see them mute". Though, this might seem as a case of media multiplexity (Haythornthwaithe, 2002; Rainie and Wellman, 2012) where the strong bond that Mr. Raghavan shares with his grandchildren triggers communication with them over Skype and landline, what needs to be noted is that all his communication channels have voice as the overarching theme. So, though the theory prescribes that strong bonds use more media to communicate, what is of note here is that this is not straightforward and is influenced by the cultural context as in the case of Mr. Raghavan.

The above case in a way leads us to another aspect of intergenerational communication, that which occurs between grandparents and grandchildren. Working as professionals in the IT sector may lead to an ever-increasing demand for travel to onsite projects (Xiang, 2007) (including foreign assignments) for long periods of time based on the project or sometimes the foreign client they work for. There are several cases, where IT employees invest on a house, live there for a couple of years, but then are immediately

asked to relocate to the USA or UK or another country for a project. If they move abroad to the project sites with their families (wife and children), it is normally the parents of the husband who tend to occupy this house, until they return, instead of keeping it locked[146].

Similarly, several elderly couple invest on a house here, typically after the man of the house retires. They live in a gated community and tend to socialize with other such couples. They usually stay in India for a period of six months and move to their son/daughter's house in the USA or UK for a period of six months or so (as in the case of Mr. Raghavan whose son lives in the USA). In such cases, though communication between the married son/daughter living abroad happens with the elderly living in Panchagrami, the urge to communicate with their grandchildren is always high. Though pictures of their grandchildren are often seen on Facebook or sent to the grandparents on WhatsApp, a bi-monthly Skype call or a Google Hangout becomes a ritual. Similarly, in several cases, though the weekly general communication between the elderly parents in India and the son/daughter abroad happens over phone, when it comes to communicating with the grandchildren, a visual with voice (typically Skype/Google Hangout) always takes precedence. If it is not possible to make a visual connection, then they are satisfied with at least listening to their grandchildren's voice. This pattern is typically seen in families with grand children under the age of 10 years.

For example: Varun and Varenya, 10-year-old twin grandkids of Mrs. Sarada and Mr. Namashivayam have a weekly Skype call with their grandparents. Sarada was given an i-pad on her last trip to the US during Christmas. It was `gifted' by her grandkids (though the parents paid for it). She claims to have

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[146] Though, there are cases where it is rented out to other professionals on students. Advertisements for such rentals also appear in the intra-company forums as well.

been taught by her grand kids on how to use FaceTime and Skype. Now every week, they get on either of these platforms for a conversation, though the conversations could be very brief. Sarada noted that there were times when it so happened that she would have multiple conversations with her grandkids in comparison to her conversations with her daughter. She is also on WhatsApp, with a group named after her grandkids, where her unmarried son, her daughter, her son-in law and her daughter's in laws (parents/sisters etc.) are also members. They constantly exchange messages and pictures over this group.

Both in Mr. Raghavan's case as well as that of Mrs. Sarada, though voice is the most significant factor, use of multiple media for communication is also evident. However, the only difference is the higher frequency of visual accompaniment (through either Skype/Facetime) in Sarada's case. Both the above examples illustrate aspects of media multiplexity and Polymedia (Haythorthwaithe, 2002; Madianou and Miller, 2013).

Similar is the case of Mrs. Geetha Thiagarajan, who sends messages to her daughter on how to care of her daughter's new-born baby over WhatsApp. Earlier, her conversations with her daughter were over Skype, where they mostly discussed family gossips and Indian recipes that her newly married daughter could try in the USA. Mr. Thiagarajan, jokes that his wife has spent more time on Skype chatting with their daughter since her marriage and subsequent move to the USA than she did face to face with him (Miller and Sinanan, 2014). With the birth of their first grandchild, most conversations now centre on providing tips for childcare. When their daughter's in-laws were in the USA, the conversations moved to telephone and to WhatsApp, to respect their daughter's time with her in-laws as it was an inappropriate behaviour to

hold her daughter back on Skype for too long when her in-laws were present. Of course, pregnancy was also a part of the issue on why long Skype calls weren't possible. Though, their daughter is on Facebook, Geetha as well as her daughter's in-laws had advised the daughter not to upload pictures of the child on Facebook for now, as it might lead to an evil eye[147]. So, pictures are exchanged over emails or WhatsApp. Even the lone picture that her son-in-law had uploaded onto Facebook, immediately after the child was born letting everyone know the good news, was deleted after advice from Geetha.

Several grandparents believe that uploading pictures of their new-born grandchild on Facebook is something that will lead to this phenomenon of evil eye. However, they were fine if a picture of a new-born appeared after a couple of months on Facebook. Facebook 'Likes' on the pictures clicked immediately of new-born are an indication of evil eye too. They agree that thinking so might seem superstitious to the outsiders, but also opine that in their experience evil eye is certain and social media such as Facebook could be a medium to cause this. This can be summarized best in the words of Mrs. Kalyani, a 68-year-old who recently had a new born grandson in the US *"the people who you know are the ones on Facebook as well, so you very well know who is of what nature, so why give them a chance to harm you* (by casting an evil eye)*?"*

However, clicking the picture of a new born is not frowned upon and neither is the action of passing these pictures on WhatsApp to the nearest and the dearest kin/relatives (specifically, to the grandparents if they are not present during the delivery of their grandchild) who matter most and who would also be annoyed if they were not informed or shown the picture of the new born.

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[147] Evil eye in India is the belief that people's presumed envy at seeing one's happiness/wellbeing/prosperity can lead to the occurrence of misfortunes in the family.

So, in conforming to this family networks expectations, the pictures are passed along, but only over WhatsApp. Here again, Facebook is a public platform (or a platform that caters to a larger network) and WhatsApp as a more private platform (a network of strong ties). The middle class/upper middle class elderly specifically split and categorize media as private and public and hence decide which aspect needs to appear where and their word on platform use is held rigid when it comes to deciding communication of intimate inter-generational family issues.

Another issue that the elderly express about new media communication is how important life events of extended family members are communicated to them. Several elderly like Mr. Raghavan and Mr. Karan (as seen in chapter two), ascertain that social media doesn't understand age or hierarchy, while voice and personal calls do.

For the elderly, communication within a close-knit family should necessarily take place over voice rather than texts when it comes to detailed or important communication with parents or grandparents. Little or no communication is routed through a social networking site and they play no role in fostering a communicative channel between children and parents or grandparents who live with each other. They (social networking sites) take on a role only when it comes to communicating with immediate family members who have migrated to other locations within India or abroad for education or work. Spatial distance as a variable, determines the use and interplay of visuals in communication as well. Skype or Google Hangout only comes into play when the distance between the communicating parties is high.

While media is clearly categorized for intra family communication, we will now move onto examining how families employ social media (especially Facebook) to play a significant yet strategic role in fostering public[148] communication. Though Facebook isn't a preferred platform when it comes to communication between close-knit family members, it becomes a much-preferred channel to perform and showcase the intimacy within their family to their intended social circles. In short the exhibition of love and intimacy goes over two cycles, one in the private sphere within a limited strong tie network and the other in the public sphere (specifically on Facebook) for the larger network to see.

For example: Mrs. Mythili Vijayan and Mr. Vijayan are grandparents of a 7-year-old granddaughter who lives next door (this is a typical case of the extended families living next door as discussed earlier in this chapter). Mythili's son Shankar posted a picture of his daughter after her first day in a western music class on Facebook. The picture before being posted on Facebook, had been making rounds within the immediate family circle on WhatsApp for a couple of weeks and each of them had expressed how cute the little one was and this admiration had quietened down after the first couple of days. However, when the picture was posted on Facebook, both the grandparents commented on how their *'little angel'* looked, followed by their daughter-in-law's comment. This was then followed by several other comments from Shankar's sister living abroad, who had seen the picture a week earlier on WhatsApp when it was sent to her and she had even responded with her comments on it.

Similarly, Mrs. Uma Prakash, a 35- year-old, homemaker, uploads pictures of her eight-year-old son, Vidyut playing, going to school, doing homework etc.

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[148] The public here, refers to the social circles that one gathers on Facebook as Friends

Each of these pictures receives responses as comments from her in-laws (sister in law, parents in law etc.) and her parents who live right next to them and see Vidyut every day.

In the case of Krishnan, a 67-year-old retired government telecom officer, the weekly Skype calls that he and his wife have with their son and his family (settled in the USA) is the time when news is shared. Conversations do go around their grandkids, Varsha and Shyla who study in grades five and four respectively. Their daughter-in-law (Sumi) uploads pictures of Varsha and Shyla on Facebook and each time Krishnans' and Sumi's parents would comment on them, though these pictures would have already been shared with them and appreciative comments would have been shared in private.

In societies, such as Panchagrami, there are several normative discourses related to the ideals of a good and model family. The essentiality of normative ideals of a family needs to be demonstrated rather than just being subsumed within the family itself. As in the offline world, where families perform for the outside world to show their closeness and how ideal their family is, Facebook has emerged as an online mass medium where families overtly display their affection, love and bonding for the world or in other words their larger network to see. This is also a typical case of scalable sociality where the families strategically engage in choosing both the size and the nature of the group before posting anything related to their families.

While both the older and the younger generation participate in this performance, it is the elderly who do this overtly. This is not seen in the lower socio economic classes or the lower middle classes that live in the villages, as the parents/grand parents' use of technology/social networking sites are severely limited. However, they do view and express admiration of photos that

their children might show them on their mobile phones. They would see it as photos shown on a mobile phone and do not see it as emerging from Facebook or WhatsApp or any other platform for that matter. The hardware instrument (i.e. the mobile phone or the computer) is what is perceptible to them.

In conclusion, the inter-generational communication over media (phone or social media) is multi-layered and strongly influenced by the structures of power which spring from a cultural context that places high levels of importance on hierarchy which is again driven by principles of respect for age. This does not necessarily mean that such controls over determination of media usage are devoid of care, protection and concern for the close family kin. Though issues of visibility, normative ideals, conformance to the expectations of a network and even skills influence the choice of a medium of communication over another, there is a convincing display of Polymedia in these intergenerational communications at Panchagrami.

4.3 Married Couples and Polymedia

Unlike intergenerational communication, married couples were much more open to communication over text messages. There was a balance between text and voice communication. However, their channels of communication were always private and never exposed to the outside world. Couples living together rarely used Facebook to communicate with each other. It was always voice calls, text messages or WhatsApp, which they preferred over other kinds of social media. The media that they selected to communicate have in common, features such as privacy, security and intimacy. The examples

discussed below most often are the middle classes (except for Lakshmi and Karuppiah) rather than lower socio-economic classes, as communication between couples in the lower socio-economic classes normally take place over voice or over text (if both are educated), else it is always over voice. Education and cost of access to certain technologies do play a significant role in determining communication channels in the lower socio-economic classes.

Chandralekha and Ranga

Chandralekha (Chandra) and Ranga, work for the same ITES[149] company and had an arranged marriage (fixed by their respective families). Ranga got himself transferred to the same branch as Chandra, once they were married. As their company, doesn't allow them to work for the same team, Ranga and Chandra work for two different teams on different floors. However, they meet for lunch every day and schedule their lunchtime accordingly. As they are cognizant that their schedules in the company aren't always fixed, they send messages to each other asking if the other is free for lunch. However, they don't use their phones or even WhatsApp or Facebook to communicate this. Such communication takes place through an organization wide instant messenger, where one can send personal messages to another employee to ask for something, without calling the other person over phone. Ranga and Chandra make use of this to communicate with each other, as this also doesn't give an impression to their respective bosses (Chandra's boss specifically) that they are talking personal matters during office hours. This for them is an easy and discreet process of communication without attracting anyone's attention. They do this not only to schedule lunch, but also, to fix the right time to wind up work for the day or to sometimes even discuss certain other domestic issues.

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[149] IT Enabled Services (IT Support services)

Aarthi and Akilan

Akilan (31 years) and Aarthi (30 years) are a young couple with a five-year-old child and live in Panchagrami. They had an inter caste marriage, much against the will of their parents close to around 8 years ago and since then have an estranged relationship with their parents. Though, time is said to be a great healer, it didn't seem so in their case. They live as a nuclear family, with only Aarthi's mother[150] and sister visiting her when time permits. Though, both work for IT companies, they are not on Facebook, as they think that their relatives are also not too favourable in their views with respect to their marriage. Since membership on Facebook might connect them with these relatives who might ask embarrassing questions, they kept out of Facebook. However, they are members of technical (computer and work related) social networking sites – such as LinkedIn and other forums and groups. They both own Samsung smart phones and have post-paid connection (Vodafone) with a CUG (Closed User Group - only having the two of them as a group). Both tend to communicate with one another over text messages while at work before calling each other. For example: a typical communication they had on Nov 22nd 2013 a Friday was something like this

Aarthi: Sappitacha? (Meaning: Finished Lunch?)

Akilan: hmm n U? (Meaning: Yes, and did you finish your lunch?)

Aarthi: nt yt cll pannalama (meaning: not yet, can I call you now?)

Akilan: Innum 10 mns pannatumma (meaning: can I call you in another 10 mins)

Aarthi: K (meaning: OK)

Akilan: anythng urg (meaning: anything urgent)

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[150] Her mother visits her without the knowledge of her father, who still hasn't accepted his daughter's marriage

Aarthi: Illa thayir konjam pulikuthu (meaning: no, the curd seemed a bit sour) -
- (curd rice for lunch is common in India)

Akilan: hmm theriyum kandukalla avasarama sapttaen (meaning: yes, I knew, had the food in urgency so didn't bother)

Akilan: Seri 10mns la call pannuraen (meaning: Ok will call you in 10 mins)

Aarthi: K

As both work for IT companies, both very clearly know that they just can't call each other, as one of them might be busy, so both message each other before calling. Their messaging has now migrated to WhatsApp.

Deepa and Vasu

Similar is the case of Vasu (37 years) and Deepa (35 years), who also had an inter caste marriage. Vasu, whom we had earlier met in chapter two, owns a business and Deepa is a homemaker. They had the same issue like that of Akilan and Aarthi. Both of their families were against them getting married. However, they have now been married for 10 years and have two primary school going children. Both are on Facebook as well as on WhatsApp. Both have Samsung smart phones, while Vasu also uses an i-phone (which he purchased while on a business trip to Dubai). However, when it comes to everyday communication, both prefer to call each other or send quick messages on WhatsApp rather than over Facebook. Deepa calls Vasu only between 1 PM and 1:30 PM, when he is normally at lunch (as he is in the beginning stages of having a stomach ulcer, he is about the time of his food). So, she knows that she can reach him over phone between 1 PM and 1:30 PM in the afternoon, else she texts him and normally waits for him to call while she doesn't call. Their conversations usually centre on daily chores. An example of a conversation that took place through WhatsApp messages between Deepa and Vasu read as follows

Deepa: Varumbodhu Milk vanganum (meaning: Please buy milk when coming home)

Vasu: Seri (meaning: OK)

Another example of their WhatsApp conversation is as below

Deepa: Madhiyam sonnatha marakathinga (Meaning: Don't forget what I told you this afternoon)

Vasu: Marakala (meaning: haven't forgotten)

Sri Lakshmi and Karuppiah

Karuppiah, aged 25 years is a driver with a cab company, which runs special services for the IT companies in the area. Though, a school dropout, he communicates decently in English, a skill he says he learnt to make sure that he could communicate with his customers (foreigners and Indians of another lingua alike). His wife Sri Lakshmi is a call centre employee and a degree holder. Karuppiah and Sri Lakshmi each have a Samsung smart phone and are avid users of WhatsApp. Karuppiah has this hobby of taking pictures of himself at various locales that he visits during the day and sending it to Sri Lakshmi and to a few other friends of his. He maintains separate channels (a private one on one communication with Lakshmi and a group chat for his friends) to communicate with each of them on WhatsApp. His WhatsApp picture listing has him standing before IT companies, five star hotels, university buildings etc. Sri Lakshmi for her part, only comments on these pictures through voice messages if free during work or through smiley faces or thumbs up symbols if busy.

If Sri Lakshmi wants Karuppiah to run a chore, she normally calls him. However, if Karuppiah doesn't take her call, she understands that he might be busy driving and leaves him a voice message on WhatsApp, either asking him

to call back or run a chore. Sending text messages doesn't happen in their case, it's either visual messages or voice messages.

Indra and Arvind

Indra, 43 years old is a housewife and mother of two kids. Her husband Arvind, aged 45 years, is an entrepreneur, who runs a huge showroom for cycles. Though, Indra looks after most of the chores related to their domestic sphere, Arvind chips in at times, specifically when on his way home from work. In case he finds hawkers next to his workplace selling fresh fruits or vegetables, he clicks a picture of it and sends it to Indra on WhatsApp, for her approval before purchase. The same is true when Indra asks him to shop for a spice during her extensive cooking phases over weekends. Here again, if Arvind forgets or gets confused with the spice, he clicks a picture of it and sends it to Indra over WhatsApp for her approval before he buys it. Similarly, Indra for her part would do the same when buying gifts for their common friends (for their birthdays and anniversaries) and send it to Arvind to see if he likes them and approves the cost. However, when it comes to communication other than sending pictures for approval, it happens over phone and over voice, rather than through any other media.

Vasudha and Mahesh

Vasudha, aged 58 years is currently in the US[151] to help her daughter with the delivery of her second child and Mahesh, aged 62 years, owing to his professorial job in a Management Institute had to stay back in India. However, Vasudha and Mahesh would communicate over phone every day and over

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[151] At the time of fieldwork

Skype once in every two or three days. If the phone rang at 7 AM or at 9 PM Indian time, Mahesh knew it was Vasudha calling. Vasudha used a VOIP based phone in the US to call India. Similarly, as Vasudha didn't have a smart phone in the US, she used her i-Pad to send emails to Mahesh to let him know of a time to Skype. They hadn't fixed any schedule like what they had done with phone calls. However, as time went on, Skype schedules fell in place, it was mostly on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, when Mahesh was also relatively free with his course load. Vasudha's i-Pad helped her Skype with Mahesh. Other than a few private conversations, most of their conversations revolved around how to cook a dish and Vasudha always made it a point to check with Mahesh if he ate well and the dishes he had cooked.

Radhika and Santhanam

Radhika, aged 33 years and Santhanam, aged 36 years are a couple as well as equal business partners in an entrepreneurship venture. They run a fashion garment showroom as well as a hair salon. Their model of management isn't categorized, i.e. both look after both their businesses. While Santhanam looks after Finance, Logistics and Operations, Radhika is more into Marketing, Sales and HR. However, such segregation of work isn't strict and both end up taking care of everything. Both have an individual Facebook page, but it is used to communicate more with their friends rather than between themselves. Most of their communication happened both over voice as well as normal text messages and Radhika claims that it was a mess, as personal texts got mixed with work related ones. However, with WhatsApp, they now have a work group set up. Personal texts are sent to each other over WhatsApp and professional texts are sent to each other over a group name, which goes with their company name, thus avoiding confusions of any kind.

As witnessed in the case studies, communication between couples tend to show a pattern of intimacy, care and concern even in conversations, that might just seem mundane to the outside world. Another subtle pattern that emerges is the negotiations with channels of communication, where they are chosen based on what suits and is convenient for both the parties concerned. While in the inter-generational communications, there was a pattern of control, in the case of couples, there seems to be a kind of agreed upon rationality, that precedes the choice of media. The choice of platforms to be used is also determined by understanding the time and space of their partner rather than just theirs at the time of initiating a conversation as seen from the above cases. But, there also emerges a subtle pattern where such cognizance during communication is displayed more by women than men. Though, as specified earlier, platforms offering intimate and secured channels are generally preferred over others, this does not preclude them from demonstrating their intimacy to a larger network of people or the public as can be witnessed in the following cases about one platform i.e. Facebook.

4.4 Facebook as a performative platform for couples

Facebook acts as a performative platform that allows couples to demonstrate their intimacy to the wider network just like in the filial relationships. The following cases would reflect that even in cases of couples living with each other, the performance of their love and adoration for each other was

displayed on Facebook; but it was meant as a performance for the world to see rather than it being a communication between them.

Like the normative discourses of an ideal family, discourses pertaining to an ideal couple or in fact an ideal marriage are taken seriously. Further, there occurs a performance for the world to see such ideal aspects rather than them being subsumed at a family level alone[152] (Goffman, 1978; Turner, 1982; Turner and Schnechner, 1988). As seen in the case of filial relationships, Facebook becomes the platform where such performances have an impact. The following three case studies illustrate such performances.

Saranya and Srijith

Saranya, 24 years and Sreejith, 25 years, fell in love with each other when they worked together in a financial firm. With their respective parents' approval, they married within a year of knowing each other. Saranya who was active on Facebook kept uploading pictures of hers with Srijith right from their courtship period. Immediately after her wedding, her profile on Facebook was filled with pictures of their wedding. After a couple of months, it changed to pictures of them going out together. However, until this stage, Srijith had never commented on her profile nor was he very active on Facebook. Srijith, a couple of months after their marriage, started posting messages on Facebook on how much he misses her while he was at work, which was located just one floor below Saranya's work place. Similarly, both posted messages on Facebook, which said how much they enjoyed their dinner at a restaurant the previous day, their drive back home in the car etc.

Chaya and Varun

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[152] This can be related to the ideas of cultural performance and social performance as seen in Goffman, 1978; Turner, 1982; Turner and Schnechner, 1988

Like the case of Saranya and Srijith, is the case of Chaya and Varun (both in their mid-twenties). Other than the pictures of the holidays they had taken together, notes on how they had enjoyed a place together, ate an ice cream together etc. would go on their profiles. Though, they said they intended for such posts to be memories, such updates were always followed with a conversation between them on Facebook, rather than it being viewed as a space for other people to comment on.

Sandhya and Gopal

Sandhya, 23 years old, notes that her husband Gopal, a 26-year-old, was always a romantic and wished to express his love to her publicly. Sandhya noted that she was embarrassed earlier, but got used to it in the process of living with Gopal. Sandhya, being a HR executive travels around the country to recruit human resources for the IT company she works for. Gopal, a software programmer by profession doesn't travel much and stays back home when Sandhya travels. Each time, she travels, Gopal made it a point to put a romantic Tamil (Kollywood[153])/Hindi (Bollywood[154]) song from YouTube on his profile indicating that he was missing his wife Sandhya. These posts embarrassed her, but she also noted, that she looks at it positively (that her husband loved her so much) and has reconciled to such posts.

Though, in the previous section, we had seen day to day intimate conversations between couples, this section dealt with how an enhanced selection of these conversations are showcased to a larger network. At first glance, it just might seem as a demonstration of intimacy to the outside world, but as Chaya notes, such posts are memories of their time together. So, these posts could also be seen not just as a communication to the outside world, but

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[153] Tamil film industry
[154] Hindi film industry

also as a communication between each other and a strategic build-up of memories, which they can then refer to in the future[155] (Clifford, 1973). Though, such posts could be initiated by one of the parties involved, it very soon gets the approval and participation of the partner, even if they are embarrassed to start with. But, this does not necessarily mean that all couples that posted thus went through the same cycle. There were cases, where one of the partners restricted such posts and kept their intimate moments either to themselves or to a select strong tie network.

4.5 Communication between Siblings

Communication between siblings belonged to a different genre compared to communication between couples or inter-generational communication. Communication between siblings living with each other in Panchagrami was primarily face to face or over phone. It migrated to Facebook and WhatsApp, when one of them married and moved away and specifically happened if one of them or if both were women. Siblings supporting each other or each other's children on Facebook were a common sight, especially if one of them was a woman, i.e. Facebook and WhatsApp as communicative platforms between siblings happened more often in the cases of sisters or a sister-brother relationship than between brothers.

There was a clear trend that if the age gap between brothers were four years or more, they had separate sets of friends and though each of them were on Facebook, they never friended each other, though they privately

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[155] Their public display on Facebook for others to see is in a way for them to see as well. This in a way is related to the acts of public display seen in the cock fights at Bali where, it is seen as a process of telling a story about themselves to themselves and thus leads in creation of an identity, in this case that of an idealistic intimate couple. Please refer to Clifford, G., 1973.

communicated over WhatsApp. This was especially clear in the cases of young unmarried brothers. However, things changed in cases of brothers who were married and had children. If they were still on Facebook, they friended each other. This was specifically the case with lower middle classes. However, with upper middle classes, the entire family (the wives of the brothers) would also be friends with each other on Facebook. Usually, there wasn't a WhatsApp group established by the brothers belonging to a lower middle class family, as their wives weren't on it. However, in an upper middle class family, a family WhatsApp group between the families of the brothers were a common theme and more often the wife of a brother established it, with support from her in-laws.

However, when it comes to brother-sister relationships, things were very different. Though, these men generally perceived Facebook as a tool that can be dangerous for women in their families, they differed in their stance when it came to women outside their immediate or extended families. The visibility that the women from their families might have on social media is generally not accepted as a virtue of womanhood and is not being a normative ideal for a good Tamil woman or even an Indian woman[156] (Pandian, 2015). The discourses on ideal womanhood in the context of Indian culture and how men always strive to ensure this for women in their families are not rare. These sentiments are often a reflection of the influence of traditional social norms and the principles of certain caste based political parties that these men are members of. However, things were very different when the sisters got married and moved away like in Ravi's case (as discussed in the chapter two), where his sister initiates calls with her family every week even after marriage or the

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[156] Notion of ideal Tamil woman, is expressed and reiterated in popular Tamil cinema culture as well and in a way such notions help define masculinity. Please refer Pandian, M.S.S., 2015.

case of Ranjith and Sreelatha, where once Sreelatha got married and settled in Bahrain, she got into Facebook and became Ranjith's friend. She pestered Ranjith to upload pictures of her parents on Facebook and keep changing it every week, so she could see how her parents looked now. Ranjith's parents aren't comfortable using the desktop or Skype on it. Ranjith always must be there for Sreelatha to Skype with their parents. So, Skype calls just take place once a month and hence Sreelatha always calls her parents rather than see them online. Therefore, Sreelatha contacts Ranjith and requests him for pictures of her parents and relatives. Until Sreelatha was married, Ranjith accepts that he controlled Sreelatha and in fact was so strict that he wouldn't allow her to access Facebook. However, he does agree that it was foolish on his part, as with a tearful eye, he said, that only when she moved to Bahrain, did he recognize her value and his love for her. Ranjith also agreed that it was Sreelatha who had friended their long-lost cousins on Facebook and re-built relationships that had been lost. He said that he never once tried reaching out to his extended family, while Sreelatha did that, immediately after signing onto Facebook. Further, Ranjith also noted that it was Sreelatha, who became Facebook friends with the girl with whom he fell in love. Even when he had issues with his parents over his romance, it was his chats with Sreelatha over Facebook that soothed him. He would soon be getting married to the girl he fell in love with. All thanks to Sreelatha, who convinced his parents. He regretted his foolishness in thinking that his sister was immature and now proclaimed that though she was at least 3 years younger to him, she was in fact more matured than he was. However, what was strange was that they did not communicate over WhatsApp, though both had smart phones. When this question arose in an interview with Ranjith, he smiled knowingly and said that they would be doing it soon.

Communication between sisters were in a different realm altogether. They didn't mind being friends on Facebook, even if there was an age gap and generally commented or liked each other's posts and profiles. While extremely personal messages were shared through voice based calls or texts or even through WhatsApp, use of Facebook messenger was also evident in several cases.

In lower socio-economic classes, young unmarried women were not allowed access to communication technologies. However, when employed or married (and if educated), they do become significant social networkers, to keep communication between family members flowing. This does not necessarily mean that they would use social networking tools/sites as use of these also depends on who in their social circles use them. However, networking through text messages and voice messages does happen.

After having explored patterns of communication within a close family kinship, we will now move onto exploring the communication between extended family members at Panchagrami.

4.6 Communication with extended family

Communication with extended family depended on their offline relationships, where the offline nature of ties (Bott and Spillius, 2014) (stronger or weaker) influenced the frequency of communication. However, there were several

cases where long lost family was found on Facebook. This had to a certain extent even become a hobby for a few upper middle class elderlies in Panchagrami. This was a mixed group and couldn't be categorized as mainly consisting of men or women. It seemed like people of both genders were equally enthusiastic to do this. They would become members of Facebook and invariably start looking for family on Facebook. There were several of these elderly, who now deemed it as an achievement of having found their second cousin's daughter on Facebook or even their distant relatives from their native village on Facebook, who they had last seen decades ago. As Mr. Rajaram, a 69-year-old, Facebook enthusiast said *'it was like finding someone who got lost in a temple fair'*. Geni (Geni, n.d.) was another site that these elderlies thronged to, as it helped (automatically) construct family trees for them.

There were several retirees, who started writing their family history by going back to the villages they hailed from, and most of them were on Facebook to find points of contact. However, when a point of contact (a long lost relative) was found, the one on one relationship of a serious kind transferred to phone conversations or even WhatsApp, with the hunt for the other relatives still going on in the Facebook jungle/carnival (however one would want to view it). Since WhatsApp has now also taken over text messaging, communication between these extended family members happened on WhatsApp too, sometimes in the form of family group communication or sometimes individually. But, this once again depended on the nature of relationship that one maintained with them offline.

Communication between cousins, specifically married cousins split by a spatial distance factor normally took place over Facebook, as it was the

medium through which one could catch up with one's extended family. Skype calls and phone calls do take place; however, most of this depends on how much of an offline contact they had with each other while growing up. Several cases of cousins liking and commenting on each other's Facebook profiles, albums etc. take place, and this may substantially increase once they have children. Support for each other's children is extended through likes and comments, each time a picture of a cousin's child is uploaded on Facebook. There were cases where groups of cousins organized an event (more like a festival at their native village), but all of this only happened if either they knew each other while growing up or at least their parents were close to each other. Life events such as births, weddings and deaths were apparently more visible on Facebook than other day-to-day communication between extended family members. They were made more visible due to the high response rates (in the forms of likes and comments) that such events elicited from the extended family circles on Facebook. Though birth of a child would generally be announced on Facebook, uploading pictures of a new born is postponed until the child is at least a fortnight old or the religious rites associated with birth of a child is completed, for fear of evil eye. This was followed with rigidly in families where the elderly had a stronger say in such functionalities, as seen in the case of Mrs. Geetha Thiagarajan. There were cases, where pictures of the new-born were uploaded within a day, but this mattered on how the elderly in the family perceived social media. However, if the extended family group had strong ties and were members of a common WhatsApp group, such pictures were exchanged over WhatsApp rather than on Facebook, since Facebook somehow in comparison to WhatsApp was a mass media not suitable for certain communication. Even when such pictures were shared over WhatsApp, none of the relatives in the group uploaded those pictures on Facebook and waited for the parents or someone in the immediate family of

the new born to upload these onto Facebook. It seemed like there was an agreed upon ethos within such family circles with respect to certain communication (in this case visual) transitioning from one platform to another. But, this does not necessarily mean that the news of the new-born is kept within family circles, even if such communication moves out of these networks, they are only textual or oral. Hence, what was evident was not just strategizing the platforms to communicate such messages, but also strategizing what parts of communication had to appear on different platforms. Invitations to birthday parties of the children were also sent over Facebook. Though, this was generally acceptable, there were cases such as Mr. Raghavan's where invitations over social media were construed as being impolite and only phone calls were acceptable. While only a few birthday pictures were sent over WhatsApp, most were uploaded on Facebook for all their networks to see, though the intention is to target the extended family members. Response rates in the form of comments were evident in the first few pictures (generally the first 12 to 15 pictures) compared to the others in the album. The only exception would be portfolio pictures of the child and the parents, or those where the child cuts the cake. These were an expected social norm that extended family members had to satisfy in close knit families. Once again, there was a certain level of performance by the extended kin to showcase the closeness that they maintained with a specific set of kin to other relatives in their social circles[157] (Desmond, 1999).

Weddings were another important life event that was made apparent by changes in the profiles of the couple. The first change would occur in their relationship status and the next would be in their photo albums, where visuals

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[157] This can be treated as both establishing a group identity by cooperating in a group performance. The audience here are socially constituted and contribute to the performance. For more on this please refer to Desmond, J., 1999.

of the engagement ceremony would be uploaded, eliciting several positive responses. Pictures of the wedding ceremony itself would be uploaded in two cycles, where the first cycle would consist of a handful of pictures uploaded immediately after the wedding and is specifically meant for those extended family members who live abroad and might have missed the wedding ceremony. The next cycle with a full album would be uploaded almost a month after the wedding. It is almost an expected norm that people within India would certainly make it to the wedding. A few pictures from the wedding ceremony would be uploaded by those attending the ceremony i.e. cousins/aunts/uncles of the bride or the bridegroom just to let their non-attending relatives give a current sense of happenings at the wedding. This could take place over Facebook or WhatsApp. Either the bride or the bridegroom would upload the entire album of the professional wedding pictures taken by the wedding photographer on their Facebook profiles nearly a month after the event. This period was generally accepted within the extended family circles; however, pictures and gossips from the ceremony circulate on WhatsApp in this period. There were a couple of cases, mostly in upper middle class families, where an engagement ceremony was streamed live on Skype and other professional paid streaming channels[158] for those extended kin who were unable to attend the ceremony. But, all of this depended on the closeness that the extended family members on either side shared with the couples' families.

What was more apparent was the communication of the death of the elderly relatives on the profiles of the middle-aged informants. Posts on death attracted a lot more responses than those of other genres. This could also be because while several visuals of other ceremonies were uploaded onto

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[158] These were arranged by the professional wedding photographers.

Facebook, death was generally communicated with just one or two pictures and hence responses had to be centred on these posts alone. A couple of distinct patterns were observed on such posts. Either the extended family would all group together on the Facebook comment section of the user who posted the news (normally one of the children) and express condolences; else, if the deceased was well known in their family circles, several extended kin would repeat such memorializing posts on their profiles, thus symbolically expressing their mourning. Condolences are also expressed on the family WhatsApp group. While there might just be a general update on the time of cremation on Facebook, a more periodic update on such activities are witnessed on the WhatsApp family groups. Selfies with the dead body were generally not encouraged and there were a few cases, where middle class families had even stopped people from taking pictures of the death ceremony, since they felt it was inappropriate to elicit likes on Facebook for such posts.

The use of social networking tools within family circles (those related by blood or marriage) were discussed above, but kinship relationships at Panchagrami extend to friendship circles in the form of fictive kin, which we saw in the case Govindan. Also, as exploring the use of social networking tools within kinship circles was the sole focus of this chapter, the next section would deal with those friendship relationships that classify themselves as fictive kin.

4.7 Facebook and Fictive Kinship

While communication between friends at Panchagrami is a significant relationship that needs mention, this section would deal with a form of intimate friendship that transcends to fictive kin relationships. It is essential to be cognizant of the fact that not all kinship relationships are as intimate as certain friendships and nor does fictive kinship necessarily translate to an intimate relationship (Freed, 1963; Vatuk, 1969). Some common terms that signify

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such fictive kinship used in everyday parlance even between strangers is *'Anna' (big brother), 'Akka' (big sister), 'Amma' (mother)* etc. However, just because someone calls the other in such terms, it doesn't necessarily mean any kind of close relationship or even friendship of any sort. While, tradition in Tamil Nadu is to refer to even strangers in these kin terms, use of non-kin terms such as *'Sir'* and *'Madam/Mam'* also exists. The case of Govindan, discussed at the start of this chapter is a typical example of this kind of fictive kin vs. non-kin segregation. However, this section deals only with those intimate friendships (Osella, and Osella, 1998; Bell and Coleman, 1999; Nisbett, 2007; Killick and Desai 2010; Nakassis, C.V., 2013) and where fictive kinship terms are used to address each other.

Going back to understanding the relationships that develop in a certain area dominated by a certain caste is essential in understanding how kin become friends who once again become kin through fictive kinship associations. For example: Take the case of the 120-year-old village mentioned earlier in the chapter that is a part of Panchagrami, this village is dominated by an unfortunately historically discriminated caste. Several youngsters in this village very hazily know that almost the entire village (specifically long term residents of the village) were related at some point of time in history. However, more confusion rose with the recent conversion to Christianity, (though their religions have changed, their caste groups haven't) and with a polygyny practise of the older generation, hence not many know what is the relationship they share with a neighbour of theirs. Except a few youngsters, not many can trace relationships. Hence, other youngsters of their age group would normally be friends. However, there is a system through which everyone addresses each other with a kin term to relate to the other as a friend and not as a relative. So, people would address each other as brother

(elder brother) or uncle or brother in law or even as co-brother. The same applies to women too. In cases, such as this, a parabolic curve of kinship-friendship-fictive kinship exists. Actual forgotten kinship relationships are friendships (to mediate confusion) and expressed in terms of fictive kinships. The reason this is discussed is because these are the kin terms with which they address each other on Facebook and this must be understood to understand them as a social group. A few more examples of fictive kinship as expressed at Panchagrami helps examine this kind of relationship in a better light.

Sridhar, 26 years old has been actively involved in the politics of a local caste based party. Since, he helps the local youth, he has always been referred to as *'Annan'* (elder brother). With his local party leader commanding him to have a more aggressive activism and membership drive (Alm, 2010), he adopted a mechanism to get high school boys of his caste from the village into his party through social media. These high school students address him as *Annan* when they meet him offline and even when they address him on Facebook, he is always referred to as *Annan*.

Prakash, a 21-year-old, college going resident of Panchagrami is famous among his neighbourhood peer group of men. His fame comes from his ability to have friended around 30 women (strangers) from other Indian states on Facebook. While he was always referred by his peer group as *machi* (brother in law), once they saw his mastery in friending strangers (particularly women) as friends on Facebook, and his willingness to help his group in their quest for the same, he is now jovially referred to as *mama* (which normally means uncle and a Tamil slang used to refer to a pimp). Though the peer groups only chat with each other on WhatsApp, the pictures they upload on Facebook always

refer (tagged) to Prakash as mama. Though, in a way he is a distant uncle to some of his friends, this is generally forgotten, as the reason of why and how he is their uncle (by actual relationship) is not known. The friendship here extends to fictive kinship and they relate to each other through these terms. Some of them are related and refer to each other as *pangali* (co-brother) sometimes. However, *mama* seems a much more common usage to address Prakash on social media as well as in normal face-to-face conversations.

This specific idea of fictive kinship transcends class and caste in Tamil Nadu. However, at Panchagrami, this was much more evident in the lower socio economic classes than with the middle class or the upper middle class, at least on Facebook. But, this is not to say that such fictive kinship isn't expressed on Facebook by the middle classes. What differs is the frequency. Birthday/anniversary messages expressing such fictive kinship relationships appear on the time lines of a few middle-class informants, such as this- Sunithra, a 23-year-old, writes birthday messages on her Facebook friends profiles, expressing a fictive kinship relationship.

"To my sweetest brother, we grew up together and celebrated each other. Here you go with one more. Happy Birthday!"

Though, this message of Sunithra would look like its addressed to her own brother she has addressed it to her close friend who grew up in the same neighbourhood with her. Or take the case of Bhaarathi, whose response to a comment of her picture on Facebook from her mother's friend was

Mother's friend: "*Nice dress Bhaarathi kutty[159], look so beautiful*"

Bhaarathi's Response: "*Thanks Aunty. Got this at Express Avenue last week. Amma's[160] gift*"

Messages such as these do appear from time to time on several residents Facebook timelines. Several of them are event based (birthdays or anniversaries).

The frequency of posts expressing such fictive kinship relationship appears on an everyday basis on the Facebook profiles of the lower socio-economic class informants. It isn't necessarily event based. It is an everyday occurrence. While it is more of men in the lower socio-economic classes who do this, it is much more evident in the cases of women in the middle classes.

A reverse system of fictive kinship also occurs in the middle classes, which is nearly absent in the lower-socio-economic classes. A proper kin might sometimes be referred to as a Friend. This happens more so in the cases of kinship relationships that come through marriage. The apt relationship that signifies this is the sister-in-law, co-sister, brother-in-law kinds of relationships. Such messages could be event based and very often when women write birthday messages, they express such relationships as friendships. For example: Saraswathi, a 42-year-old, homemaker's anniversary message (which she received from her sister-in-law) was something like this

"to my Anna and my dearest friend Saras, may God bless you on this wonderful day. Wishing you many more such beautiful days".

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[159] Kutty in Tamil means little one, a term used in intimate circles
[160] Mother in Tamil

Messages like this appear on the timelines of the middle-class informants. However, messages that express both kinship relationships and friendships overtly are also evident on Facebook timelines. For example: Abhinaya, a 25-year-old, IT employee, wished for her aunt's birthday on Facebook with this message

"*Happy Birthday to my dearest Chithi[161], my all-time bestest friend*"

In a Tamil society, notions of hierarchy govern intergenerational relationships such as those between aunt and niece or even same generation relationships between sisters-in-law. However, the idea of being friends as expressed in the above two examples, showcases to the outside world that their relationship is that of equals, at least with respect to a free flow of thoughts rather than ones dictated by hierarchy. This is not to say that men don't post such messages. But, their kind of messages are like what Abhinaya posts, it would express both the actual relationship as well as their idealistic relationship they share with the person, for example: Sarvesh, a 32-year-old, IT professionals, time line on his birthday had messages such as these

"*To my kutty thambi[162]…my life advisor, my friend, Happy B'day da!*"

"*My fav cousin, my 4 am friend, philosopher, guide, wishing u a sooper b'day!*"

Messages such as the above, sometimes clearly state the relationship that this person has with others in his friendship circle on Facebook. But, take the

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[161] Mother's younger sister-aunt
[162] Little younger brother

first birthday message to Sarvesh: though it gives the impression that it was a message expressing kinship and friendship at the same time, it was a message from a sister-like friend of his. It wasn't a message from a real kin. However, the second one is a message from a cousin of his. Unfortunately, Sarvesh just knows that they are related and can't map out the actual relationship.

While frequencies of such expressions differ by gender, this constant reshuffling of friendship to fictive kinship and kinship to a friendship happen often. A reason for this might be the constantly nudging normative idea that comes from cinema and distribution of moralizing memes of how friendship is much more important to people than kinship (Nakassis and Dean, 2007). These idealistic discourses on friendships influence people to treat friendships as analogous to close kinship relationships and vice versa. However, what is significant is that in the lower-socio-economic classes, all friendships appear as fictive kinships and in the middle classes, there is this tendency to express kinship as a friendship rather than kinship.

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the idea of relationships and intimacy through kinship relationships, since kinship being a significant aspect of Anthropology is also foundational to Panchagrami and influences not just everyday offline relationships, but also relationships on social media.

This chapter started with intergenerational relationships, where principles of age and kinship hierarchy exerted power and influence in ensuring that the choice of communication channels for inter-generational communication within a family was only within an array of media determined appropriate by the

elderly. Such influence on the choice of media was multi-layered and had to be understood in the cultural context where such firm media attributions existed.

It was evident that in intra family (parent-child specifically) communication; voice dominated other forms of communication due to aspects of concern and care, for example: Lakshmi, the young mother who we met in chapter two, wasn't able to talk to her children from her workplace, and yet she still recorded voice messages and sent it over WhatsApp to be played to her children. However, one cannot brush aside influential variables such as literacy and other skills, which also played a role in lower socio-economic families choosing to communicate over voice rather than other forms of communication. Stronger patterns, which support the theories of Polymedia and media multiplexity, existed in the middle-class families where the elderly could afford to choose multiple communicative media. However, even while other factors such as spatial distance influences the choice of communicative media, both these classes, when it comes to inter-generational relationships, generally preferred voice communication to other kinds of communication. In the case of extended family relationships, normative ideals, conformance to network expectations and visibility play significant roles in determining the levels of performance that a family might put up on social media platforms such as Facebook, for the world (a wider network of ready audience) to witness their closeness as a family. This was also becoming apparent on WhatsApp groups of extended family members, where a few close-knit family members performed for the other family members.

When it came to everyday communication between married couples, secured private channels such as text messages and WhatsApp alternated with voice-

based communication. This could also be since the frequency of communication between married couples was much higher than those in inter-generational relationships. There was a sense of mutual understanding by the partners in the choice of an appropriate array of media to communicate with each other. This was also influenced by the general cognizance of the time and space that their partners occupied and what media was available to them.

While, there were cases where visibility and normative ideals of a married couple influenced performance in such relationships, what is of note is the rationalization of such performance as a strategic building of memories of communication for the future. Though such overt posts of communication between a husband and wife do take place on Facebook for the wider network to see, they were strategic to portray only those that fit the ideal, while the supposedly mundane everyday communication occurs privately on WhatsApp or through text messages.

The chapter has also explored, relationships with siblings across classes and when this is correlated with the earlier discussion of gender and communicative media, it becomes clear that while for the middle classes (more so in the upper middle classes, where women are allowed to use social media), sibling bonding can happen even when women are single; in the lower-socioeconomic classes (and in the lower middle classes) this projects a challenge as younger unmarried women are not allowed access to primary communicative media and thus are restricted from the use of social media. Hence, the sibling bonding over social media for this class only happens after the women are married or have a job. Irrespective of the class, what was also evident was in sibling relationships, which involved a sister, communication seemed to occur with a higher frequency.

This chapter finally moved to view friendships from the point of view of fictive kinships, as kinship was the sole focus of this chapter. A significant aspect of this was the ways in which fictive kinship and friendships alternated with each other across classes and find themselves expressed on Facebook. While the lower-socio-economic classes viewed all friendships in their area as fictive kinships, the middle class alternated between actual kinship, fictive kinship and friendship and sometimes viewed and expressed actual kinship as friendship and vice versa. What was evident was that at times, when the nature of relationships was blurry, there was a tendency to move in a parabolic curve from kinship to friendship to fictive kinship.

What was also apparent in these examples was a neat case of Polymedia, where communication within certain relationships transitioned between platforms. While in chapter three, we did witness visual communication conforming to network expectations, in this chapter, we observe that even the apparent use of multiple platforms and the nature of communication over platforms themselves are centred on the expectations of the network that one maintains. What was also significant was the perceived notion of Facebook as a mass media meant for external communication and WhatsApp as a more private platform. However, what is also visible is another layer of division as public and private even within WhatsApp, based on the social circles that one maintains on it. Hence, while certain WhatsApp groups are treated as public like Facebook, others are treated as being private. What is also visible from family communications is a clear strategic pattern of transaction oriented towards different networks on WhatsApp conforming to their expectations.

Within the kinds of communication that occurs between various kinship relationships across classes, there exists an inherent sense of belonging to a

much larger social group, be it younger generation negotiating their own media preferences to those of their elderly family members or parents who sincerely believe that their motivations are just to protect and secure the best interests of their daughters by telephoning them, or even those brothers who don't allow for their sisters to access certain media in concern for their safety, or the parabolic curve of kinship, friendship and fictive kinship. By alluding to concerns of maintaining an ideal family, in a way they conform to the ideals and expectations of the much larger social group they are embedded in. The study of kinship and their communication on social media is thus a reflection of the much larger society itself.

Chapter Five - Bringing Home to Work: The role of Social Media in blurring Work – Non-Work Boundaries

It's around 3 PM on a Tuesday…Abhijit, a 27-year-old, computer code tester, who hails from Palghat (Kerala) is working in his cubicle, testing a code that needs to be submitted later that evening for processing. He works for a large IT company, which has its development centre in Panchagrami and lives in the area, after having moved away from his family in Kerala, for employment. He is interrupted by a text message from his mother, who asks him to visit them at Palghat this weekend to see his potential bride's family. Abhijit, like several other youngsters of his age is in the long drawn process of an arranged marriage system[163] (Caldwell et al., 1983; de González, 2013). Looking at the message, he walks away from his cubicle into the hallway and calls his mom to ensure that he fully understands the purpose of the visit. He agrees to travel that weekend and gets back to his cubicle. He then logs into the Indian railways website from his smart phone and books a ticket for travel that Friday evening. Abhijit then browses his WhatsApp image folder to see the potential bride's pictures that his sister had downloaded from her Facebook profile and had forwarded to him that morning. He smiles to himself and gets back to working on the code that he was testing.

It's around 5:30 PM on a Friday… Kavitha, a 37-year-old, Senior Director of Human Resources for a financial data processing company in Panchagrami, leaves a crisp WhatsApp voice message in Tamil which says … *"don't cook*

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[163] This is a marital system that has been traditionally practiced in India. When the boy and the girl reach a marriageable age, the parents/guardians choose their ward's partner based on aspects such as religion, caste, sub-caste and natal charts. Please refer Caldwell, J.C., Reddy, P.H. and Caldwell, P., 1983; de González, L.T., 2013.

dinner tonight…we are going out for dinner" and gets a voice message in return (in Tamil) from a woman which says *'Ok...will get the kids ready'.* A mother of three school going kids, Kavitha takes pride in shuffling between work and home quite effectively. Kavitha and her husband Rajesh (an entrepreneur), now have a stay at home cook-cum caretaker (a woman aged around 50 years) to ensure a smooth process with home maintenance as both Kavitha and her husband work long hours. They decided shortly after Rajesh's mom's death, that they needed someone to be with them to take care of their children and at the same time help them with cooking as well. To orient this domestic help to their way of doing things, Kavitha, got her a cheap Samsung smart phone. Though, their communication started with phone calls, they gradually moved on to communicating over WhatsApp. Kavitha very soon figured out, that her caretaker was more comfortable with voice messages rather than texts on WhatsApp. So, normally on weekdays between 5 PM and 5:30 PM Kavitha ensures that she follows a ritualistic process of instructing her caretaker on plans for dinner and checks on replenishment of provisions and groceries. All of this is done over WhatsApp voice messages before Kavitha leaves work at around 7 PM.

Here are two examples that are typical of the way people communicate between work and home at Panchagrami. While modern companies try to ensure that there is a strict formal boundary between the spaces of work and non-work, this boundary as we can see in the cases of Abhijit and Kavitha tend to be continuously undermined by social media.

However, to understand the rise of this binary categorization of work vs. non-work within Panchagrami, one also needs to be cognizant that this arises in the modern IT and its subsidiary work settings and not from the long-term

residents involved in agriculture or its allied sectors. While studies (dealt with later in this chapter) on hi-tech industries have specifically paid attention to this idea of work and home spheres, they have gained a rather important ground for discussion in the Indian corporate sectors and workplaces fuelled by the knowledge economy. Several studies such as Annapoorna and Bagalkoti,2011; Radhakrishnan,2011; Reddy, 2010 etc. deal with the idea of work-life balance and the constant rupture of boundaries between work and life spheres, more with respect to how work infuses into life by transcending the spatial boundaries due to the influx of laptops and smartphones and the associated stress and the imbalance arising out of this rupture's effect. However, the idea of work-life balance is an important corporate Human Resources (HR) policy aspect addressed with much interest in most technology companies for employee engagement and retention. Employees are made aware of the policy that addresses issues connected to balancing work and life outside work as a corporate strategy for building an admirable work culture. Hence, the idea of work and life (addressed in this thesis as work and non-work – as life involves work too) is not extrapolated from other studies but are rather concepts that originated within the field site during indepth interviews with employees of these technology companies and thereby is locally relevant too. This categorization assumes significance specifically with respect to social media since most companies treat personal communication platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp as platforms for building sociality which are then associated with non-work aspects. To understand this further, we will introduce a few social media related policies that most technology companies in this area use to better manage the work days of their workforce (the contextual understanding of how these policies are deployed is dealt with in the case studies and examples that are presented in this chapter).

Though the corporate policies on the social media usage within the spatial boundaries of the work places are varied, the underlying trend showcases, cognizance by the companies in controlling the sociality that one might build outside of the spatial boundaries of the company during work time (and sometime even inside the company boundaries), in other words, such policies in a way try and mediate the spatio-temporal aspects of building and maintaining sociality with the help of personal communication platforms such as social media. Though, workplace sociality through company tools is not mediated within company boundaries, employees, do understand that non – mediation does not necessarily mean non-monitoring. Hence, to ensure that their communication within the company boundaries cater to the limits that these companies have on non-work related sociality building in work places, they either ensure face to face communication, communication over voice media, covert means of communication or even communicating over social media from break rooms or canteens. In other words, most companies view sociality outside workplace during work times as a dissent and hence mediate such processes through HR policies. The company policies related to social media in Panchagrami are as follows

1)   Explicit and Complete Ban on Social Media Use – This involves companies which explicitly ban the use of social media through clear workplace policies and ensure that people don't use the company's onsite technology or the internet to access social media platforms. Some companies even prohibit browsing the internet, while some limit themselves to blocking email services such as Gmail, Yahoo and Hotmail. A few companies which might allow for internet browsing through Google, might not allow access to social media websites and to sites such as YouTube, which in a way also involves heavy use of bandwidth.

2)   Allow Social media access on personal devices – This category of companies generally allows the use of social media; however, they cannot be accessed through the company's resources (which not only includes desktops and laptops, but also the free Wi-Fi and the internet). Companies that boast of such policies can be divided into two major sectors and such a division is based on the projects that these companies own and operate for their on-shore clients. For example – they have stringent policy with respect to employees bringing in their own smart phones with a 4G/3G access to the work floor (or the project floor), if the project that the employee is involved in is sensitive in nature (e.g. Finance, Military and Security, Healthcare etc.) or if the client has signed a purposive no phone policy within project floor. So, employees working on such projects generally lock their smart phones in lockers specifically provided to them to store their personal belongings and tend to access their phones and social media during breaks that they might constantly take over their work day.

The same companies might have a slight variation of their policy for employees working on non-confidential project implementations and might deploy a non-stringent social media policy where employees can access social media from their work desks with a subtle expectation that the employees would follow an honour code of not discussing their projects on social media for the outside world to see.

The idea of secrecy and competition amongst the companies to ensure that they maintain the rigorous standards imposed by the clients are factors that specifically speak to such policies. However, these companies also walk a tight rope in ensuring that the employee engagement levels don't falter and

hence allow employees to bring in their own personal communication devices and use their own resources to access social media from within their work places.

3)   'Facebook' time – Companies and workplaces that fall into this category generally allow employees access to social media from the workplace/company resources (e.g. laptops/desktops and even Wi-Fi), however, they might be limited to a specific time and space. For e.g. There were workplaces, which allowed employees to access social media, specifically Facebook between 12 noon and 2 PM (coinciding with lunch breaks) and after 6 PM until 10 PM, which some of the informants in this study referred to as 'Facebook Time' (more on this is also dealt with later in this chapter). Yet another allowance that this category of workplaces offer is that the 'Facebook time' can also be used on their personal smart phones, but such access is time restricted. Similarly, if an employee wishes to access social media from his/her own phone but wants to use the workplace internet, they would have restricted access based on the space from where they try to access social media, for e.g. the coffee lounge, the canteens or the food courts are open areas with no restrictions but anywhere within their work floor or their work desks might pose restriction to such access. However, there were workplaces which restricted the kind of social media one could access using the company resources, for e.g. YouTube was restricted due to videos consuming high bandwidth just like an earlier category of companies.

4)   Free Allowance – Smaller companies which generally deal with digital marketing or online products or services and those that employed a significantly lesser workforce (micro, small and a few medium sized enterprises) allowed for a complete open access to the internet, trusting their

employees to honour and respect such freedom. However, even these companies did monitor the kind of reputation that the company held online and were careful to ensure that their employees did not do anything that would go against the company's reputation or brand.

One of the underlying trend's that gets reflected in these policies is the idea that social media is for building sociality outside work spaces and is generally viewed as a dissent to the workplace norms. However, as we will see later in this chapter, the idea of work-life balance for employees involves balancing the multiple dimensions of life (family, hobbies, travel etc.) even while at work, with the help of personal communication platforms (e.g. WhatsApp). Such ideas and techniques of 'work-life' balance that the employees use don't fall into ambit of the work-life balance policy (which are associated with work timings, company picnics, vacation days etc.) that these companies deploy to their employees. Such differential meanings associated with the idea of work and life are often at logger heads, however, this is not to imply that these companies don't understand the importance of managing non-work life aspects while at work, as interviews with the Human resources professionals in these companies revealed. Such transgressions of policies are not discouraged and are not encouraged either and most often are based on the contexts, as seen from the case studies and examples provided in this chapter.

Hence, while most studies deal with taking work to non-work aspects of life, specifically home, this chapter, deals with how employees, use social media at work to balance non-work aspects at work.

In Chapter One the field site 'Panchagrami' was introduced as a deliberate choice of a rather extreme example of the massive transformations of modern India based on the juxtaposition of an IT zone in the midst of rural villages. While this area looks like a case of dealing with contemporary modern India, it is still very recognisably traditional and as such the details of social media are immersed in issues of kinship, class and caste. Nevertheless, the rise of the IT sector brings certain issues into the foreground, of which one is clearly the relationship between work and the rest of life; since by contrast to agriculture, the IT work is largely a formal and professional domain that is clearly designated as work. This obviously represents a challenge to the more informal complex weave of other kinds of relationships we have been discussing so far. Thus, this chapter is largely devoted to this question of what happens to social media when we see this massive presence of a formal work based structure right in the middle of our field site. Though, there is cognizance of how work-non-work boundaries can shift both ways i.e. taking work out of office to working from home and bringing non-work aspects to work, this chapter will specifically focus on how non-work aspects are brought to work through social media, in other words bringing home to work and ensuring the blurring of the rigid work-non-work boundaries in modern work settings.

To do this effectively, we will start this chapter by exploring the idea of work as defined by Anthropology and then move onto understanding work in India from a historical context. We will then move onto the IT sector's work culture and explore how social media fits into this work culture with several case studies from Panchagrami. These case studies will also show how personal communication technologies frequently undermine the strict boundaries of work and non-work.

5.1 Work – A view through the lens of Anthropology

The concept of "Work" has been explored by social sciences in detail and Anthropology is no exception (Wallman, 1979). Though, initially concerned with less formal work such as agricultural labor, Anthropology has since then moved onto explore formal modern industrial work settings (Baba, 1998; Nash, 1998). However, when other Social Sciences tend to treat work in dichotomous terms such as Work vs. Non-Work or Formal vs. Informal work, Anthropology tends to view work as a continuum, though it recognizes the relative conceptualization of work in dualistic terms of work and non-work, in practice such dualistic framing of work might not hold ground. Anthropology begins by not differentiating work itself but the spheres or domains of life in which work is performed and it acknowledges that these spheres overlap and are very culture specific (Wallman, 1979; Ortiz, 1994). Anthropology, like sociology or psychology, views work not only in relation to economics but gives equal importance to the social aspects of work and the relationships between them (Wallman, 1979) as well.

Anthropology also differs from other social sciences in the approach it takes to the study of work. While social sciences such as Psychology, Sociology and Economics tend to approach the concept of work from an individual's standpoint, a group standpoint and from an organizational standpoint respectively, Anthropology for its part strives to understand work in a holistic fashion (Wallman, 1979; Baba, 1998; Jordon, 2012). The works of several. Anthropologists on formalized industrial work settings stand as evidence to this approach (Parry, 1999, 2001; Freeman, 2000; De Neve, 2005; Moeran, 2005; Broadbent, 2011).

While alongside other Social Sciences, it acknowledges that work may be regarded as a dichotomous variable (Work vs. Non-Work) this must still be seen within the wider social contexts and variable understandings of space and time (Grint, 2005). What is important to recognize is that Anthropologists have historically worked in areas, where such dichotomous practices of work do not exist, but acknowledge the context of formalized modern industrial settings which tend to emphasize and use the widespread dichotomous model of Work vs. Non-work or Work vs. Home (Broadbent, 2011), to define the rigid separation between work and home realms. Anthropological studies do recognize that innovations (Broadbent, 2011) such as personal communication digital technologies have blurred this dichotomy and have undermined this rigid separation of work vs. home spheres.

Modern work places in India specifically the IT companies which work as knowledge outsourcing development centers are modeled on a western understanding of workspace and strive hard to enforce such dichotomies, which are distant from more traditional forms of work in India. For example, in the case of the vast textile manufacturing industry, which had been organized largely by caste, work such as spinning, weaving and dying did not necessarily mean being away from family or home and such dichotomies historically had never existed (Swallow, 2008). However, with large-scale industrialization, and the subsequent establishment of formal factories and office spaces, dichotomies such as these are now becoming apparent (De Neve, 2005). This chapter deals with how people mediate and negotiate such dichotomies that exist in modern work environments using personal communication digital devices, thereby constantly posing challenges to such boundaries. But, before focusing on the way social media disrupts the boundaries of formal work we need to acknowledge the labor system in India

more generally. This will help us appreciate the fact that mediating such structures isn't anything new and people have done this historically too. This will also help us understand how formal labor systems in Panchagrami have apparent contradictions with respect to work centric policies.

5.2 Work, Caste and Kinship – A Historical View from India

Anthropology recognises that people work in a variety of spheres and formal work is just one such sphere, which exists alongside others such as domestic labour, education at school etc. This idea is also central to feminist literature (Ortiz, 1994; Mirchandani, 1999; Williams, 2001), which has always argued that the work of a homemaker (women in particular) is as important as that of a breadwinner (traditionally a man). The yardstick of direct economic benefit being applied to what is productive and non-productive work or what defines work itself is reversed in such literatures. This also leads to an assertion that work related to one space or another assumes importance by the nature of work (in non-economic terms) rather than by the space in which such work is carried out.

The idea of control in making one space more formal than the other seems to have been in place long before industrialization and can even be traced back to the time of Kings and royalty in India (Choudhary, 1971; Gopal, 1976; Buhler, 2004). However, they were immensely strengthened across class and caste with the advent of industrialization. Formality lay not only in the separation of space but also in imposing sanctioned social conduct that was required of all those who occupied this space per their role, which depends on several factors such as hierarchy, ownership, position etc. For example: A

Principal vs. a teacher vs. a student or a CEO vs. a Manager vs. a security guard. This kind of formalisation is like the ways in which one's position in kinship determines the proper behaviour of people in relation to each other, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Given that Panchagrami is situated in Tamil Nadu, the concept of work in both Tamil Nadu and India needs to be understood. Continuity and change is a cliché that can be applied to India (Fuller, 1996) and this can be extended to the concept of work in India as well. The earlier structure of work in India was based on the division of labor split by caste hierarchies, where caste groups performed work that was speculated to have been ordained to them in the Hindu Shastras. This was called the Varnashrama system: which refers to religious authorities dividing the population into four groups based on the work they performed, namely the priests, the warriors, the traders and the menials. Understood in terms of its legitimating cosmology, this Varna system then underwent changes and broke into the multitude of differentiated castes where one's occupation and thus the social status was ordained by birth in a certain caste (ascription based) rather than the vocation that one chose to perform in a society (Ambedkar, 1944; Pillay, 1977). Caste has remained significant as it has always been the case and many specialist traditional occupations, from potters and goldsmiths to barbers and washer-men remained largely tied to the castes designated to do that work, which was true for Tamil Nadu as it was for the entire India (Pillay, 1977). Work was also viewed as a transactional service between different castes (Kolenda, 1963; Commander, 1983; Gould, 1986; Wiser, 1988). The specialist traditional occupations associated with certain caste groups was also true for the wider spheres of manufacturing, for example: the weavers of silk sarees in Kanchipuram district (where the field site is also located) only belong to

specific caste groups such as Mudaliars/Chettiars. In Tiruppur, a major textile production hub in Tamil Nadu, it is the Vanniyars and Vellala Gounders who are employed in this sector[164] (Niehoff, 1959; Srinivas, 1962; Beteille, 1965; Holmström, 1976; Vidyarthi, 1984; Fuller.1996; Reiniche 1996; Dirks, 1996; Parry, 1999; Osella and Osella 2000; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005; Bear, 2007; Swallow, 2008; Breman, 2013)

Historically, work in India was performed in a family/kin/caste environment, which did not consider the spheres of work and home as being mutually exclusive or dichotomous in nature. This is very much evident even in contemporary Tamil Nadu (De Neve, 2005; Swallow, 2008), for example, in the organization of textile production, fabric might first be given to people spinning within their own homes and later to people weaving within their own homes. Further the Hindu Undivided Family law is also based on this model of a joint or extended family system, which extends to property and rights over work.

5.3 IT – Work Culture

Before we move on to examining of how social media and personal communication technologies help mediate structures within this sector, it might help to briefly consider the IT sector in India to better appreciate the role of such personal communication technologies in blurring boundaries of work and non – work spheres of lives.

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[164]Trade opportunities along with a cosmological understanding of what their duty to the society was, have worked together in offering and stipulating positions for certain caste groups to perform certain work. However, this works only for groups, which haven't had the kind of social discrimination and exploitation that caste groups such as the Dalits have faced.
Significant literature in terms of understanding family, kinship and caste in formal and informal work environments in India would be that of Niehoff, 1959; Holmström, 1976; Vidyarthi, 1984; Parry, 1999; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005; Bear, 2007; Swallow, 2008; Breman, 2013
Similarly, literature on understanding work in the midst of caste and class in Indian rural and urban life exists in vast amounts, however, some significant literature of interest in the South Indian contexts are that of Srinivas, 1962; Beteille, 1965; Fuller.1996; Reiniche 1996; Dirks, 1996; Osella and Osella 2000.

After the 1991 liberalization of Indian economy, India's growth in the IT/ITES[165] sector grew steadily (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007). The growth in this sector, the nuclear power test and the political condition post 1991 projected the Indian economy as a Knowledge economy (Nisbett, 2009). Entering this sector was considered as a significant status symbol that enabled people to build symbolic capital through investment of education capital and was an aspiration for social mobility (Nisbett, 2009). The growth of the IT/ITES sector as symbols of such an economy also resulted in recruiting highly skilled knowledge workers to help transnational clients (Arora and Athreye, 2002; Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Nisbett, 2009). While such recruiting processes are said to be based on merit, where education and skills of an individual were given preference over kinship/family/caste, how much of it is truly meritocratic is questionable (Das, 2002; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett, 2009). However, as research (Arora and Athreye, 2002; Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett, 2009) shows, while the IT/ITES industry accepts recommendation, it still values certain skills such as knowledge of English, computer programming and others as essential and basic, knowing fully well that their future is based on highly skilled workers, therefore, restricting the aspect of bringing in kin/caste and family members as in the unskilled workers of Chotanagpur region. Similarly, research (De Neve, 2005) clearly points out the limitations of kin based labor recruitment in textile industries. However, one needs to remember that IT/ITES does not only encompass employees who are into programming/Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)/Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO)/Call Centers. The industry is much larger than these divisions and employs a support system of cleaning/floor staff, canteen and

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[165] IT: Information Technology, ITES: Information Technology Enabled Services

café employees, drivers, electricians, and security personnel and so on in the lower pay grades as well. It also employs consultants and HR and Operations personnel in mid and senior level positions. The lower pay grades do not necessarily need skill and knowledge of programming or perfect vocabulary or the right English accent. Therefore, kin based and family based recommendations can still be witnessed in these lower cadres of employment within the IT field, but again critical deconstruction of how these work in a formalized environment needs to performed (De Neve, 2005). Further, the turnover in IT/ITES is also relatively high thus ensuring no permanence in kin/caste or family network ties within a single work place (Arora and Athreye, 2002; Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett, 2009).

The work culture in most of the IT/ITES firms in India is unique. It has been credited with increasing the relative value of professional workers and attracting more women employees by projecting a "Gender Neutral" image (Arora and Athreye, 2002; Annapoorna and Bagalkoti, 2011). On the other hand, research has also highlighted that the phenomenon of body shopping[166] (Bhatnagar and Madon, 1997; Mathew and Raza, 2000; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007) has forced employees to be always on their toes, with companies encouraging the employees to always be connected to the workplace. Another aspect of the Indian IT/ITES culture is the unique network culture. With the advent of official networking sites, people are always connected to their workplaces. This correlates with the idea of networked organization culture (Rainie and Wellman, 2012) that might be true of the

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[166] Body shopping for IT workers in India involves a third party company recruiting the IT workers for short-term contract services. Please refer to Bhatnagar and Madon, 1997; Mathew and Raza, 2000; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007

Indian IT work culture, as many of the companies have modeled their workplace on their customer firms in the USA.

The expectations of satisfying the clients in the western world and modeling their work culture in terms of the transnational clients have ensured a rigid separation of work and home spheres in the IT/ITES environment (Freidman, 2005; Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett, 2009). Further, one of the biggest gaps in study of Indian industrial labor has been the seriousness with which kinship; social relationships on the shop floor and social relationships in the urban neighborhood are engaged (Parry, 2001). Extending this to the IT/ITES sector, if one needs to understand work in the Indian IT/ITES industry, understanding the general kinship relationships, social relationships in the work place and the relationships of these IT/ITES employees in their neighborhood will play a significant role.

As a part of exploring social media's fit into this work culture and its role in helping mediate work-non-work boundaries, it might help understand why certain restrictions are placed in IT companies on the use of social media and how employees constantly bypass these restrictions.

For ease of understanding the transgressions of policies and how employees tend to navigate the work and non-work distinctions that arise in these modern work settings with the help of personal communication devices and social media, the next few sections provide case studies and scenarios where such transgressions are witnessed. However, when one tries to summarize and structure the discussion, very often the cases point to a few underlying trends such as 1) cultures of work discipline 2) Practices of secrecy and competition within companies and between companies and 3) the intensification of work

itself. Since most cases and scenarios in the next few sections originate and encapsulate a couple of more of these trends, it might be challenging to divide these sections based on them. However, most scenarios subtly hint about these trends. For example: The case of Sharath and Keshav not only speak to the idea of work discipline as a culture which the clients also demand, but also hints at the cultures of secrecy that needs to be maintained in projects encompassing sensitive data and information. Similar are the cases of couples and friends using office communicator or the case of Ravi and Shwetha who strive to re-integrate home alongside their pretty busy work day.

5.4 Bypassing Restrictions

The last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century were the crucial years for the emerging IT industry to find a strong foothold for itself in India. There are several studies, which speak to the evolution of the IT industry in India and the IT work culture (Athreye, 2003; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Nisbett, 2009; Reddy, 2010). By serving a North American/European clientele, these business/knowledge process-outsourcing industries adopted English as their lingua franca and a dress code of business formal wear to ensure and showcase professionalism to their trusting clientele, who sent their officials to visit the Indian offices for signing partnership deals[167]. This process also meant adopting a culture that was geared to showcasing a higher degree of professionalism as compared to the earlier factory systems. The shop floors where manual skilled and unskilled labourers worked were now cubicles for well-educated skilled work force that

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[167] Even cab drivers that were sent to pick up the Western clients from the airport/hotel were sometimes coached to have functional English in order to communicate with the client while travelling

could speak English. While the factories did not have to showcase their work place to every single clientele of theirs and get their approval, for the IT sector, with issues such as data privacy and security, clients flew to inspect the Indian knowledge processing industries work setup, thus ensuring that these industries maintained high standards to satisfy the ever curious and cautious clientele. However, all of this was an evolving process too. By adopting a western work culture and workspace concepts (the general and the data security systems, the cubicle system in larger companies and the agile workspaces in small entrepreneur led start-ups trying to be lean with respect to costs), they eased their clients' anxieties. This also influenced other aspects including dress codes, which now had evolved to business casuals instead of formals[168], a Friday dress easy culture and providing the weekend off. Other aspects such as office gyms, snooker and table tennis facilities, along with a kitchenette other than food courts and canteens were cultures adopted specifically in this sector both to attract the educated Indian youth as well as to have a culture that reflects the culture of their global clientele. However, this adoption isn't complete yet and is a work in progress. With all of this in place, these companies still ensured that there was a rigid separation between work and non-work. Though, this system ensured that it allowed employees access to work systems outside the office space (taking laptops home), most frowned when it came to bringing in non-work aspects to work.

Sharath, a 47-year-old, formally dressed director for sales of digital healthcare projects for a multinational IT company, stated that earlier (around 10 years ago) there was a culture where work hours needed to be exactly measured and chalked out to charge the clients. This led to frowning upon communication that was non-work related as it led to lesser billable amounts.

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[168] One wore strict formals only if he/she was client facing

Though such an attitude seems to have decreased in the past few years, this kind of culture still exists in a few companies.

Sharath's teammate and direct report Keshav, a 34-year-old, engineer and team lead, related an incident that happened to him, a few years ago, when a client had visited their team from North America. During the client's project audit visit, he had encountered members of Keshav's team handling smart phones at their work desks. This client had questioned a member of the team, on the camera functionality of the phone. The team member, in all his enthusiasm to satisfy the client not only answered the question but also took a picture of the client and boasted about the phone's superior camera functionality. The client was so furious that he stormed into Keshav's office and stated that he was going to cancel the project effective immediately fearing data theft through camera phones. Though, camera phones aren't allowed into sensitive projects (such as military or finance projects), such rules can be applicable sometimes to normal IT projects to cater to the concerns of the clients. Since that day, Keshav's team banned the use of camera phones during any healthcare centric projects. This translates to not bringing smart phones (and social media) into the work area and only accessing them at intervals from the lockers provided away from this work area. However, with social media, Keshav, states that these intervals have become more frequent and it isn't rare to see employees taking breaks every half hour to check their WhatsApp or Facebook messages. While, social media was also blocked in the company, restricting access to smart phones, added to this restrictive policy for data protection purposes.

However, it needs to be stated that not all companies restrict smart phone access and it depends on the type of project, the client's policies and

concerns etc. But, restrictions with respect to access to social media such as Facebook, Twitter YouTube etc. is followed in most large-scale IT companies, as they tend to view these social networking sites as a major distraction from work and is hence categorized as non-work. However, LinkedIn, the professional networking site remains an exception in a few of these companies. LinkedIn is more or less seen as a free knowledge exchange site with its various IT related knowledge groups and hence some companies allow access to this site alone. But, once again, all of this is relative to the project and the team that one belongs to. However, as Rajagopal, a 20-year IT company Human Resources veteran puts it

"With engineers these restrictions are always bypassed. We would be fools to think that these restrictions are strictly followed. However, we trust the integrity of these engineers. One thing is for certain, they know that they will lose their jobs, if they steal or make our data vulnerable and we would make certain to have criminal proceedings against them and destroy their career and life if we have an issue with data theft…so, they understand this…and by the way, we can easily find out who bypasses these restrictions"

Vishak and Sujith, both 24 years old, engineers, who hail from the state of Telangana, are bachelors and work for a Business Process Outsourcing company in the Panchagrami area and stay close to the field site. Vishak and Sujith work on a banking project, for a European company. Strict restrictions are in place with respect to accessing social networking sites on office computers fearing data theft. However, if people log in to their clients' European systems (which they must as a part of their job), then one has unlimited access to social media. Similarly, over the weekends (which are off), Vishak and Sujith accessed YouTube videos to watch old cricket match clips

and download films, all through access to their clients' systems. While such practise will be frowned upon and action leading to termination can be deployed if this becomes known, Vishak and Sujith noted that several of their colleagues did this and quipped that even their manager himself did this occasionally and wouldn't bother with them if their work was done and if the data protection aspect does not take a hit in these online adventures of theirs. No one from their client's side had complained as well.

This case of Vishak and Sujith as well as Rajagopal's statements go onto prove that such boundary digressions always exist and for highly qualified engineers, such rigid systems become a joke of sorts. This can be viewed as a case of a work system paradox, where the client doesn't allow the employees to access social media from the Indian systems, but allows access to social media through their systems which don't have these restrictions. Similarly, from the IT Company's standpoint, though they place strict restrictions, they understand that they are dealing with highly qualified engineers who can bypass such restrictions with ease. They seem to resign to trusting their employees' integrity rather than their systems. This kind of paradox exists not only with respect to restriction of access but to other aspects such as internal office communication as well.

However, there is yet another set of companies that move between complete banning to restricted access. Mid-size companies recognize the need for employees to socialize and allow access to social media by only restricting their times of access for example: between noon and 1 PM or after 6 PM etc. which a few informants call as 'the Facebook time'. However, several of these companies, which restrict access to other social media, tend to allow complete access to LinkedIn, viewing this as a knowledge medium. Employees then

tend to make use of LinkedIn to send personal messages. For example: Suchitra, a 24-year-old IT employee, while working on a smart phone restricted project, corresponded with her friend from another IT company over LinkedIn, by sending personal messages over LinkedIn's messaging system. However, most of these channels of communication change when such restrictions are removed. For example: When Suchitra shifted to a project which allowed employees to bring in smart phones, she shifted her communication to WhatsApp instead of LinkedIn, thereby reducing the use of company property for personal use.

With small sized companies and start-ups, these restrictions don't find a place. Employees tend to access social media over phones as well as over their work systems and with WhatsApp now taking over instant messaging, unrestricted access to non-work aspects from workplace is evident. Further, when it comes to accessing social media from the company machines, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn rank as the most visited social media sites from workplace for these employees of small sized companies and start-ups. However, most of these start-ups are web based and have their economic model centred around advertising and mobile applications and thereby require all their employees to be online. But, then with this kind of work access to personal communication over social media reduces significantly since most social media access now centres on work. Raghu, a 22 years old Physics graduate and a self-taught programmer of a start-up which designs mobile and social media apps, stated that "*people in my company normally go on an invisible mode on Facebook while designing apps as constant personal communication can be disturbing and also we most often sign into social media from a work account and not on personal account to counter this. Also,*

my boss sits right next to me, since we practise an agile workspace[169] (Joroff et al., 2003)*. The work area is small; so people know what you are up to. Though, no one would let you know of your personal distractions immediately, they will ensure to pass on visible cues that will in itself get you straightened out. So we communicate over WhatsApp…it's easy and discrete and disturbs no one. Also, it's easy in such a small set up to know what you do and when you do something online. While my good friends are at my workplace, I tend to do face to face communication, I only have my college friends on WhatsApp…so communication during work time with people outside work is sometimes minimal."* He also likened his work to that of a filmmaker watching someone else's film, where the focus is not on entertainment but on the technical aspect of it.

However, both Suchitra and Raghu's cases once again are examples of how the system itself provides ample opportunities to cross restrictions that it places on employees. But, when it openly offers opportunities, the platform for such personal communications has already shifted and the employees no longer access social media over the company's properties and shift to their own personal devices.

5.5 Office Communicator

To further examine the specific role of new digital communication technologies inside an IT work environment, we need to recognise that the context was not just an issue of the delineation of formal work spaces alone, but also the way

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[169] This system allows employees to keep moving between work desks and isn't fixed to a cubicle (which is a practise in bigger companies and offers a bit more privacy). Please refer to Joroff et al., 2003 for agile workplaces.

these created conditions for communication. Formal work always also included non-work communication. For example: having a conversation about a movie that one saw last night with a colleague or exchanging gossip, when two or three colleagues see/meet each other in the office canteen or next to the water cooler. Areas such as these, even inside a formal work place, foster non-work communication. These areas have also expanded to an online space to foster channels of non-work communication. For example: the instant office messaging system such as an instant communicator or internal office forums allow for such non-work related communication to take place. So, this use of online facilities including internal office message systems for non-work related communication has plenty of precedents in the way people at work previously chatted face to face by the water cooler (Fayard and Weeks, 2007) about other matters such as movies.

Like Sharath and Keshav's company, several IT companies restrict access to popular social media sites. However, to ensure that their employees still have a social network, some of these larger companies build their own social media sites for facilitating communication and socializing employees within the company. Several large companies also provide access to internal company forums, where employees can post group meet ups and even sell stuff like used books, watches, vehicles etc. However, not everyone tends to use these facilities effectively, since this kind of social networking still tends to be work related and in a work space which observes employee activities, this can have a significant impact on one's career and in several of these cases people never mistook it as a substitution for Facebook or WhatsApp or LinkedIn.

While start-ups don't provide this facility (due to budgetary restrictions) of an internal social media, with its smaller structure it tends to ask employees to

socialize and build a collegial atmosphere. However, employees don't do this over Facebook (though they might add friends from work), but tend to do this face-to-face or over WhatsApp (if they are outside the work space). An exact parallel to this example is discussed in Chapter six with respect to school systems in Panchagrami.

This is yet another example of how the concept of system paradox works. The larger IT companies build their own social media for their employees but they don't necessarily use them effectively, but start-ups which try to create a collegial atmosphere would love to create such bonding, but have their budgetary restrictions to put this in place, so employees do this face to face.

While team meetings can be termed as formal work related meetings, several other meetings/interactions are sort of fluid in their actual status of being termed formal work related communication and moves through a continuum of work between different spheres of life. There is a kind of smooth flow that is maintained between different spheres of life through such communication even within a formal work system/work space. We will now examine how social media has enhanced such mediation by offering communication channels, which were non-existent in the factory system.

This section starts with three examples that look at communication that takes place within the workspace over WhatsApp and inter office communicator. In the next section, we will place that communication within the wider context where work communication is inseparable from communication that takes place outside of work. The final section will show how these combine to create a general social media space where local non-work contacts actually end up

transforming the personnel structure of work by recruiting social media contacts into the workplace.

The following cases are typical amongst a majority of middle class IT workers who live and work at Panchagrami. In these cases, the space from where such reaching out happens namely the office space is the space of contention.

None of what happens in the following cases can be termed office work however hard one tries to categorize. But what can be seen from these cases is the *'flow'* of communication and idea from one sphere to another and the immediate movement back to the former, be it communication flow between work and home spheres while at work or between work and hobby sphere or between work and a sporting sphere which a group itself does and flows back into the work sphere once again. The temporality of such flows might change and can be relative, but such flows happen daily and can never be avoided.

Anita and Purushottam – Couple on Inter office communicator

Anita, 24 years old, and Purushottam, 27 years old are newly married and work for an IT company at Panchagrami. They work on different projects and are based out of different floors in the same company. While Purushottam is a Project Manager, Anita is a Business Analyst. They come to the office together and leave together in a sedan. They message each other every couple of hours through office communicator, which connects all employees of the company on the intranet. They message each other to coordinate and plan their lunch and coffee breaks and end up meeting each other at least four times in a span of their 9 hours' workday. Frustrations that each other have

with their co-workers is sometimes exchanged over office communicator with code words, so no one who peeks at their machines understand who they are referring to. Though, their romantic messages are reserved for WhatsApp rather than the Office communicator, general messages such as reminding to pay a telephone bill, organizing to meet during the day etc. are all done through this office channel. To an onlooker it gives an image of one staring at a computer screen and portrays an image as though one is working. Handling mobile phones, as Anita puts it, gives an impression that one isn't working but wasting one's time fiddling away with things, and providing the manager enough to chew on. However, communicating through office communicator, helps preserve one's image of a diligent worker and at the same time communicate with a close family member who works in the same office. Their case is like that of Ranga and Chandra, discussed in chapter four. There were other cases of couples working in the same campus of a company exchanging personal messages on official communication systems.

Ramanan and Balashankar – Cycling Buddies

Ramanan, 24 years old, is a bachelor working for the same IT company as that of his cousin Balashankar, 36 years. Though both work out of different branches of the same company, they found a common interest in cycling, as a hobby as well as an exercise. They send each other posts related to cycling over WhatsApp and over the inter office communicator, all being done while both are at work. Further, they are also members of a cycling group, which has a group page on Facebook. Posts on this page are constantly checked by Ramanan throughout the day and are sent to Balashankar. They chat with each other several times a day over the inter office communicator as well as

over WhatsApp. Their communication while at work revolves primarily around cycling. Once again, for both Ramanan and Balashankar, this doesn't necessarily mean walking into the hallway to have a conversation. Sitting at one's desk, one can hold conversations and make it appears one is working[170] (Goffman, 2002).

These examples showcase the way in which employees use the affordances of technologies to flow across different spheres of life. These provide possibilities for performative communication, which may enhance prestige in the work place while at the same time extending that work technology into the domestic/hobby sphere, through a technology devised for the work sphere. They also provide evidence on why it has become particularly hard for companies to retain barriers to external communication and demonstrate how companies as a work system have challenges enforcing rigid work- non-work boundaries when having married couples or kin working for them.

Cricket Matches and Abhishek's Office

During Indian Premier League cricket matches, Abhishek, a 27 years old programmer sends a message over office communicator to his friend, a business analyst in another project, requesting for scores of Chennai Super Kings (Chennai Super Kings, n.d.), a county cricket club which has some of India's most famous cricket players. He receives a message from Vidyashankar, a colleague of his asking for scores. Soon most of his teammates start browsing for scores on their smart phones and on websites and pass this information over office communicator to their teammates.

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[170] This can still seem as a conscious presentation of oneself in the every corporate life. Please refer to Goffman, 2002 for more on presentation of self in everyday life.

People also start getting messages from friends over Facebook and WhatsApp commenting on cricket scores, and everything is passed through office communicator without disturbing anyone else (other teams on the same floor). Everyone is involved, right from the Vice President to the data entry operator. Next day, everything returns to normal, checking Facebook during office time is frowned upon. Though this case cannot be classified as home sphere moving into the work sphere, yet it is a clear case of non-work sphere moving into the work sphere and thereby creating an informality even amongst a group primarily formed for formal official work.

So, before we even consider the issues of flow between work space and non-work spaces we must recognise that within the office and the work environment there is already a complex mixture of flows between what is strictly work and non- work aspects of communication.

Now, given that we have a bird's eye view of how social media fits into the everyday work culture of IT firms in India, the everyday mediation in such culture through personal communication technologies might be better appreciated through the following case study of a typical weekday for a typical middle class nuclear family at Panchagrami.

5.6 The Re-Integration of Work and Home

In one of our earlier examples we had discussed Anita and Purushottam. They were married and shared a work environment, but now imagine a few

years later when they have children. Perhaps by then they will have turned into Ravi and Shwetha.

Ravi, 36 years and Shwetha, 32 years are a couple that live in their own three bed room apartment in a multi-storeyed apartment complex at Panchagrami. Both work for Information Technology companies in the field site. Their family is a typical nuclear family with the other members just being their two children, the eldest, Vishal is 10 years old and attends a well reputed affluent International school inside their apartment complex while their daughter Anu, two and a half years old attends a play school situated right next to the apartment complex.

Their typical day begins at around 5 AM, when Shwetha and Ravi wake up to alarms set on their smart phones. While Ravi goes out for a quick run, Shwetha starts her cooking by then. However, a part of their routine includes a quick check of their office email accounts set on Outlook, a quick check of WhatsApp and a very quick glance into their respective Facebook profiles to see if they missed any official or personal communication. All of this is done before they begin their domestic chores for the day. Vishal is woken up at 6 AM for a cricket coaching scheduled at 7 AM in his school, after which he would stay back to attend to his classes at school. This is when Ravi steals some time off to read a few e-newspapers/tech magazines that he subscribes to, on his iPad, concurrently checking his running (marathon) group page on Facebook. Anu is woken up at 6:30 AM for Ravi to drop her off at her Montessori by 8 AM and then directly head to his office. However, Shwetha is off to her company at 7 AM after finishing her chores of cooking for the day. Owning two cars makes it easy for the Ravi household, as they don't rely on each other for transport in the mornings. Shwetha sends Ravi a routine

WhatsApp text once she reaches office letting him know that she had reached safely. The note also includes a little *"Love you and Kisses"* message. Ravi does the same thing twice, once when he drops Anu at her play school and the other when he reaches his office. The first WhatsApp message is intended to let Shwetha know if Anu cried when she was dropped at school, as both have been worrying about these sudden outbursts of Anu for some time now. The second message is meant to let Shwetha know that he has reached his office safely and this message would include a "Love you" note as well.

Shwetha calls her maid on her mobile phone at around 10 AM to check to see if the maid has arrived at home for cleaning and for providing instructions. If the maid doesn't show up, then Ravi gets a frustrated WhatsApp message from Shwetha cursing the maid and how they can't be trusted at all.

At around noon, Anu's play school sends a WhatsApp message to both Ravi and Shwetha. This is a service that the school offers at an extra cost. This is a daily report sent only to parents who have requested for it. It specifically addresses on how/what did their child do at school and if the child ate its lunch properly. If, Anu seems to have not eaten her lunch, then Shwetha calls the play school to check what happened and sends a WhatsApp message to Ravi. The maid would give Shwetha a missed call (as phone calls are charged and she can't afford to make calls) (Donner, 2007), giving Shwetha a clue to call back, else, calls are made from their land line phone to let Shwetha know of a courier service or gas service delivery that turned up unexpectedly. If something unexpected turns up, Shwetha and Ravi exchange WhatsApp messages clarifying things.

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During or immediately after lunch (normally after 1 PM) both Shwetha and Ravi also send WhatsApp texts to each other letting the other know if they enjoyed their packed lunch for the day. Shwetha normally heads back home at around 2:30 PM, as a part of her work from home policy that her company encourages. She picks up Anu from her school after a quick chat with her teacher. Once again, a quick message is sent to Ravi letting him know that Anu has been picked up from school.

While Anu naps, Shwetha prepares a snack for Vishal who comes home after school at 3:30 PM. Once Vishal is home, Shwetha once again logs into her work computer at around 4 PM, with music videos open on their HP home computer's chrome browser. Vishal, either goes to play with other children in the apartment complex at around 4:30 PM or would choose to play games on Xbox. Meanwhile, Anu is awake now and Shwetha helps her watch cartoons on iPad and gets back to work. Around 6 PM is when Vishal is first asked by Shwetha to sit with his homework, though it takes a while for Shwetha to convince (shout, beg, ask etc.) Vishal to do his homework for the day. Finally, at around 6:30 PM when Vishal starts his homework, Shwetha works, helps Vishal with his homework and keeps an eye on Anu. At around 7:30 PM, Ravi normally sends in another WhatsApp text letting Shwetha know that he would be leaving office in a few minutes or so and checking with her on dinner. Shwetha normally logs off from work at around 7 PM for dinner preparation and to feed Anu before dinnertime at 8:30 PM. However, preparing dinner is not as hectic as getting breakfast and lunch ready in the mornings. Shwetha makes sure to call her parents or her friends and operates with her Bluetooth earpiece and gets her dinner prepared while also helping Vishal with his homework.

After dinner, while Ravi checks on Vishal for his homework, Shwetha helps Anu to bed. Between 9:30 PM and 10 PM is when Shwetha checks her social media for other messages, this is when she catches up on WhatsApp group messages on the four groups that she is a member of and chats with her women (house-wives/working mothers) friends, as most of them seem to be free only then. Ravi, does this in office, so, he alternates between his office emails, WhatsApp and Facebook before retiring for the night.

This case represents a typical everyday routine in middle class working couples' homes. Panchagrami has a lot of Shwethas, Ravis, Anus and Vishals. A deeper look at the case study would elucidate the emotions that such couples undergo and the life they lead as nuclear households. They are typically referred to as double income families as both the husband and wife are well qualified and typically work for private sector companies. Such families normally tend to make sure their office work is not hindered in anyway and aspire for higher positions at work while also trying to ensure that their family life or life outside work is not hindered. While the above case study is characteristic of how young working couples mediate their everyday family life, there are other cases with slight variations, however, most fit into a pattern. What the details spotlight is Polymedia (Madianou and Miller, 2013) - the roles of the complementary personal communication technologies such as Smart phones, WhatsApp and Facebook. This also shows how WhatsApp helps mediate and catch up with domestic life while also ensuring to pass on and express the myriad emotions of love, guilt and frustration in the midst of a long working day. The generation of younger working middle class couples grew up as children in an era where their mothers were mostly homemakers and showered them with attention and their father was the sole working member of their families. However, amassing immense education capital and

with opportunities that are being offered to the new middle class to turn this education capital to economic capital, they face a dilemma of sorts, where opportunities that offer upward mobility through higher positions at work and ensuring economic wellbeing should not be lost but at the same time, the morality that beckons them to shower their children with attention, which they received from their parents (especially mothers) should also be ensured (Säävälä, 2010). This is especially true in the cases of young working middle class mothers. Interviewing young working mothers and working mothers of young children revealed a mix of emotions that came out of what they thought their moral duties were and a helplessness of sorts in not being able to perform their moral duties well. These are well captured in the words of Purnima, a 27-year-old, programmer for a major IT company who has a two-year-old son.

"This is the age, when my son needs me, I feel so guilty when I drop him at the Crèche every morning. He thinks I will be with him. I don't know if he cries, but I cry everyday. I know, what I do is wrong…we just invested on a house and a car…I can't resign my job…my salary is needed to pay off these loans…at least I am ensuring a good future for my kid…"

After a minute she asked *"Am I cheating myself by convincing myself of securing his future? Doesn't he need me now more than ever?"*

Though interviews with working mothers of young children would normally divulge what Purnima revealed, there is more to this than what appears on the surface. Normally, working mothers who had just had their first child were much more emotional when it came to leaving their first child and going to work as compared to mothers who have a younger second child. However, there were cases, which were exactly the opposite too. For example: Sridevi,

a 30-year-old, working mother of a seven-year-old and a two-year-old had her widowed mother staying with her for over three years before she passed away. Her mother took care of her first child, while now; her second doesn't have anyone to take care of.

Shankar, 32 years and Janani, 30 years are a couple working for two different IT companies at Panchagrami. Shankar normally drops their daughter at school and Janani at work. Shankar's mother picks up her granddaughter, Sravya, 8 years old after school at around 4 PM and Shankar picks up Janani after work. They message each other and Shankar's mother over WhatsApp at least 10 times a day, right from the time Shankar reaches work, starting with letting Janani and sometimes his mother know that he reached safely and has dropped Sravya and Janani safely too. There is another message that goes out when Shankar goes for lunch at noon and similarly during the two or three coffee breaks during the day. Some of these messages aren't synchronous and each of them take their time in answering these messages based on the work they are engaged in at that precise moment, however, most messages are normally answered within half an hour. Once Sravya is home, she messages Janani over WhatsApp from her grandmother's phone letting her know that she has reached home safely. The grandmother messages both Janani and Shankar at around 6 PM letting them know of the groceries they might need to purchase on their way back home along with a menu for dinner.

If we strip away the grandmother's character and exchange it with that of an elderly female cook, you might see Kavitha's case reflected here as well. Typical families in Panchagrami with an elderly member at home tend to normally communicate in this fashion.

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However, even with grandparents around, things don't seem as they are, which was best seen from Lakshmi's case, who we already met in chapter two. Being a busy IT Manager, Lakshmi used WhatsApp voice messages to mother her children from her workplace. When asked if she could achieve "good work life balance", she smiled and said, "*I wish I could, that's why I talk. I am struggling to find this. I try my best to negotiate team meetings and deadlines. My Blackberry Phone helps me even while I am not at work. Though my team is an all men team, they are good so they understand*". Personal life does intrude her at work, and she adds that social media such as WhatsApp helps her manage it.

However, given that children have the highest priority, and with grandparents taking care of grandchildren while parents are at work; an interesting dimension to the joint family system as seen in chapter four was witnessed at Panchagrami. As seen above, marriage into a traditional family with several expectations can cause severe stress for working women who move away from the joint family system with their spouse and children. However, this poses a problem of childcare when they work. To surpass this issue, a workable solution, of staying close to the elderly (parents/parents-in-law) is becoming a trend as seen above and as discussed in chapter four. This ensures that they still live apart as nuclear families, but also live close but as neighbours; close enough to be a joint family. This becomes a viable solution, as this not only ensures privacy, but also guarantees a safe childcare and food too in some cases.

The husbands of such young mothers do understand such issues with childcare moralities as well as their practical needs. Help comes in the form of

dropping their young kids off at school[171] and sometimes cooking[172]. Most have a maid who comes in for other domestic chores such as cleaning.

At the same time, middle classes in Panchagrami are a collective group, and hence establishing and staying in connection with friends and extended family was important as well. This was clearly shown when people were asked to name the circles of connections they see as important. Though, 96% of couples named their spouses and children in their first circle of importance, 89% of middle class couples named their friends and family in their second circle of importance (some named their dogs in the first circle and their mother-in law in the second circle. There wasn't any statistically significant difference between men and women who did this.) Their need for connection is evident through families such as that of Ravi and Sujatha somehow ensuring to stay in touch with friends and family through WhatsApp and Facebook groups.

Many cases such as this exists at Panchagrami, and with this pressing desire for upward mobility and for asserting and exercising morals that trouble them, there is a constant need to keep in touch with their domestic life though they normally end up working for long hours in their office jobs. One way they ensure that they bridge both these aspects of life is through ensuring constant communication between both these spheres of life i.e. the work and the domestic sphere.

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[171] This was confirmed by three play school coordinators and also a quick count of children dropped in school by their fathers over a two week period counting over three working days each week – for working family households the average turned out to be that 41% young children were dropped by fathers before going to work, 27% by mothers, 24% by grand parents and 8% by a care taker.
[172] The right amount of domestic work share at home for these working mothers, is still far away.

While all of this might seem apparent, it is still not straightforward in modern work places, especially in IT companies, since they have their own set of regulations of what is permissible and what is not permissible within their office space. As seen earlier, since access to social media is not allowed on work computers, they can only be done through affordable smart phones. However, a few companies, which view social media as an efficient tool to harness work-life balance, allow restricted access during lunchtime or after work hours. Weekends are always open to access such sites, but, a tab is kept on the broadband usage and anything that exceeds a certain level of usage (varies by company and by team) is monitored and acted upon so that company properties aren't misused. All of this matters less and less as such restrictions are bypassed through the personal smartphones, which guarantees 24/7 connections without anyone breathing down their necks.

In the review of the general literature on work in India it was noted that a further dilution of the ideal of a strict work to non-work division was the way that kinship itself infiltrated into the workplace. This may still further blur the boundaries when it comes to an IT company. This specific phenomenon might be better explained with a case of lower socio-economic classes at Panchagrami, who typically work for these IT companies in lower management cadres or other associated level jobs.

5.7 Mediating Structures - Kin based networks in IT – The case of Lower Socio economic classes – Recruitment and beyond

As seen in the earlier chapters, Panchagrami comprises of villages that have strong caste-based networks. Most same caste members in these villages are

kin or at least address each other in fictive kin terms. This is more often an intra caste characteristic than an inter caste aspect, though universalization of fictive kin terms such as *'Anna'* (meaning big brother) is an inter caste aspect that exists almost all over Tamil Nadu.

Most lower socio-economic class youngsters between the ages of 18 years and 30 years, in these villages are either dropouts (high school or college) or are degree holders from the local area colleges. However, most work for an IT/ITES company closer to their village. They occupy positions in lower management grades or end up with a position that entails work of a decent status such as that of a copy assistant, records keeper, hardware technician etc. Consciously, they avoid jobs such as that of a cleaning staff in these companies, which is traditionally associated with lower caste positions. They feel that their literacy (though not all of them are degree holders) and the importance this gains in the knowledge economy, has given them the necessary impetus to revolt against traditional caste norms. This conscious decision is a significant breakdown of caste shackles and movement towards an upward social mobility (Ambedkar, 1944).

So, how do they end up in positions in IT/ITES companies with degrees or even without degrees? None of these IT companies have any kind of formal affirmative action plans to supply these village youngsters with highly skilled jobs; however, for support staff roles (and that of cleaning staff), many of these companies end up recruiting from the local areas as the process is easy when it comes to hiring villagers for menial labor rather than for management positions. So even if the IT companies don't help them in securing management level jobs, the youngsters help themselves by recruiting each other into lower management positions.

It all started a few years ago, Dharshan, now 30 years old, had dropped out of high school after a failed love affair. As a true mark of friendship, Naga, 29 years old now, a dear friend of Dharshan, dropped out along with him. Not having anything to do, they roamed around these IT companies and spent most of their time in casual chats to avoid boredom and as a time pass (Fuller, 2011) mechanism. A school senior, who worked for one of the IT companies, spotted them and had asked them, what they were doing there. Listening to their story, this senior had offered them advice and agreed to help them secure jobs in the company he worked for as record keeping staff, since they were both literates. Both Dharshan and Naga agreed to do this and given the urgent requirement for staff in these positions, the hiring company did not ask many questions in the interview process and had just ensured that they were literates. Soon, they found that hard work paid results. While, Dharshan, became the head of record keeping for a client of the IT Company, Naga branched out to become a records collector. Both were permanently placed in the company. When, a school friend of theirs came knocking at their doors to seek favor for a job, Dharshan and Naga, helped this friend exerting their influence to find a job in the same company as a records copier. Soon after this experiment of placing a friend bore results, they discussed on why shouldn't they help their own community members and kin find jobs in such companies and help them achieve social and economic mobility. However, they didn't go out to advertise this. They just unofficially posted a job opening their company had on their Facebook profile to see if other young men from the area responded. They did! The duo found success by placing a non-degree holder kin of theirs in their company as a transport in charge in the Logistics department. Word spread around quickly that Dharshan and Naga could help youngsters secure good jobs. The young men in the area either

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waited until the duo posted job adverts on Facebook or they approached them requesting favors. The idea as Dharshan noted, was to pounce on these job openings as soon as they were internally advertised and not wait until everyone knows about these, thereby beating competition. The strategy they adopt now is to not even advertise these openings on Facebook, but to text the right person through WhatsApp, so he can apply immediately. Sometimes, they send WhatsApp texts to around four or five potential candidates and check to see who is suitable for positions that have opened. As noted earlier, this behavior isn't new, but a key characteristic of work in India itself. However, in the past it would have been kin connections recruited through word of mouth, whereas now, it is social media that moves this process from family to a wider sense of one's locality.

The ones who find jobs look out for other openings in the company and help others from their community secure positions as well. Dharshan has now started helping women graduates from his area secure good positions in his IT company. However, communication happens with the parents of these girls rather than the girls themselves, as they don't possess mobile phones. He uses his influence to place them in positions that wouldn't spoil the girls' names in the community. For example: The records division and the transport division consists of mostly men and Dharshan felt that women from his community shouldn't work here, and if they did, he felt they would be very uncomfortable or at least the parents would be uncomfortable and rumors would spread in their village tarnishing the girl's character, which will then spoil her matrimonial alliances. So, he ended up placing them in data entry positions, where one could find a lot more women than men. Similarly, the duo also clearly distinguishes between positions that a non-degree holder should

occupy as opposed to those that a degree holder should i.e. records copying vs. data analyst respectively.

Now, this network seems to have expanded to other companies in the neighborhood as well and most often messages about openings for jobs in lower management positions in these companies are passed on through a WhatsApp group and action takes place at a rate faster than what it would normally take for companies through their regular process of recruitment. This internal referencing method for lower management positions seems to work in a faster and in an effective way. Another aspect of this is the training given to these candidates first by Dharshan and/or Naga or by one of the earlier recruits based on the position that the candidate is applying to. Jointly they have placed around 25 youngsters in various positions and claim that their success rate has been around 95%.

So, what do they get in return? They have carefully constructed an image for themselves in their community and have built a social capital for themselves. Further, the elders of their community perceive them as people who have shaped the future of the community youngsters. For Dharshan and Naga, their workplace now becomes a place where their own community members are found in significant numbers. With an invitation provided by Naga and Dharshan, a visit to the work floor of the records section revealed that most men here addressed each other not as 'Sir' but as *'Mama'*, a colloquial term for Uncle or as '*Anna'* meaning big brother. They normally ate together and had formed a kin network within a modern IT/ITES company. Everyone had a smart phone with WhatsApp installed, as this is what helped him communicate and send information to each other about opportunities as they arose. Whatever happened in the community was passed along through

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WhatsApp even during office hours and none felt that he was working overtime as they were working with their families and kin. It didn't make much of a difference being away from home or being away from work. It was all the same.

While Dharshan and Naga took care of non-professional degree holders and non-degree holders and supported them in gaining employment in lower management positions, Vasu, a 28-year-old, data security administrator, who hails from the same community and is a professional degree holder (an Engineer) helps other engineering graduates from his community find employment in middle management positions in either his IT company or other IT companies. Vasu, Dharshan and Naga all belong to the same caste and have struggled to gain the social mobility that has been escaping their clutches for a long time now. When just graduated engineers or engineers looking for a job change from his kin network knock on Vasu's doors, he sits with them to coach them through resume preparation, creating a LinkedIn profile, answering interview questions and prepares them as potential candidates before he recommends them for a job. However, the phrase 'sitting down with Vasu' has a different meaning; Vasu normally tends to meet them only once, else he only talks to them over Skype and communicates information about potential job opportunities through WhatsApp, everything is done online. He does this from office or from home, but he makes sure that his kin that come seeking favor gain an understanding of other communication tools and expand their horizon much beyond their personal communication on social media. While Dharshan and Naga don't pressurize people about creating LinkedIn profiles, as they themselves don't have one, Vasu, makes sure that his network of job seeking kin create profiles on LinkedIn. Further, he makes sure that these kin of his also understand how to access knowledge

based engineering groups on LinkedIn. This he stresses would come in handy not only during job interviews but also once they join work. Vasu's success rate has been around 70%, which he feels isn't bad for someone trying to help his kin get into management positions in companies. The jobseekers, who seek his advice, have expanded beyond his kin network and have gone on to include other caste individuals too.

However, what must be noted here is not just the movement of kin networks from one space into another alone, but also the creation of candidacy for positions through creation of knowledge. In other words, these are informal knowledge networks, which operate under the guise of kin networks. However, these operates from the work place, be it recruitment or bonding. These kinds of recruitments allow us to compare this to a factory based, low skill recruitment of labor as studied at Chota Nagpur, Tiruppur or even the other iron and steel plants. Iron and steel plants and mines that were set up in the earlier part of the 20th century also gradually started to set up the industrial infrastructure in India (Vidyarthi, 1984; Bear, 2007). It was in this set up that there arose a separation of work and home (Niehoff, 1959; Vidyarthi, 1984; Holmström, 1976; Parry, 1999; De Neve, 2005). Anthropological studies (Vidyarthi, 1984) of work on the Chotanagpur area concludes that though people migrated towards these industrial settings leaving their family/kin/caste based work, they seemed to help their family/kin groups and caste members find work in the same factory and migrate into the area as well, therefore re-establishing the ties that they left behind (Holmstrom, 1976).

Anthropological studies (Vidyarthi, 1984; De Neve, 2005) on Tiruppur garment factory workers or on Chota Nagpur area factory workers specifically note the social relations that get built in spaces of formalized wage related labour.

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They specifically speak to how people bring in their social relationships (for e.g.: Caste in terms of garment factory workers in Tiruppur and kin from their native villages in the case of Chota Nagpur) to work. Similar observation is made in a study (Osella and Osella, 2000) of Izhavas in Kerala, where a migration of a caste member to the Middle East (specifically the UAE) helps other kin groups and caste members to move there as well, thus re-establishing kinship and family ties.

Therefore, though systems of rigid separation of work from home arose in the modern industrial work settings, it is pretty evident that once we turn to the Indian context these have always been compromised by kinship and caste. However, one also needs to realize that earlier, caste based networks were also based on collective origins from a specific geographic area, where people were of the same religion and of the same caste. Though, they might not have been kin, they mostly knew each other through descriptive fictive kinship terms, and in some ways, all of this followed from the idiom of a kin based society. This however starts to change following rural urban migration, as people recognize the way the same caste cuts across to other religions (e.g.: Muslims, Christians and Hindus), it is fast becoming an aspect of cultural separation than hierarchical rank (Fuller, 1996; Fanselow, 1996; Vatuk, 1996). Further, caste is also becoming overlain by the idiom of class inequality in contemporary India (Fuller, 1996; Beteille, 1996). Largely, caste based networks do exist, but they are increasingly becoming just one part of a very complex and ambiguous sort of competing orders and categories within modern work settings which might expand to more specific groups such as trade unions (Bear, 2007).

As stated earlier, though systems of rigid separation of work from home arose in the modern industrial work settings, it is apparent that mediating such dichotomous environments (home vs. work) was much more evident in unskilled wage related work (Holmstrom, 1976) existing outside and inside industries rather than the salaried management. However, this does exist in the management ranks as well, as certain perks come with their hierarchy and status inside a factory. Nevertheless, their position also adds greatly to being visible when they perform such mediating activities and may result in being called out for nepotism. However, for the low-wage workers, the idea of nepotism does not exist as factories face high labour turn over and such recruitment might be the most effective way to manage this turnover.

However, what also needs cognizance is that historically in India, not all labor was related to one physical space. There was a putting out system (Swallow, 2008), where an industrial process is not contained within the confines of a single physical space but rather goes through stages of processing, each of which could happen in a different physical space, such as a worker's home.

Though, this entire process of mediating the work vs. non-work boundary inside a factory system may look like an effort from the labor force itself, the factories in a way allow for such mediations to happen. There exists a system's paradox cycle in all of this. The factories (work system) for their part try very hard to establish this rigid separation of work and non- work. But, at the same time for them to recruit lower-wage laborers into the factory system, they allow for their employees to recommend and help recruiting other workers. The employees for their part recruit their families/kin/caste group members favoring them over others. This in a way acts as a catalyst for non-work related informal communication within formal workspaces, which leads to

the creation of a non-work environment at work thoroughly undermining formality of the workspace itself. This tips the work system to what has been traditionally followed in India, which then makes the formal work system frown upon this arrangement and leads it to enforce stricter regulations.

Image 5.1 provides a visual cyclical presentation of this paradox.

Image 5.1: Work System Paradox Cycle
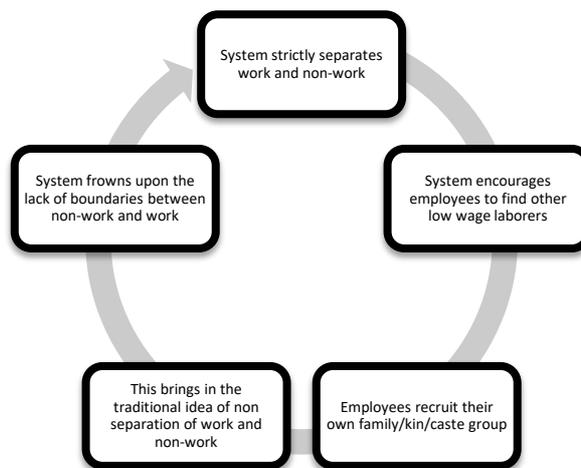
This kind of a work system's paradox cycle was just not prevalent in the manufacturing process systems alone; this exists as we see in the knowledge processing industries such as the IT work systems as well; but this time in relation to social media and personal digital communication technologies.

Though the nature of such recruitments has historically stayed the same, in this case (Dharshan and Naga and Vasu too) the speeds at which such recruitments happen with the help of social media differs significantly from the earlier industrial labor recruitments. Further, social media in a way helps squash competitions as in Dharshan and Naga's cases. The speed of recruiting someone by passing and withholding information also helps the duo

gain brownie points and achieve social status both at their workplace and within their community.

Again, restrictions on social media do happen here as well. For example: when Naga had, a friend take a picture of himself in the documents room and posted it on Facebook, his manager's manager who was a Facebook friend of his threatened him with dire consequences if he did not take down the picture immediately, as it had been taken in a safe room, which per the client's policies restricts any photography and use of smart phones. Naga had to apologize and take down the picture. He also closed the Facebook account and opened a fresh one, this time only friending his well-known local friends and not his superiors from work. Visibility led to restriction here and bypassing these restrictions by unfriending someone or opening another account was an easy way out, thus, once again reflecting aspects of a work system's paradox. While, social media is useful and praised when used for recruitment, it is frowned upon when it comes to letting everyone know of one's workplace.

5.8 Workplace Sociality

Though undermining the boundaries of work-non-work in modern workplaces through personal communication technologies and specifically through social media might be new in the Indian scenario, the idea of bringing non-work aspects to work (thus forming a workplace sociality) is visible across sectors in South India (De Neve, 2005) and is not of recent origin. As seen earlier, IT is an eco-system, which consists of not just well established companies, but also entrepreneurs (start-ups), venture capitalists, subcontractors and so on who employ a diverse workforce of both skilled and unskilled employees. While NASSCOM estimates the IT sector to have employed around 3.5 million

skilled workforces[173], it also employs unskilled workforce either directly (like in the case of Dharshan and Naga) or indirectly through subcontracting (e.g. house-keeping staff, drivers etc.). Breakdown of work-non-work boundaries while establishing a workplace sociality is seen in both these segments and can be ascribed to both the recruitment processes (in both skilled and unskilled segments) which leads to a certain kind of informality in work culture as well as to the kind of workplace sociality that exists due to formation of personal networks within workplaces and extend beyond the space of work.

5.8.1 Recruitment

Access to jobs and the recruitment process become important gateways to a workspace symbolising prosperity[174] and contribute indirectly to a breakdown of work-non-work boundaries. While unskilled labour force recruitment is majorly informal labour recruitment, which happens through caste, kin or other personal networks, access to jobs and recruitment in the skilled segment, though more stringent in process and requiring job specific skills, is also through personal networks. This section will first deal with the informal labour recruitment and will then move onto skilled labour recruitment.

Over 90%[175] (Indian Budget, n.d.) of employment of Indian labour is informal and over 80%[176] (Indian Budget, n.d.) is employed in the unorganized sector.

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[173] NASSCOM – The National Association of Software and Services Companies
It is not certain if these estimates combine the startups and take into consideration the whole of the IT eco-system. It is very unlikely that the whole IT eco-system is considered in this case. Further, the Economic survey 2014-2015, states that only 2% of the Indian workforce is even skilled.

[174] There have been several studies, which mention of skilled workers getting paid very well in the IT sector. Studies on pay disparity in the unskilled workforce in the IT sector is still warranted.

[175] Indian Budget, n.d. Retrieved from http://indiabudget.nic.in/es2014-15/echapter-vol2.pdf (page 136).

[176] ibid. The rates were higher in 2004-2005 at 87% and have since then reduced to 82.7% in 2011-2012.

Informal labour[177] (Unorganised labour in India, n.d.; Harriss-White, 2003) and work in the unorganized sector can be traditional in nature (Unorganised labour in India, n.d.; Harriss-White, 2003), include work in modern settings and small scale urban enterprises or even be self-employed; however, most of this labour force is being unskilled or casual (Harriss-White, 2003). The contribution of the informal sector to the economy is large and is characterised by highly personalised social relationships involved in the labour process. The kind of informality that these social relations share (Bremen, 1976; De Neve, 2005) is much more visible in the cases of contractual, casual, putting out form of labour system, which involved people of the same extended family, caste or religion working together (Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005). Such informality rarely separated boundaries of work and non-work and involved a constant flow of non-work communication in work floors (De Neve, 2005).

Historically work in India was characterised by such informality. However, one of the earliest organizations, which appears to have changed this informality and introduced industrial discipline to the Indian labour force seems to have been the Indian railways[178](Bear, 2007). Since then, with the development of other Indian industries, such industrial discipline has striven to separate non-work aspects from workspaces[179] (Vidyarthi, 1984; Bailyn, 1993; Parry et al., 1999). However, as seen earlier, even these systems paradoxically allowed for recruitment of kin in the workforce, thus establishing a workspace sociality, which was frowned upon to start with (Vidyarthi, 1984). This recruitment need not necessarily be characteristic of the rural or semi-urban markets or town

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[177] This labour is defined as Informal labour is a labour whose use is not governed either by state regulations or by collective agreements between workers and employers." by fedina.org/777/2011/10/UNORGANISED-SECTOR-IN-INDIA1.doc
and the Informal economy is characterized as the economic activity of firms and individuals not registered for the purposes of taxation and/or regulation by the State by Harriss-White, 2003.

[178] As expressed by Bear, 2007, this has been an argument consistently made by the historians.

[179] This has also happened globally, please refer to Vidyarthi, 1984; Bailyn, 1993; Parry et al., 1999

markets alone (Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005), since personal contacts and kin and caste-based networks have played a significant role in urban labour markets (Harriss et al., 1990) recruitment as well.

While such recruitment across markets in South India was earlier (and even now in contemporary small scale enterprises) through word of mouth, in the IT sector, such recruitment has only been enhanced and made quicker through social media, as seen in the case of Dharshan and Naga. With several such kin, caste or personal networks for recruitment existing within this industry, beating the competition and being ahead of the curve becomes important and social media, especially WhatsApp and Facebook, are put to strategic use in such scenarios.

Even in larger IT firms, certain services (cleaning/housekeeping/drivers) are out-sourced to avoid overhead costs. Contractors, to whom such services have been outsourced, sometimes re-contract them to small-scale operators. These small-scale or individual operators are often recruited through personal networks and kin based networks. For e.g. Kittu, a 24-year-old driver for one of the IT firms is contracted through a small transport company. Hailing from South Tamil Nadu, he was referred to this post through his brother-in-law's brother, who works as a driver for this contractor. His brother-in law sent a note on WhatsApp asking him to get in touch with his brother for this position. Now, Kittu and this relative both work for the same IT company through the same contractor. Similar is the case of Chinnamma, a 46-year-old widow, who works as a part of a 40-member house keeping staff for a large IT company. This team was sub-contracted through another staffing firm. Chinnamma, with limited literacy knew of this position through her son's friend's sister, who works for the same company. News of ongoing recruitment for this

housekeeping team was passed through WhatsApp to her son who let Chinnamma know of this position. Most of this 40-member strong team have a similar background and know at least one other team member through personal contact. These contractors also double up as human staffing agencies in certain cases and are small-scale enterprises with flexible labour practices when it comes to employing informal labour[180] (Harriss et al., 1990; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005). Though there were cases of high labour turnover, these contractors considered themselves a part of the IT service sector where such turnover is expected[181] (De Neve, 2008). Sometimes, people who left such companies, ended up working for IT employees as their house help or drivers and others joined other services such as hotels or hi-rise apartments as hospitality or maintenance support staff, thus still catering to skilled IT employees in a different way.

Open positions were filled in quickly, by recruiting more people from the rural areas through different networks. A transport company even suggested that they hired agents in rural areas to inform the rural men of driver vacancies in their company. Communication with them was both through phone as well as through social media (WhatsApp messages to young men who acted as nodes in these villages). While this process of recruitment is not entirely new in India (Iversen and Torsvik, 2010), communication through WhatsApp for faster and more efficient recruitment is of more recent origin.

There were also cases, where such labor worked in more than one job at the same time. For e.g. Chinnamma worked in a small bakery as a maintenance

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[180] Such flexible labour practices are common in several south Indian small scale enterprises. Please refer to Harriss et al., 1990; Harriss-White, 2003; De Neve, 2005

[181] Limits of kin recruitment and management strategies in calling everyone a kin and thus trying to reduce turnover in an urban textile industry is discussed in De Neve, 2008. However, though recruiting through kin networks and personal networks is seen in the small scale enterprises too, the difference is that management does not refer to its employees as kin and turnover in this case was in a way expected.

support after her house keeping duties for the IT company was over for the day and sometimes had even tripled up as a housemaid for the owner of the bakery. She took over the latter from her daughter, who was now married and living in Chennai. With high workload, Chinnamma wanting to find a replacement for the housemaid position had asked her son to let some of his friends know of this (through WhatsApp). She was very soon able to find a replacement for the housemaid position.

Similar was the case of Jesuraj, a 33-year-old security personnel contracted for a small IT start-up. He doubled up as a call-driver for the IT employees during weekends and networked directly with other drivers who sent him WhatsApp messages about available weekend driver duties.

Such flexibility is something that is also seen in most informal labor scenarios in other sectors as well. However, as in the case of Jesuraj, once again the difference in such scenarios is that communication happens through WhatsApp rather than through other means, which in a way guarantees a faster and sometimes a privileged access to jobs.

Recruitment for the skilled positions in larger IT companies was much more selective and had a stricter interview process and not everyone knew each other, though there were cases of kin and personal friends working in the same company. Though skills of various kinds are prioritised in such companies (e.g. specific programming knowledge for certain programming jobs, English for call centres (Krishnamurthy, n.d.) etc.), not all job openings are advertised for the external job market. Employee referral system works extensively in such companies. So, networking across the IT industry helps access job openings and very often they happen over social media such as

WhatsApp, LinkedIn or Facebook. Networking for skilled IT jobs happen through four processes:

Campus recruitment and college networks: Colleges, specifically the popular Engineering, Arts and Sciences and Management institutes have a process of campus recruitment (some Engineering colleges even charge a fee from the students for this process) where IT companies recruit students in droves[182]. The colleges take pride in placing their students in IT sector jobs even before they graduate. With students being placed in IT companies, their inter-personal/friendship networks become an important source for movement within the industry. Alumni networks also play a part in sustaining such lateral moves. With employee turnover after the first couple of years being common in the IT sector, news regarding open positions in projects is conveyed quickly through social media by the alumni and friendship networks. With campus recruitments and such networks operating in IT companies, it isn't difficult to see college friends working for the same company. For example: Sarangan, a 28-year-old, Dotnet programmer was recruited from campus around six years ago and has since then moved three companies, with references from his college friends. The case of Raghavi, a 24-year-old programmer is similar. She was recruited into a well-known IT company through her college a couple of years ago and wanted to move to a rival company which employed her close friends (also recruited from college). Her friends were on a lookout for a position for her within their company and as soon as one of the projects announced a position, they let Raghavi know of it. She was soon interviewed and now works with her close friends. As Sarangan and Raghavi observe,

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[182] There were rumors of HR of some of these companies, demanding a bribe for student placement in their companies.

only people working inside the company would know of vacancies in certain projects as not all positions are advertised. Though, recruitment at this level requires skills, personal connections and knowledge of open positions also matter. Social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook speed up this kind of recruitment process as well.

Networks from workplace: Friendships from workplace also matter, since with the high employee turnover rate, such workplace friendships tend to go a long way. For example: Vasu, the IT professional whom we had met earlier, observes that the personal networks that he had fostered from his previous work places, have helped him know of job openings and place skilled youngsters in need of work[183]. The water cooler conversations, as Vasu puts it, have worked for him even outside his previous workplaces.

Networks from residential localities: With the residential infrastructure on rise in Panchagrami, specifically catering to the middle class and upper middle class population in the area, such apartments and localities usually start housing people working in the same industry (albeit not from the same company). These apartments are spaces where social activities of various kinds (sports, festivities, celebrations etc.) take place and such activities help foster networks of various kinds[184]. For example: In one of the high-rise apartments, the men (almost everyone here works for the IT sector) meet every weekend to play cricket. They maintain a WhatsApp group through

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[183] A glimpse of how he uses social media to train prospective employees, while discussed earlier, is also available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQmyPAntkTs

[184] Examples of such networks in apartment complexes https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEjzxrMznF0 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5WJYWRDQxI

which such meetings are coordinated. Meetings outside this stipulated cricket time also occur often. Such networks help in accessing news about job openings in other companies. So, cross-company movement in a way becomes easier for members of the network.

Networking through social networking sites: Recent graduates becoming members of various Facebook and WhatsApp groups that advertise for positions in the IT sector is also common. These groups are based on mutual goodwill, where people would become members to search for jobs in the IT sector and others would voluntarily post open positions. There were several employees who advertised on Facebook about vacancies in their companies as a good will gesture. Similarly, connections over LinkedIn also became important for those who already had jobs in the sector and were planning on moving jobs.

A special case is that of start-up firms run by entrepreneurs where recruitment of skilled personnel normally take place through networks that they are already a part of, to avoid overhead costs of recruitment and the risk of turnover and competition through release of trade secrets. Subcontracting routine tasks to freelancers through cheap digital labour is employed in these firms as well. Only once they grow to a specific size does recruitment move away from just personally known networks to a larger network of cheaper and skilled individuals, who understand the start-up culture.

None of the above is in any way different from what has happened historically in industrial labour contexts. Though, this segment might be skilled and belong to the middle class, their networking patterns for jobs aren't different from that of the informal labour.

5.8.2 Workplace informality

Recruitment through such networks guarantees bringing in non-work aspects and a kind of informality into the formal workspace. This is accentuated even further through other networks of various kinds and sizes that exist in the work place e.g. corporate social responsibility network, gym group, small lunch groups, hobby networks, groups based on various languages or hometowns (Malayalam speaking employees have the Mallu group, employees from Madurai have the Madurai group etc.) and so on.

While the companies themselves encourage certain networks to encourage employee engagement and make some of these networks formal, not all networks formed within these companies have the prior permission of the management and are very often informal in nature e.g. a group of mothers from a formal working mothers group in a large IT firm took off on a trajectory to form a secret in-law (specifically mother-in-law) complaint group on Facebook, which later shifted to WhatsApp as well.

Further, non-work communication in such informal networks can get extended across working hours as well. For example: In a lunch group network (with around 10 members) that I was also a member of, WhatsApp was used to coordinate the time we met for lunch in the afternoons. In one such lunch meeting, a few members got into a debate about the veracity of a certain rumour on a well-known political leader. This verbal debate shifted to WhatsApp even after the lunch meeting was over and continued till the end of the workday and in case someone was busy to respond immediately, they would do so when they find time amidst their work. Preetha, a 27-year-old,

programmer who was a part of this group, also recounted such experiences in other groups that she was a member of. It was clear that they kept shifting between work related activities and non-work related activities throughout their workday. Such shift between work and non-work activities was also a part of sociality in other industrial settings (De Neve, 2005), except that in this case such shifts were over social media.

Though the companies tend to encourage formal networks with a strategic idea of employee engagement, in a way they also end up allowing other informal non-work networks to exist. While some of these networks (e.g. caste group networks that exist in a few companies) are not frowned upon, they are not encouraged either.

Interviews with the Human Resources personnel in IT companies revealed that most often the management knew the informality that existed in such work places and even encouraged it to a certain extent by being silent, for the purposes of employee engagement. However, when exigencies arose, strict formality was enforced. For example: A Human Resources personnel working for a large IT company, recounted an incident of sexual harassment. This was a case where a group of new recruits (around five males) had formed a secret Facebook group, where comments about women colleagues were shared. When news of this secret Facebook group leaked, the five young men were immediately suspended and within a month were terminated. As the HR professional put it, policing all such informal groups is almost impossible and they are cognizant that even with stricter security protocols and controls of what can be accessed, it is easy to surpass such controls if one needs to. For e.g. accessing restricted social media channels through the client's network was not uncommon.

It is apparent that in these modern work places, where formal groups with non-work aspects are encouraged as a strategy for employee engagement and informal groups are not discouraged, the undermining of work-non-work boundaries automatically happens without much effort. However, this has an additional layer of complexity, since control of communication with non-work space outside work is left to the manager/supervisor of the team. Such controls can vary across a spectrum from complete restriction to being completely free. Sarangan, whom we had met earlier, recounted how his first manager completely controlled the use of smartphones even in a project that did not need such security measures. Thus, while the management sets a certain work culture, implementation of such cultures can vary widely depending on the team and its leadership. In a way, this was one of the reasons that people employed covert means of communication such as using the online office messenger to communicate personal messages for fear of getting noticed by their managers.

Also, the kind of sociality that seem to be expressed in the work spaces (De Neve, 2005), differed once again by the culture set in the team. Some teams shared a very informal relationship, while in others a kind of formality was evident. However, irrespective of the team culture, non-work conversations did occur often.

While on one hand people kept in touch with the world outside work during working hours, on the other hand non-work conversations occurred amongst colleagues even within the workspace.

The entrepreneurial IT start-ups tend to follow a typical start-up culture, which is usually a copy of the Silicon Valley start-up cultures. With no strict or formal

boundaries drawn between work and non-work aspects an informal sociality with respect to workspace and timings exist here. As Soundar, a 39-year-old, entrepreneur observes, only such cultures can attract the newly emerging talent pool of skilled engineers in India.

To conclude, it is easy to see from the above discussion that there is a historical continuity in how personal networks and sociality are significant elements of the Indian worldview of work and the main difference between the past and present or formal and informal labour is the ways in which such networks are formed and expressed. Another significant difference is observed in the changing boundaries between work and non-work historically. Before the advent of the industrial workplace, there was no difference between the work and non-work spheres in the Indian concept of work and the idea of a strict workplace was alien. This changed significantly with the emergence of formal workspaces where work and non-work were strictly differentiated and non-work was prohibited during work hours and work was never carried home[185] (Bratton et al., 2010).

The modern IT workplace for its part frowned upon bringing non-work aspects to work, however, paradoxically it blurred the old strict boundaries between work and non-work spaces by permitting work to be taken home through flexible work hours, virtual organizations (Bratton et al., 2010) and so on. With the boundaries blurring to allow work at home, it is not surprising that non-work has also entered the formal workspace through factors such as recruitment through personal networks, informal and formal networks in

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[185] For a discussion of Fordism, Taylorism and industrial labour and how factories imposed rules curbing independence please refer to Bratton et al., 2010.

workplaces. This is accentuated through social media, which also helps maintain communication with the outside world during work hours.

5.9: Women at the Crossroads: Social Media, Work and Social Pressures

An underlying aspect of this entire thesis has been the mapping of the offline norms and practices associated with gender and its online reflection as showcased in the differential use of social media conforming to the society's expectations. In a knowledge economy, which pays much attention to skill based labour recruitment and performance based promotions, demotions and terminations, what becomes very evident is the gaining pressure to adapt to the expectations of the work place irrespective of the gender, while at the same time deal and conform to the non-work related social pressures, attributed by gender. Women seem to be the most challenged in such an intersection, where their workplaces don't necessarily bother about gender, while their domestic sphere places much importance on gendered roles. With more families moving into the economic arena of double-income families, tending to the everyday expectations of both these spheres can be pressurizing, all of which could have been seen from the case studies and examples showcased above e.g. Lakshmi and the guilt that she faces when missing on mothering. Similarly, cases where grandparents specifically that of the women's parents taking care of the grand children are all examples of how such pressures impact the domestic life of these working women. Social media and personal communication platforms in such scenarios tend to help survive and balance both the workplace culture and social non-work pressures as can be seen from the various examples discussed above. It

might be particularly interesting to see how certain employees and particularly women thrive in the intersections of these expectations, which is what this section strives to undertake

Late work culture

Work in the IT sector can be hard with long working hours during demanding project deadlines. Reddy (2010) specifically mentions the number of hours of work per day and the number of days of work which range between 12 hours to 16 hours a day for five and a half to six days a week, sometimes seven days a week during work deadlines for high priority projects. Though, these expectations form a part of the organizational culture of the IT companies, they are further enhanced by peer pressure, expectations from supervisors, employee's expectation and a host of other such reasons, which ultimately force employees to stay late and forces these professionals to go home late. This as Fuller and Narasimhan (2007) quote can tend to make parents specifically that of young, single women, unhappy and anxious.

Though, people tend to associate such late work hours to peer pressure and team's expectations, there were cases, where access to social media after business hours strategically helped employees stay back late after business hours to impress their managers and peers that they stayed late and worked.

As Wellman (2012) observes, employees also used such opportunities to interact with their peers in other organizations thus increasing professional networking contacts helping them accumulate Social capital.

While this may be true for single men, this might not be entirely true for single women, who unless placed in a late-night duty to cater to the western corporate clients due to time zone issues, normally tend to be careful about the time they spend in the workplace after the recent safety/rape concerns (as

also seen in the case of Shobana in chapter two). Further, given the prudence that the companies employ in ensuring that women don't stay late, they generally tend to go leave work within a certain time frame after office hours unless and otherwise required. In an indirect way, it does play a role in reducing the effect of the exercise of branding themselves as hard and competent workers as compared to men and sometimes even shows in the social capital they build which could help them move jobs. Thus, while married women might have a familial issue with working late, single women who might want to showcase themselves as competent workers as compared to their male colleagues and build a social capital, sometimes fail to do so, given the general social concerns surrounding the safety of the women going home late. This might be more applicable in cases of employees in the lower and middle management.

Economic Independence

IT sector employees tend to get a higher starting salary than their counterparts in other industrial sectors (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2008) which instantly rises their position to the new middle class. Well educated and skilled women stand to gain from this sector in terms of independent earnings, social contact, greater bargaining capacity and high self-esteem (Brinda and Shanthi, 2010). While Fuller and Narasimhan, 2008, note that the high earning power for women empower them and enhance their negotiating power in the family domain, for women in lower middle class and sometimes even in middle class (as seen in the earlier chapters), such employment guarantees even access to smart phones and social media. The idea that employed women with their earning capacity are more matured and independent provides access to an entirely new set of social norms and rules for these women (though these might bring their own set of expectations and expect

these women to conform to them). Moreover, most of the IT companies do not underpay or exploit women, which provide many young women software engineers a sense of equality with men and a sense of empowerment or individual autonomy (Harriss, 2003). This empowerment is not trivial; in particular, young women IT professionals appear to command greater respect and have more bargaining power within their families particularly over their own marriages than women before them have had. The rise of romance in workplace which culminate in marriages and the courtship over social media are proofs of this trend. Further, partly because they bring so much money home, women can better resist exploitative demands from their husband's families which tends to be a genuine social change.

Travel

Migration due to body-shopping and consulting assignments in Indian IT sector, is not rare and in general the IT employees feel empowered by the cross-cultural exposure such foreign travels and assignments abroad bring them. However, for married women with children, this often causes concern since such travels can imply leaving their young children back home. Though, such concerns exist, they agree that these overseas assignments provide them with greater managerial and cross cultural exposure, more remuneration and ultimately better promotions. With personal communication platforms, such as Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp, keeping in touch with their families even while they travel for work has become smoother and such travels aren't met with apprehensions that were seen a few years ago, especially for married women with young children.

For young single women and men, social media helps stay in touch with their parents while travelling abroad for work. It is also not rare to see them giving

their parents laptops, desktops and even smart phones. Once abroad, the communication first starts through mobile phones (calling cards) and then graduates to using social media. There were cases where lower middle class parents visited the local IT institutes to learn the basics of internet just to chat with their children abroad, where they learn to use and operate a webcam, Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp, email, Google Hangout etc.

<u>Marriage</u>

Earlier, from studies of Caplan (1985) of professional women in Chennai, it was observed that half of these women were unmarried due to the demand imposed on them to support their natal family. However, ethnography as well as studies such as that of Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) helps us note that this does not arise as a problem for women in IT sectors, as they come from middle class families and earn enough to fund even their own marriages. In case of unmarried women, their parents tend to become, anxious, as they tend to believe that IT sectors provide an ideal ground for love marriages and with the rise of personal communication media, specifically smart phones and social media, the concerns of the parents are on rise as well. While such concerns are articulated in a subtler fashion by the middleclass and upper middle class parents, policing the social media use of women in the lower middle class and the lower socio-economic class families even after women gain employment in such hi-tech sectors still exists. While chapter two and four showcases such concerns for young unmarried college going women, this can equally be true, but with lesser intensity for single working women as well. While workplace romance and courtship over social media was common in most of these sectors, during interviews, the IT employees agreed that they were single and working together could lead to such romance and courtship. It is not rare to find these couples getting connected on social media such as

Facebook or WhatsApp and carrying on their relationships outside work. Further, with IT parks having more than one IT company within a huge campus, cross organizational romantic relationships are also not rare. Social media helps in maintaining such relationships.

The young, single women seemed to be concerned about social support from their families after marriage. Therefore, though not principally agreeable to arranged marriages, they still prefer arranged marriages, as a strategy to secure their future career dreams. Residential arrangements resulting from such strategies were discussed in chapter four.

There have been cases of IT employees getting divorced a few years after marriage. The reasons seemed to be varied and could range from absence of both the partners or either of the partners from home, loneliness, work load, ego issues, adultery, issues with in-laws etc. which also seem to agree with Reddy (2010). This also seemed to happen more in families where the wife was much busier than the husband with her work. Jealousy results in surveillance of the partner's social media profiles and these cases of surveillance seemed to occur when the wife occupied a better position or earned better than her spouse. While most women spoke about how one of their friends was affected and stories of a jealous partner's surveillance on social media often occur within gossip circles, except for a couple of divorced single parents, I didn't have success in meeting with the people who featured in such gossips and stories.

However, most women complained about how one of their in-laws as a friend on Social media, especially Facebook policed the pictures posted and often passed comments at home or in family gettogethers. There were women who

were members of secret, by invite only 'in-law hate' groups on WhatsApp and Facebook.

<u>Children and Time with Family</u>

As Jasrotiya (2007) observes, most often balancing work and life (specifically home and family) are challenges that the IT employees often face due to flexible work times that needs to coincide with the western corporate clients that these companies provide service to. Though safety of women is a genuine concern that the companies have, long work days aren't necessarily avoidable altogether (for e.g. coming to work early in the morning, rather than staying late), and therefore time with family does becomes scarce with work-life imbalance. The time spent with family, specifically when married, becomes scarcer causing several gaps in relationships. To combat issues with work life balance, corporate policies such as virtual teams and work from home options introduced with an idea of helping employees, have only tended to blur the line between work and social life even further. As Chesley (2005) suggests, the worlds of work and home are now interspersed and blurred, however, as seen earlier, taking home to work is still seen as dissent by these companies. While working on team projects, employees who take time off to deal with their family responsibilities especially children, can cause resentment to other team members, this is specifically seen in the cases of married women with children. The right balance between work and family is challenging, as Papanek (1989) rightly quotes this in the case of women, where though their work might be providing status to their family, it becomes tough, to manage between old obligations and new demands. As seen in the case of women discussed in this chapter, social media brings the possibility of being connected to one's children even during working hours on team projects. While most young working mothers seemed to be anxious of missing

mothering and feeling guilty about it, they seemed to assuage it by constantly checking on their children through social media (either messaging the grandparents or the crèche). This might be like how the Filipino mothers mother their children across national boundaries Madianou and Miller (2013). Crèche for children of working women are now tending to become common in larger Indian IT firms, thus tending to bringing children to their mothers while they are at work. Also, several Facebook and WhatsApp help groups exist for these mothers to share their issues/challenges in dealing with such scenarios while at work. Sometimes, working mothers in IT parks housing more than one company get together to form child care groups and organize such facilities for their children and tend to be connected through social media especially WhatsApp.

With children in the care of grandparents, communication over social media especially over WhatsApp with the elderly seems to have intensified. As Broadbent (2011), observes the communication might be very limited in length, but happen constantly at least over the topic of the child/children.

5.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, what has been discussed above is a clear case of how personal communication tools have been strategically used to enhance mediation and negotiation of superimposed western industrial structures of work and non-work divisions in an environment, which has never favored this strict demarcation of boundaries between different spheres of life. This mediation has been an age-old practice in India and is nothing new and is seen being practiced in certain industries even in contemporary times (Vidyarthi, 1984; De Neve, 2005; Swallow 2008), however, what is new is the role of digital technology enabled personal communication, which did not exist earlier. Such

mediation occurs since the workforce is expected to adhere to a certain sense of formality that comes when one-steps into a space clearly delineated for work and is then encouraged to disassociate themselves from all other spaces for a certain time frame. However, continuity of relationships from one sphere to another irrespective of the space always undermined such formality of space. The earlier literature gives considerable evidence for the way kinship infiltrates the work place leading to further recruitment through the family (Vidyarthi, 1984; De Neve, 2005, 2008). Here we see that social media tends to broaden the basis of connectivity beyond the family and this is reflected in a wider network of recruitment for firms.

We have also seen how Anthropology deals with the notion of work and how this plays out in Panchagrami and have discussed cases of how communication at work expands to include non-work communication topics but within the work culture. We have also seen a case of romantic relationships and marriage and how that leads to our next section that was about the integral nature of communication between work and home. However, what was also apparent was that in modern work places such as the IT sector, this segregation of work – non-work boundaries were multi layered. While a few companies, mostly startups, did not bother about such dichotomies, others did, but it was more to satisfy their client's business requirements. There seemed to be an unstated agreement amongst the layers of management that it was fine for one to do non-work related activities while at work, but this should not be made explicit. It seemed like everyone knew the secret, but no one would acknowledge this openly. What is also made apparent was the strategic presentation of the selves by the employees to the workplace norms. At one level, though everyone knew that they had to engage in non-work related activities while at work, no one would express

dissent regarding the strict workplace policies around this and seemed to perform as if conforming to these workplace regulations. However, at another level, they were constantly expressing dissent, by ensuring that such regulations were bypassed, but all the while ensuring that this was not made explicit. But, as seen earlier, this was all a part of an unstated agreement and the employees were conforming to this agreement.

The intimacy expressed in relationships as seen in chapter four, calls for varied kinds interaction between people involved in these relationships, so while some involve textual communication and some involve voice, certain others involves a combination of these. But, as seen in the earlier chapter, while mothering still involves voice communication, social media helps afford asynchronous voice communications for example: Lakshmi using WhatsApp to mother her children while still at work. We also see that in cases of working couples, the type of communication based on the context enables them to engage in a variety of media to communicate with each other, which is a clear case of Polymedia. What was also clearly visible in this constant flow of interaction between domestic and work spheres, was that in the case of these couples, Polymedia also involved covert communications over regulated internal office communicators. By expanding such communication to other work relationships, we also seen how this has moved the earlier water cooler conversations to now happen at one's own desk.

In the cases of working couples, specifically those with young children, it might seem that with the increase in social media communication, the responsibilities of women in such households have decreased. However, that doesn't seem to be the case, though one might argue that such communication platforms have helped women manage both the home and the

work spheres more effectively, this hasn't in anyway decreased their responsibilities at home, but in a way, has only added more responsibilities. The need to constantly check on their children while striving to manage their work place expectations are evident in their cases. Being a good homemaker is an expectation that these women seem to have imbibed from middle class moralities, which have been thrust upon them as being normative. Constant feeling of guilt encompasses these young mothers, and they sometimes tend to over compensate these expectations to mitigate this feeling of guilt, even when they have their parents or parents in law living closer to them taking care of their children. Though in some nuclear families, the husband tries to share domestic responsibilities, in many cases, the disparity in gender based domestic work share hasn't reduced. So, young mothers strategically use social media to place themselves in a competing corporate workplace, while at the same time fulfilling their roles in the family (Pleck, 1977; Baruch et al., 1987; Nath, 2000; Kelkar et al., 2002; Myrdal and Klein, 2003; Aziz, 2004; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Sandberg, 2013)

Further, while the recruitment through kin network is an age-old facet of Indian labor markets, in the case of Vasu, Dharshan and Naga, though it started as a kin network, it has now moved from merely being some kin based network to a wider sense of people connected locally through social media. Such aspects of recruitment are not radically new but has shifted somewhat in the movement from word of mouth as seen in cases of manufacturing factory towns (Vidyarthi, 1984; De Neve, 2005) to social media in a IT dominated knowledge economy, and thus has helped reinstitute some local characteristics of Indian labor after what was a relatively short period in which abstract and foreign notions of pure work-non-work dichotomies were introduced. The case of using social media to combat competition in informing

kin and other known people for lower management positions needs to be understood by placing this in the context of the wider world and its associated socio-cultural issues. It might seem as a case expounding nepotism, but looking at the context and the larger socio-cultural issues that these caste groups face and with no affirmative action employment plans from IT industries in the area, such proactive recruitment strategies in such positions could also be viewed as a path for social mobility and as a revolt against the traditional caste norms that the larger system places on them (Ambedkar, 1944).

Additionally, while the case of Dharshan and Naga recruiting for the IT companies, also neatly speaks to the concept of scalable sociality (Miller et al., 2016), where communication for roles move between different sizes of groups and from being publically stated on Facebook to being privately exchanged with a select few on WhatsApp, Vasu's case of using multiple platforms is a clear indication of Polymedia. In all these cases, mediating the boundaries of work and non-work stood ground.

However, while it may be tempting to suggest that the work-non-work dichotomy was always circumvented through the agency of the employees alone, this is not entirely true as the work system here is filled with paradoxes. It restricts and regulates something and at the same time provides enough opportunities to bypass what has been restricted.

So, going back to the introduction, the anthropological refusal of a clear dichotomy of work and non-work is based on the study of precisely places such as Panchagrami and recognizing that in such places there has never been a simple rigid separation of work to non-work and where these were

imposed they were often circumnavigated. Nevertheless, the rise of social media has done much more than simply speak to this issue, which is evident from the detailed stories in this chapter. They show a richness of interactivity within work, outside of work and between work and non-work that may in some respects be unprecedented.

Chapter Six – The Wider World - Social Media and Education in a Knowledge Economy

Wednesday – Ranjith, 15 years old, upper middle class, attends an International School

6 AM – Alarm rings…snooze…catch another 5 minutes of sleep…hear mom shouting at the top of her voice…but go back to sleep again…it's all a dream…wake up in another 5 minutes to a WhatsApp message from Samvrat, asking if the basketball practise is still scheduled at 7 AM and if the English essay is due at 11 AM. Curse words used! Answer Yes to Basketball practise and '****! I forgot' to English essay. Add a quick suitable smiley face and send off message on WhatsApp. Mom shouts once again seeing use of phone as the first thing in the morning.

6:15 AM – 6:45 AM – Curse self and pray that English teacher should excuse the essay while brushing teeth, have coffee while half asleep – hear mom shouting at the top of her voice that he shouldn't have slept at 2 AM. Realize that she is right and promise self that no gaming and chatting after 10 PM. Finish morning ablutions. Quick check of Facebook… 'Like' Sowmya's picture with her new puppy. Check WhatsApp…feel happy looking at Samvrat's message that he hasn't finished the English homework either…all the while eating Corn Flakes. Rush off to basketball practise.

7 AM – 8 AM – Basketball…click pictures of others practising and post it on Facebook. Coach sneers at the smart phone. Promise coach to leave it at home the next time around. Check post and see that it already has 10 Likes.

8 AM – Rush home to leave phone…quick wash…check WhatsApp…happy that except for a few people in class none remembered the essay's due date…appreciate Samvrat's quick WhatsApp homework status check with classmates…check Facebook…basketball post already has 12 Likes. Maybe, everyone is on their way to school…school doesn't allow mobile phones…so maybe the post will get more Likes that evening

8:30 AM – School begins – Physics class…listen to a 15-min lecture followed by a documentary screening from Discovery Channel video on YouTube … Smart classrooms are just awesome.

9:15 AM – Math class – Solve calculus…teacher checks to see if everyone watched the required assignment from Khan academy[186].

10 AM – Interval – quick check with everyone about essay and let them know of the Facebook picture.

11 AM – English class - Teacher excuses essay, as majority of the class hasn't completed it. Rush to the computer lab, where the teacher asks to type in the essay. Vijay…a classmate stealthily checks email…site gets fire walled… lab coordinator must have seen him checking and must have restricted access.

Noon – Lunch…catch up with friends…

12:45 PM – Head off to Biology and Chemistry classes

2:30 PM - Computer science lab session. C programming. Search Google for C- routines…access online C – classes and check for aspects of this routine. Try accessing Facebook…website blocked. Access YouTube…check for lessons on C.

3:15 PM – Head Home…check WhatsApp…check Facebook...still only 14 Likes. Start gaming along with quick snacking

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[186] A non-profit educational organization that produces mini lectures on Youtube and also provides teaching materials for educators and can be accessed by anyone who has an access to internet.

4:00 PM to 7:30 PM – Online Gaming…check WhatsApp and Facebook…30 Likes…awesome! Mom home…shouts to get back to studying

8:00 PM – Mom calls to help her with buying a flower vase from Flipkart[187]…watch YouTube…keep checking WhatsApp and Facebook. Dad arrives home from work. Eat dinner. Help Dad with his iPad issues.

9:00 PM – Research online for English essay…due date fixed for tomorrow…message Aditi and Samvrat, to see if they have completed…everyone is online…in the process of writing/typing it. Call Samvrat for talking about essay and end up chatting about basketball.

11:00 PM – Complete essay…upload it to the school online assignment system…start online gaming…shift between WhatsApp and Facebook

11:30 PM – Dad peeks into the bedroom, asks to go to bed.

11:45 PM – Mom peeks this time and shouts to go to bed

00:30 AM – Finally sleep early, after kissing goodnight to Aditi on WhatsApp voice message.

Wednesday, Pandian, 15 years old, lower socio-economic class, attends a private local school

4:30 AM – Wake up…sister's voice asking to wake up…rush to brush teeth and finish morning ablutions. Get to the paddy field…it's easy to receive a mobile signal there. Check Facebook. Vinoth and Suraj have uploaded pictures taken yesterday… 'Like' and comment on them. Check to see if any new friends request has come in. Its almost 30 minutes…need to rush to the cowshed.

5 AM – 7 AM – Milk cows, work in the paddy field.

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[187] Online retailer like amazon.com

7 AM – Check Facebook…Deepak has commented and liked too. Like Deepak's comment in turn… Browse through Friends profiles. Have tea and finish breakfast of rice gruel

7:30 AM – Quick wash and rush to catch bus to school. Check Facebook all along. Listen to actor Vijay's "Selfie Pulla[188]" song and other Tamil film songs. Need to download some more songs. Should remember to buy new data pack this evening.

8:10 AM – Arrive at school…talk to Suraj and Vinoth about their Facebook pictures. Listen to a new song from Vinoth's mobile phone.

8:30 AM – 11:00 AM – Tamil, English and Math classes…need to copy notes quickly from the blackboard as English teacher is very fast in erasing the black board…submit homework note book at the end of Math class.

11:00 AM – Interval – Transfer a few new songs from Vinoth's phone.

11:15 AM – Physical Training class – Teacher asks to see if any new film songs are available…Vinoth transfers new songs…asks for new Tamil films downloaded from the internet…transfer it from Suraj's phone. Play football…Lunch.

1:50 PM - Computer science class. Computer Science teacher asks everyone to copy a computer program written on the blackboard… go to computer science lab. Run the program. Get result. Chat with friends…Deepak helps teacher with fixing a broken computer

3:30 PM – Go to the roadside bunk sized cell phone shop with Suraj and recharge Data plan for Rs.15/-. Get new songs loaded for an additional Rs.5/-

5:00 PM – Quick Tea…rush to the paddy field…tie cows…listen to new songs… check Facebook… post picture of Tamil film actor Vijay[189] downloaded from Google. Never failing friend Suraj always likes it first.

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[188] A popular Tamil film song that speaks to people taking "Selfies" and sharing them
[189] A very famous Tamil cinema actor, also referenced in Chapter three

7:00 PM – Do homework… check Facebook

8:00 PM – Have dinner…ask mom and sister to join in watching a new Tamil film transferred from Suraj...transfer film from phone to the government provided laptop borrowed from cousin. Mom and sister express their admiration looking at the technical expertise and knowledge shown in not only getting the film but also the ease with which it was transferred.

10:30 PM – Film ends…check to see if cows in the cowshed are doing fine. Check Facebook once again

11:00 PM - Sleep

In themselves these two highly contrasting accounts would seem to represent the daily lives of two school going 15-year-old children and their relation to social media. However, they aren't two disparate scenes occurring in two different societies, they occur right next to each other at Panchagrami. But, to see what we can learn from them we must step back a bit and consider as background the macro-level social structures that provide for both possibilities to arise within the same area, and this is the precisely the task of this chapter.

6.1 Introduction

The task of this chapter is to analyse how larger social structures and infrastructures impact upon social media or may be transformed by social media. In this project, some authors have looked at several such structures including politics, the state, religion and commerce[190](Costa, 2016; Haynes, 2016; Miller, 2016). But in the case of Panchagrami many of these wider issues such as politics and caste have been discussed throughout this thesis

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[190] For example: For topics such as Politics and the state see Costa. E. 2016. ; Haynes. N. 2016. For religion and commerce see Miller. D. 2016.

and to deal with them would simply be too complex. Instead this chapter attempts at providing an in-depth analysis of one context, that of education. Education brings with it a wider arena of aspiration and the struggle for prosperity or at least a decent living and fits within the emphasis of the last chapter as it is highly relevant to the specific work practices that have developed around the IT sector. By focusing on this single field, it is possible to give a depth of analysis that a broad-spectrum approach would not permit.

The sections below will provide a glimpse of how the development of educational infrastructure has come to be symbolised through its conceptualisation as a '*Knowledge Economy*' (Powell and Kaisa 2004; Dahlman and Utz 2005) thereby kindling aspirations across all socio-economic classes, which then go on to influence education in this area. Then the chapter will survey the use of Information and communication technologies (ICT's) in schools, where Internet access, social media and mobile phones play a significant role. Next, it will touch upon how the different school systems at Panchagrami perceive social media and will then discuss the relationship aspect of teachers' friending students on social media. Finally, the chapter ends with a case study of how certain affluent schools create their own social media to discourage students from accessing popular social media sites.

The influences of other socio-economic factors on education are also discussed. An attempt is made at showcasing how macro structures operate in the background and influence the seemingly disparate everyday use of social media as in the two cases provided above.

6.2 Knowledge Economy: An Identity that inspires aspirations

While there's debate amongst researchers on whether a knowledge economy is appropriate for India (Konan and Balasubramanian, 2002), the Indian government has adopted the idea in dead earnest. This is also reflected in how the local government as well as the private IT enterprises in Panchagrami have struggled for over a decade in ensuring that this area projects an image of a knowledge economy, by setting up IT companies and ensuring that they attract skilled and educated workforce. To a certain extent they seem to have achieved this intent, as outsiders also ascribe this area with such an identity. Though an inhabitant of Panchagrami might not understand the term 'Knowledge Economy', he/she certainly understands that this area is transforming to an economy that values knowledge more than anything else and this is reflected in their educational aspirations (Lepawsky, 2005).[191]

As seen in chapter one, the setting up of an IT park, brought with it several infrastructural changes, and educational institutions catering to the emerging needs of the knowledge labour was one of them. The upsurge in the number of schools and colleges in and around Panchagrami occurred along with other forms of expansion including that of sophisticated housing, commercial spaces and other affiliated services to cater to the newer skilled population. For a long term Panchagrami resident, these changes coupled with laptops and mobile phones symbolically asserted an economy that placed an immense value on knowledge and skills.

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[191] A similar case of aspirations in a knowledge economy in Malaysia is discussed in Lepawsky, J., 2005.

For the lower socio-economic classes at Panchagrami, the word "IT" has now become synonymous to prosperity. They perceive "IT" as computers inside massive buildings with visibly intimidating architecture (Berg and Kreiner, 1990) symbolising development and prosperity only attainable through knowledge and education. Thus, for the lower socio-economic classes working for an IT company would translate to social mobility. Further, their aspiration for social mobility is reasserted on an everyday basis not only by the architecture in this area, but also by the visible use of the newer resources (such as upscale housing, expensive restaurants, newer smartphones etc.) in this area by the newer educated middle class population[192].

The parents belonging to the lower socio-economic class strive to attain this aspiration for social mobility through their children. These parents provide their children with computers, which to them signifies knowledge. Accessing the Internet and social media such as Facebook through these computers become further proof that their children are on the right path to achieving social mobility. The next step is providing their children with the right school, which for them roughly translates to schools that provide education through computers.

Rani, a 36 years old housemaid who works at one of the multi storeyed apartment complexes in Panchagrami, has been a long-time resident of this area. Being a witness to the massive infrastructural transformations in this area, she understands IT as those massive buildings, which have air conditioners, where well-educated and well-dressed people work on computers all day and get paid a lot to do it. Being a third-grade school

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[192] As seen in chapter one, though not all of the new middle class population in this area work for IT, somehow the perception is that they are all associated with the IT companies and their associated prosperity is due to their employment in the IT sector.

dropout, she now aspires for her twins (a son and a daughter), who are in their ninth grade to study well to be employed in the IT sector in the near future. She had bought them a second-hand desktop and a second-hand government provided laptop a couple of years ago to inspire them and drive them hard to succeed in fulfilling her ambition.

Like the aspirations of the lower socio-economic class, the upper middle class families (mostly comprising of the double income IT employees) also aspire to send their children to the right schools. The 'right' schools for this group consists of English medium schools following either International or National level syllabi. With the proliferation of such schools in this area, a specific kind of distinction that these schools tend to showcase is the 'Smart Class Room' facility, which necessarily means that the class rooms are ICT (Information and Communication Technology) enabled and are connected to the internet. This also means that they have access to newer learning platforms such as the Khan academy (Khan Academy, n.d.), Open Courseware and video documentaries on YouTube.

Ashwin, aged 41 years, works for a multinational IT company and was posted as a consultant at one of its client's offices based in Arizona, USA for over four years. As his company wanted him to return to India for some time, Ashwin bought himself an apartment in Panchagrami. Since, he wasn't too sure with his plans in India (he might shift back to the USA, based on his career and company's plans) and with his son studying in the sixth grade, he wanted to ensure that his son went to an International school, which provided him with an access to the internet and laid sufficient importance on imbibing ICT into its teaching curriculum. This, he felt was important, just in case they

decide to go back to the US or even if his son aspires to get into a premiere engineering college in India, this exposure would stand him in good stead.

One can encounter many people like Rani and Ashwin at Panchagrami. They are examples of how parents think and strategize their children's education, thus ensuring a secured future for them. There is yet another kind of a parent who belongs to the lower middle class, is happy to send his/her child to a private English medium school with a state level syllabus, and ensure that the child studies hard to become an engineer or a science/commerce graduate and get into the IT sector. The parental aspirations thus form a pattern. Irrespective of the school the children study in or the social class one belongs to, the IT sector seems to be the destination for their children. In summary, for these parents, getting their wards into the IT sector in a respectable position symbolises settling down in life and at the same time attaining social mobility. To get there, the children need to study in an English medium school, which gives preference to technology (at least as a learning platform) and the ICTs in schools symbolise this.

6.3 School System at Panchagrami

The schools[193] (Asadullah et al., 2003; Kingdon, 2007; Desai et al, 2009; Venkatanarayanan, 2015) found at Panchagrami fall into three different systems namely, the State Board (Samacheerkalvi, n.d.) which follow the Tamil Nadu state syllabi, CBSE (CBSE, n.d.), which follow the National level syllabi and the IGCSE (CIE, n.d.), which follow an International syllabus. In and around Panchagrami, one can find two international schools, half a dozen

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[193] For an overview of Indian school system and its progress please refer to Asadullah et al., 2003; Kingdon, 2007; Desai et al, 2009; Venkatanarayanan, 2015

CBSE schools and at least a dozen private and government owned state board schools. For ease of understanding, the chapter will use terms such as affluent schools and less affluent schools instead of the actual school boards. Generally, an affluent school would be one where middle and upper middle class children study (they are mostly the International and CBSE schools, though a few privately owned state board schools can also be classified as affluent) and the less affluent schools would be the government and other private local state board schools which are poor in infrastructural facilities (they cater to the lower socio-economic class and the lower middle class and charge a fee[194] that is significantly lesser than their affluent counterparts).

While all affluent schools have English as the medium of instruction, the less affluent state board schools have either Tamil or English as their medium[195] of instruction. However, in this area, a rise in demand (Annamalai, 2004) for English medium schools over Tamil medium schools was fuelled by the employment practices in the IT sector, though a desire for English education had crept in around 30 years ago. Ironically, the children who now study in the primary classes of these Tamil medium government schools are children of poor migrant labourers who migrate for construction work from other Indian states.

Though both the affluent and the less affluent schools at Panchagrami advertise their ICT infrastructure, a significant distinction between these schools get established through smart classrooms and Internet connectivity. This factor makes or breaks a school's popularity and demand in the society.

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[194] A third grade student in an affluent international school may end up paying around Rs. 150,000/- (around £ 1,500) for a year as fees alone, which is pretty costly according to normal middle class income standards in India.

[195] This is based on the medium of instruction in the schools

While several affluent schools rationalise their steep fees through smart classroom system, the less affluent schools make do with just a computer lab.

6.4 ICT and Social Media in Schools

Not surprisingly, the affluent schools in this area have the best ICT and smart classroom facilities with several of their computers connected to the internet. A popular pedagogical method adopted in these schools is to show videos from 'YouTube'. Another source that the teachers tapped into was the Khan academy (Thompson, 2011). Google search and Google Images also act as additional resources for these teachers to research for class presentations and projects. Other than this, these affluent schools also had a few systems with unrestricted internet access in the staff common room. Some schools also encouraged students to request teachers for help in downloading stuff from the internet during times of activity based projects.

However, when it came to students' access, most affluent schools had strict rules on restricting access to the Internet and almost all of them ban access to social media sites on their school computers. Though, children above the fifth grade are actively encouraged to access the internet under the guidance of the teachers and a lab instructor, the teachers invariably complain of a few naughty children in the higher grades (usually the 10th or 11th grade) accessing certain restricted sites unknown to them. What was also apparent was that this was new to these schools and they were also in the process of constantly experimenting their approach to the Internet and social media sites (Facer and Selwyn, 2010).

The affluent schools, as they come to terms with the internet enabled ICT infrastructure, also strive to satisfy the parental demand for practical lessons on safe internet browsing habits for their children. This was because these children belonged to double income families where both their parents were employed, and usually they were all alone at home until late evening. The teachers and the parents view the combination of a lonely environment at home, an iPad or a laptop and an unrestricted internet connection, as being dangerous and therefore teaching these children on how to browse the Internet safely became the responsibility of the teachers. Though parents set parental controls, they knew it wouldn't be difficult for these children to bypass such restrictions. However, in most schools, these lessons are not taught through a one-day workshop, but happen on a continual basis in the classrooms.

Some of these affluent schools also conduct safe Internet browsing training sessions for teachers to train them in handling and advising the browsing habits of their students. These schools normally discourage parents allowing their children (specifically below 14 years of age)[196] to become members of social media websites, especially Facebook as they see Facebook as a site of not only distraction, but also view it as a dangerous space for young children as they might be in-advertently exposing themselves to anti-social elements and school bullies. Nevertheless, they are also certain that several of their students were on social media, especially Facebook[197] (Cheung et al., 2011). These students don't just stop with signing onto Facebook, but also friend their teachers who were on the platform. However, these concerns about the

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[196] In India, compulsory education for children is stipulated until the age of 14, so this age is somehow associated with the age of accessing Facebook for these schools, though Facebook allows children from age 13 to become members of the site.
[197] For an examination of why students are on Social Networks refer to Cheung et al., 2011

internet and social media were only expressed orally and never made as an official written regulatory policy by these schools and very often these concerns were conveyed to the parents only during the Parents Teachers meetings.

The concerns that these schools had about social media also influenced how they categorized the internet and social media. While the teachers identify Internet and YouTube as a knowledge resource[198](Burke and Snyder, 2008; Duff, 2008), they were categorically differentiated from Facebook and other social media, which to them were just frivolous and had no merits for educational purposes and thus was shunned as distractions[199] (Roblyer et al., 2010). This also influences the rules on accessing the internet from schools. They were usually simple: no access to websites other than Google and YouTube. YouTube videos don't have recommendations that normally come up while viewing one. Further, the schools also ensure that they don't have advertisements popping up. Parental controls and other security features are normally enabled in the school labs. However, even these were made concrete only after experiences such as Madhuvanthi's.

L Madhuvanthi, a 38- year old high school science teacher in an affluent school, had a computer lab session with her students, and wanted her students to watch a YouTube documentary. But, soon found a couple of students accessing Facebook from the school's computers. She had to immediately shut down their access and coach them. She felt as the school did not have a firewall restricting such access, the students always got

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[198] For an examination of Youtube as a knowledge resource in different contexts, refer to Burke and Snyder, 2008; Duff, 2008
[199] A similar finding was discussed by Roblyer et al., 2010 where college faculty considered Social Networking Sites as having only social purpose and no instructional purpose

tempted to access social media sites during lab sessions. It was only after a series of such complaints, did the school take a serious measure of restricting access to certain sites through firewalls and appointed a qualified lab administrator to keep a watchful eye on the students who circumvented firewalls in the computer labs. Several IT lab instructors in such schools agreed that sometimes things were lax with firewall restrictions on their systems to particularly restrict access to social media sites and even when they had, they quipped that a few children always knew how to bypass such firewalls.

On the other hand, most less affluent schools don't have their computers connected to the Internet and if at all they had a connection, it was just with one or two specific computers, which might also be under the supervision of the lab administrator or the teacher in charge.

For the students in these less affluent schools, even owning gadgets is a luxury. With the government's one laptop per child policy, several lower socio-economic class high-school students now own laptops. These students either didn't have an internet access or it was tethered from a cheap smart phone that had an access to the internet. However, this was only possible for the male students[200] (Jeffrey et al., 2010), while the female students accessed the internet for shorter periods of time by tethering from a borrowed phone (this would normally be from their relatives or elder brothers). Use of a USB dongle internet connection is now becoming a symbol of knowledge as it is

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[200] As discussed in earlier chapters, young unmarried women belonging to certain classes were restricted from accessing phones, which were the primary means of accessing social media. But, for a general idea of masculinity and education in India, refer to Jeffrey et al., 2010

immediately related to accessing the internet[201] (Miller and Slater, 2000). However, even in the use of such devices, gender based controls were evident and as discussed in chapter two, access to social media for women students belonging to the lower-socio-economic class was restricted or even banned by their family members.

As social media was not something that these less affluent schools had to handle systemically, they invariably never discussed this with the parents. Thus, the parents of these children, (specifically the young boys) consent to the access of social media as they perceive social media as one of visible symbols of technological advancement that requires mastery in the knowledge economy.

While ICT facilities in well-equipped affluent schools may entail watching a documentary on YouTube, it equates to watching a DVD (Digital Video Disc, n.d.) in less affluent schools, as they are not connected to the Internet. While teachers of several less affluent schools were not aware of the existence of open source resources such as the Khan academy, they were aware that YouTube had educational elements to it and sometimes encouraged their students to view videos on YouTube on their mobile phones. However, it was not a part of their curriculum and therefore no YouTube based homework or project was assigned as in affluent schools. Several teachers from these less equipped schools remarked that their students would do very well if such opportunities were available to them. Possibly, this mindset influences their perception of social media as well. It was evident that several teachers in

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[201] The lower socio-economic classes viewed internet as a symbol of knowledge, gaining which for them also signified potential freedom from their everyday struggles. For an idea of how the internet in itself can be viewed as symbol of potential freedom refer to Miller and Slater, 2000

these schools did not differentiate between the internet and social media and viewed both as equal opportunities for their students to explore knowledge that was denied to them due to their economic condition. This was also visible in the way that they treated and encouraged students even with a little competence and knowledge of the internet and social media, though it might not even be connected to their curriculum. This is in sharp contrast to how affluent schools viewed such distractions. This is also made apparent in the case studies of Ranjith and Pandian, while, in their Physical training sessions, the 'Coach' in Ranjith's case and the physical training teacher in Pandian's case, saw phones in the hands of their students, their reactions were different. While the coach sneered at the interruption that this phone could cause to the Ranjith's session, in the local school that Pandian attends, his teacher asked for film songs. Though, their reactions differed, it seems like they now acknowledge the pervasive nature of such devices and its impact on their students.

6.5 Accessing Social Media on Mobile Platforms

Though, most school students operate and access social media through multiple devices (based on their socio-economic levels), smart phones seemed to be the most popular medium of access to internet and social media.

All schools at Panchagrami have a strict no mobile phone policy within their respective school premises and very strongly discourage students from bringing mobile phones to schools. However, teachers in both affluent and less affluent schools agree that they have caught multiple students with mobile phones within their respective school campuses.

As a disciplinary process, the school retains the mobile phone and lets the student know that the phone would only be handed over to his/her parents. This also brings about an opportunity for the teachers to talk to the parents about such policies and issues when their wards breach this policy. Often, the teachers blame the parents for providing a ten/twelve-year-old with a mobile phone. Several teachers during interviews said that this breach of policy normally happens with children, whose parents (both father and mother) were working. Per the teachers, the parents (with high disposable income) seemed to shower their children with all kinds of gadgets to make up for their lost time with kids. In fact, the teachers in less affluent schools, also complained of this, but it was centred more on the male students, who received these phones sometimes from their extended families rather than from their parents (it was typically provided by an elderly male relative from their extended family, e.g. uncle). But, what differentiated these students from those of affluent backgrounds was that they owned used non-smart phones and sometimes smart phones, while the children from affluent schools generally owned new smart phones. Also, it was mostly the boys in less affluent schools who got caught, while both boys and girls were caught with their phones in affluent schools. But, children getting caught with mobile phones happened across schools irrespective of its affluence.

With the children in the affluent schools, the teachers rationalized that the only way out for the child, whose parents were working, was to be attached to the device, as it tends to interact with them more than their parents did. The phone or the iPad becomes their actual companion and several younger children who end up playing online games ensured that these games kept them company, while their parents were at work.

Per the teachers, gaming was one of the primary reasons that these children became attached to their mobile gadgets. Gaming takes places through several channels. They could be downloaded as applications from Google Play store, iStore or Samsung store. However, most parents also allow their kids to sign up on Facebook, thus allowing them to play games on the platform. The teachers noted that the young children, who sign up for Facebook, only use it for gaming purposes. But, they felt that though such social media memberships expose these children to unwanted distractions the parents simply didn't seem to mind their children being on Facebook.

An affluent school once even had a surprise inspection of the student's school bags to see if someone carried a mobile phone, when they heard a rumour that the children were using mobile phones in a silent mode during intervals for playing games and accessing social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp. The inspection ended with 21 mobile phones being confiscated in the 11th grade alone. This led to stricter policies and rules. Though the schools host parents' teachers' association meetings (PTA) and let the parents know of this, they noted that some parents just didn't seem to care.

Regulation of mobile phones in less affluent schools also does happen. They do have a no mobile phone policy as well and as seen earlier, students in these schools also got caught with their mobile phones. However, in a few less affluent schools, even though the teachers witnessed students bringing in mobile phones, they normally didn't fuss over it. These schools normally have students of 10th to 12th grades bringing in mobile phones and getting caught by teachers during inspections. While a few teachers might just confiscate these phones as a warning during surprise inspections, they do look at the

economic background of the student before they punish the student with a monetary fine or before instigating other disciplinary processes.

Sujatha, a teacher in one of these schools, recounted an incident when the school had warned and let the parents know of the policy that the school had against the use of mobile phones within the school premises in one of the parents' teachers meet. The parents were encouraged to check the bags and be on lookout for children taking their mobile phones with them to school. Almost all parents seemed to have supported this stance taken by the school. Within a couple of days, during a midmorning break, they caught two male students talking on their mobile phones. When the phones were confiscated it was found that they were talking to their mothers asking them to deliver lunch at school. When the parents were called in, they claimed ignorance of such a policy. Sujatha pointed out that several schools including hers had only made this as an oral policy and it wasn't written, so, claiming ignorance was always easy. Hence, while some schools have a written policy on the use of mobile phones (banning it within the school premises), most schools don't even make a mention of it, just like how they view social media. It was more of an unspoken/unsaid rule of operation. Though, several teachers noted that these need not be necessarily put in print and it was just common sense to understand this, they expressed doubts over cooperation from parents, when it came to following these rules.

Even in the case of affluent schools, with highly regulated policies on banning mobile phones on school campuses, teachers often complained that this sometimes had no effect. This brings up the question of children's autonomy, on why they choose to exercise the choice of carrying a mobile phone to school, even when they knew it was a banned entity. Several reasons speak

to this effect, many school going children reasoned that they needed a mobile phone for the simple fact that it was the only way they could communicate with their parents (both working) or other responsible care givers at certain times of the day. Further, other than constant gaming, the kind of phone they carried helped them build a kind of social status among their peers. In fact, a few high-school children even suggested that it was an act of rebellion against the authority of their parents and teachers.

On the positive side, the teachers acknowledge that such attachment to mobile phones have in a way helped these children know more about the intricacies and the mechanics of smart phones.

Kalpana, a systems administrator and a computer science teacher at one of the affluent schools recounted that once when she had a problem with a new iPhone, she mentioned the issue to a child in class nine who solved it for her within minutes. She was both surprised and proud of this student. She then found out that the child's parents had iPhones at home. When she casually mentioned this to the other teachers, word naturally got around to the school management. Though, the principal of the school warned her against doing this, Kalpana feels that teachers need to acknowledge the fact that children these days know a lot about phones and other gadgets. She says the internet or the mobile phone for children isn't necessarily evil and teachers needed to understand that neither can be avoided. There should be a holistic understanding of the children's needs and backgrounds and they need to be taught on how to responsibly use technology. Though, she personally feels this way, none of the other teachers felt the same way (at least at her school). Teachers in both affluent and less affluent schools speak of technically competent students who may be able to handle and repair a range of smart

and non-smart phones'. However, while stories of technical competence in less affluent schools would feature a 10th or a 12th grade student, such stories would be about a 7th or 8th grade student in a well-equipped affluent school. These stories in a way make apparent the knowledge gap in exposure to technology between these school students. In affluent schools, though individual teachers might encourage such competence, as a system the practice of encouraging such technical competence is frowned upon and is a distraction. However, in less affluent schools with low-infrastructure, both the individual teacher and the system itself would look at this technical competence as a symbol of technical knowledge required to thrive in Panchagrami. For example: the teacher who asks for songs from Pandian, in the case study discussed at the start of this chapter, views his expertise with downloading songs as a technical competence. Similarly, the computer science teacher getting help from Pandian's friend Deepak in fixing a computer, views it as a technical competence and no one complains or frowns when these teachers take help from their students.

Irrespective of the school system or their perception of mobile phones, internet access or even social media, what is apparent was that the schools were extremely cognizant of growing impact of technology in general and social media amongst their students (Buckingham, 2013). The chapter had until now discussed how schools viewed social media formally, we will now move onto see what happens when students extend their relationship with teachers beyond the hierarchical power structure by friending them on Facebook. The following section will explore how teachers view such friendships[202] (Raynes-Goldie and Lloyd, 2014). In other words, it will examine

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[202] Refer to Raynes-Goldie and Lloyd, 2014 for a discussion of the issues surrounding the act of friending students from teacher's perspective in a university environment.

whether teachers take students' friend requests as an affront to traditional hierarchical power relationships and discourage it or do teachers welcome these acts as a sign of technical competence of their students and encourage such friending?

6.6 Social Media: Friending Teachers

As seen in the earlier sections, several teachers knew that their students, who were in their early teens, were on Facebook and this seemed to trouble them since for them Facebook was not a site meant for children. Though, they kept restating the Indian legal rule that children below the age of 18 years should not be allowed access to Facebook[203] (Explain how children open Facebook, 2013), they acknowledged that banning the platform for children was not possible and seemed to have reluctantly come to terms with the reality facing them.

However, a couple of significant aspects soon became apparent. Many of the teachers who expressed such concerns were friends with their students on Facebook and though the schools had an informal policy of not encouraging teacher-student friendship outside the school premises, none of the schools seemed too worried about what happened outside school. Nevertheless, the teachers did not seem comfortable discussing their Facebook friendship with their students within their school premises. The students who friended their teachers did it for a variety of reasons; while some did it to show off their closeness to power centres within their peer group, others did seem genuinely

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[203] The teachers referred to articles such as these: Explain how children open Facebook and other accounts, 2013. Retrieved from http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/explain-how-children-open-facebook-other-accounts-delhi-high-court-to-govt/1107592/, where 18 years seem to be the stipulated age to open a Facebook account. However, what was also evident was the association with the age for compulsory education namely 14 years, as seen earlier in the chapter.

interested in what was happening in their teachers' lives. The interviews with a few students made this apparent.

For example, Rajeev, a class eight student of an affluent school said, *"I am a friend of Prema mam on Facebook. I told my classmates … they sent a request and became friends too. She posts little. She had gone on a trip to Malaysia… I saw the pictures on her album. The girls in my class liked her dress… the boys liked the theme park."*

Varenya, a class nine student of another affluent school stated *"I greeted my teacher on her birthday when I friended her on Facebook and she liked my comment and I told this to my classmates… I never ended greeting her when I saw her in school"*

While Dhandapani a class 10 student of a less affluent school mentioned *"Only my computer science sir is on Facebook, I sent him a friend's request when I signed up on Facebook, my friend Arulraj asked me to friend him, as he was friends with him. My sir, immediately accepted the request. I thanked him when I saw him at school the next day…he just smiled."*

Though a few teachers who had their students as friends on Facebook, seemed conscious of their activities on the platform, there were others who didn't seem to care. Some had even forgotten that their Facebook friends network comprised of their students too. For example: Manjula, a 11th grade teacher in a CBSE school, said that she remembered friending one of her students on Facebook, only when the student had questioned her about the absence of recent updates. There were yet others who agreed that they maintained a close surveillance of their younger students' (aged 14 years or

below) activities on the platform by becoming friends with them. This they hoped would influence control over what their students post (pictures and the language used). They agreed that if they saw something inappropriate, they would either question the student directly or would refer to it indirectly.

This kind of surveillance and social control seemed the reason why the students in the higher grades avoided friending their teachers on Facebook. They felt that such friendships would be an invasion of their privacy. Though, this seemed a dominant thought in the psyche of the male students, the girls in these grades seemed a bit more relaxed when it came to friending their favourite teachers. A few even said that it was their teacher who had sent them a friend's request and they had simply accepted it. There were yet others, who felt compelled to friend their teachers when they were a part of an event organized at school and informal coordination happened over Facebook. However, all of this depended on the school, the relationship that one shared with his/her teacher, favourite teachers, the attitude of the teacher, the number of other students or classmates who were friends with their teacher on Facebook etc. In some cases, students agreed that they always experienced peer pressure to friend a teacher, when their network of friends were Facebook friends with their teacher and this trend was evident across schools.

While a few teachers were fine with friending all their students, there were yet others who were cautious of friending their students and particularly those in the higher grades. Most teachers noted that they would be comfortable only if they knew the student well (i.e. known the student over years or was in their class) else they would take to conducting a visual census of the student's profile, before they accept such requests. Several teachers also noted that

they would be very cautious about friending their students in the absence of a clear profile picture.

Karuna, a 49-year-old, 12th grade English teacher of an affluent school, had a set of rules if she had to friend a student from her school. She had to know who they were and gauge their attitude. She seemed to have become more careful after an incident that involved a newly admitted male student who had come into the 11th grade. She had entertained students to friend her on Facebook and thus several students from her school had become friends with her on Facebook and this student did that too. After a few months, she discovered that he had also friended her daughter who was in her 10th grade through Karuna's profile. She had discovered this only after she had seen his comment on her daughter's picture. Though, he had started commenting and liking pictures of her daughter, she had at first thought of it as a harmless friendship. However, very soon she discovered that he had unfriended Karuna but was still friends with her daughter. Karuna was also shocked when she came across another comment of this student on her daughter's profile, which she thought was bordering on lewdness. She had immediately asked her daughter to unfriend him. She wasn't able to take it to her school principal, as the school had actively discouraged personal social media contacts between teachers and students.

Though this might have been a one-off case, generally teachers were sceptical and careful when it came to friending students of higher grades due to privacy issues and concerns arising on both sides. However, teachers of lower grades were keen and actively encouraged students to friend them. This in a way was their process of ensuring that the students did not get into any issues and cyber bullying was not taking place.

Children studying in affluent schools in this area very often come from double income families. After school, they either stay at home with their grandparents or sometimes come back to a lonely house. With unrestricted internet access and tech gadgets, it is no wonder that several sign up on Facebook at an early age. Though, most begin their Facebook journey by playing online games, very soon they start connecting with their peer groups on Facebook. This is also when they start friending their teachers. Rahul's case illustrates this further.

Rahul, a 15-year-old student of an affluent school at Panchagrami feels lonely once he is back home from school. He generally stays at his grandparents' apartment until his parents are back home late in the evening. As seen in chapter four this is yet another example of a family that lives in two different apartments within the same complex. His lack of friends in his apartment complex, further adds to his loneliness. He attributes his lack of friends to his varied interests and since, he isn't into sports as much as he is into computers, he feels that none share his passion. Further, since he doesn't go to the same school (in this case the school run by the apartment complex itself) as most other children in the complex do, he feels like an outsider. Witnessing his loneliness due to lack of friends, his grandparents seem worried and have now started forcing his parents to shift him to the school in the apartment complex itself, hoping at least then he would have more friends and some physical activity too. His grandmother was candid about his activities once he is back home from school. The first thing would be to switch on his laptop and his Samsung Galaxy Notepad and start playing games and this goes on until his parents are back home. So realistically, he is on a gaming mode for at least four hours every evening. Other than this, he is on

Facebook, chatting with his school friends as he plays these games. Rahul was also candid about his interests in gaming and networking on Facebook at the same time. He seemed to be updating his friends on his scores and most often, he would be on the internet playing games with his other school friends (whose parents also naturally seemed to be working). He has a WhatsApp account activated on his Samsung smart phone and would be communicating with his gaming friends group. Rahul had his Facebook account activated a year ago, which he claims was done by his friend from school. So, one of the first things he did on Facebook was to search for his classmates/schoolmates and seemed happy to have found most of them on this platform. Once he knew that several of his teachers were friends of his friends, he wanted to friend them as well and started sending them friend requests. While still in ninth grade, he had sent a request to a teacher in 12th grade and was friended immediately, though he didn't know her personally nor had taken any of her classes. He claims that almost all his schoolmates and teachers have friended him within hours of him sending the request and now rationalizes that all of them spent more time on Facebook than he did. So, he keeps questioning his grandmother and his parents, on why should he move out of Facebook, while everyone else seems to be on it. His mother even went to the extent of calling his teachers as hypocrites, because they advised parents to discourage their wards from using Facebook, but they were the ones who were friending their students on it. She felt it was like pinching the baby and rocking the cradle. But, it soon became clear that his parents were encouraging him to be on Facebook, since they claimed that all his cousins who lived abroad used it and he should be using it as well, at least to feel a part of his extended family. In fact, his mother even claimed that Indian schools needed to grow up! She is vocal in stating that either the schools need to recognize that students use social media, else they at least need to take a strict stance by actively banning

it, but shouldn't advise parents to keep their children off social media and at the same time friend the child when a friend request is sent. Rahul's father was also vocal in stating that the schools were only bothered about what happened within their premises and this gives a contradictory picture to their idealistic claims of holistic education.

However, this seems to be very different in the case of less affluent schools. In fact, even teachers of higher grades encouraged students to actively friend them on social media as it was an encouraging gesture to explore the world further. Once again, the factor of gender differential does surface, since it was mostly the male students who were on social media especially Facebook. Interviews with several girls from 8th grade to 12th grade in less affluent schools revealed that they were not on social media either due to their economic condition or due to social control exerted by their families.

Ramesh, a 12th grade student of a Tamil medium school signed up for Facebook three years ago. He had helped a few of his classmates sign up on Facebook as well. Further, he had also spoken about his Facebook account with a couple of his male teachers who wanted him to create accounts for them too. As news of his technical competence of Facebook spread around, requests from other teachers for Facebook accounts started pouring in. Very soon, his image as tech geek started shaping up. He was someone who knew more about the internet and computers than his teachers did. Though, he wanted to be a Tamil scholar earlier, his tryst with Facebook and his now rising personal brand as a tech geek has influenced his choice of a future career in computer science.

In affluent schools, while friending on Facebook was still fine, a lot of precaution seems to be at play on both sides i.e. teachers and students, when it came to WhatsApp. The teachers weren't keen on passing on their phone numbers to the students and the feeling seemed to be mutual. They were apprehensive not only about the students use of mobile phones but to a very large extent on the parents calling the teachers and troubling them with their wards performance at school. Hence, WhatsApp did not seem to be a particularly liked/favoured channel of interaction between schoolteachers and students.

For most lower socio-economic class students in school, though their school teachers (mostly men) were much more open to exchanging their phone numbers, use of WhatsApp becomes limited due to affordance issues of mobile internet. Even if they subscribe to the mobile internet, their use of WhatsApp depends on who on their network were using it. It became a major communication channel only when they moved on to college. However, in the last phases of the fieldwork, this seemed to be changing, with a lot more male students in lower classes adopting WhatsApp as a communication platform.

Exploring the student-teacher relationship on social media is crucial, since it is only now that this relationship is being tested in a space, which breaks down the hierarchy in this relationship. As seen above, this is still in the process of being tested. It was apparent that both students and teachers were careful and apprehensive when it comes to exposing their personal side, which is never seen in a formal school environment. There also seemed to be an inherent tension in the relationship between parents and teachers, at least when it came to their children's social media activities. However, what is also crucial is the relationship between parents and the schools on social media,

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since the same set of affluent parents who expressed anxiety about their child's activity on social media, view Facebook as a promising platform to stay in touch with the schools and influence them.

6.7 Social Media: Parents Teachers Associations (PTA)

Subhashini, 37 years old, is the mother of two children, who study in an affluent school at Panchagrami. While the elder is in the 6th grade, the younger is in the third. Subhashini and her husband had returned from the USA a couple of years earlier, after staying there for nearly eight years. Once, her children were admitted to the school here, she wanted to actively take part in the parents' teachers association of the school. However, she soon found that there were limitations in India as opposed to her involvement in school PTA's in the USA. Further, she also found that while the parents were individually involved and invested in their child's education, it wasn't a united association. So, she formed two Facebook groups, each of which involved parents from her children's respective grades. The groups were specifically intended to discuss and debate any changes in the way education in these schools were supposed to happen. Further, it was also intended to discuss their children's homework and future events and get together. Though the group was active when it started, it soon became a group where the mothers gossiped and started speaking about their cooking and sarees. Bad mouthing a few teachers of this school also happened. Subhashini felt that the direction changed because this group was exclusive mothers only group. She knew that there were other Facebook groups, which had the participation of both sets of parents and those seemed to function well.

The school's principal soon recognized that there were several groups of parents who had formed Facebook groups for their children's classes and a few of them had genuine concerns. As it was difficult to address these concerns when they were expressed in disparate channels, regulation of such groups became a necessity. She actively encouraged people like Subhashini to form one Facebook group that had a high-level Parents Teachers Committee and to have several teachers as school representatives in this group, thereby channelling communication and proactively addressing concerns. This soon became a reality with Subhashini taking over as one of the group administrators. This group, she feels has much more regulation and has brought in a sense of community. Several members also take on to passing information through WhatsApp rather than just Facebook alone. This group now seems to have spun several subgroups for example: with women (specifically housewives) forming a lunch mom group – a group of mothers bringing lunch to their children at school, a father's cricket group which involves cricket with a group of children every Saturday, a mentor group which involves the corporate fathers mentoring children for success through life skills etc. These groups are active on both Facebook and WhatsApp.

The school for its part encourages only one online channel of communication other than the monthly face-to-face meetings to help address concerns. So, while it encourages communication over Facebook, it strongly discourages communication over WhatsApp, as personal numbers of teachers need to be exchanged which might force teachers to answer individual parental queries even after school hours. From the school's point of view, formalizing such online communication channels encourages healthy debates on pedagogy and curriculum and regulates and restricts blame game and questioning individual teachers.

6.8 Alternate Social Media: Case Study from an Affluent School

While we explored the cases of how schools discourage children from using social media, the situation changes as we consider what happens at the most affluent schools. These are the schools, which have recognized the need of the hour is not to keep the children away from social media, but to ensure that they use it responsibly and are not caught up in embarrassing, awkward, unhealthy or dangerous situations. These schools realize the benefits of having a common forum for interaction among its populace and are experimenting with different ways of creating such interactive platforms. This can be illustrated through a case study of a very affluent school very close to the field site and has several children from the affluent families of Panchagrami studying there.

DMG is one of the new breeds of affluent international schools that have cropped up in the area. It is the brainchild of an entrepreneurial family who form the top management of the school. It has been in existence for about two decades and has metamorphosed from a conventional school following the local curriculum to its current form of a school following an international curriculum. In India, International schools differ from regular schools in the curriculum they follow, which is either country specific (Example: American International School) or global (Example: IGCSE, IB). To meet these curriculum demands necessitates a different approach to education compared to other domestic schools. This approach is geared towards nurturing different facets of a child including cognition, affect, sensory growth, kinaesthetic awareness and interpersonal communication. To achieve such a multi-faceted

growth, the school relies on different pedagogical approaches like activity based learning (learning through class activities, presentations and exhibitions), peer-to-peer mentoring (where older children often address the younger children about social and civic issues like bullying, waste management etc.) and extensive use of ICT.

The use of ICT is especially visible in the school wherein all the classrooms are connected to the internet through smart boards and computer terminals along with a fully equipped computer lab (for hands-on use by the children) and internet-linked computers in the staffroom (for use mainly by the staff for their own research and sometimes for teaching to a smaller group of students). Apart from students researching the internet for their classroom projects, teachers are encouraged to engage in virtual research for drawing up their lesson plans, prepare assessment questions and devising worksheets for classroom purposes. Communication of important news to the parents is almost exclusively through e-mails to the students' school e-mail accounts (each student has his/her own school e-mail id) and group mailers to the staff are often through e-mail. A new initiative in the ICT sphere in this school is an online assessment tool (created in-house by the school director and external colleagues), which attempts to make online testing and formative assessment easier and more intuitive for both the teachers and students. One set of staff members who are exploring ICT to the fullest are the team of special educators who help children with different needs, both in the regular classroom and the specialized resource centre for children with special needs. These teachers have found ICT to be the ideal platform for providing different sensorial experiences to children who are not served by traditional oral teaching methods of the regular classroom. Also, ICT helps them to keep abreast of the latest happenings in their fields of expertise and helps them to

research better pedagogy for students who are not served by the regular curriculum.

ICT, in the school, complements classroom-based pedagogy that relies a lot on activities to stimulate learning and reflection. These activities range from session long intra-class activities (debates, presentations and so on) to longer duration exhibitions and project work (that can range from a couple of days to a month). One of the main activities is the school-wide two days' exhibition on a common theme; preparations for which begin weeks before. These activities are showcased to the outside world through regular updates on the school's Facebook page, which receives comments and likes from regular visitors including alumni and ex-teachers.

This international school has created its own intra-net social networking website that aims to give the experience of a public social networking site in a controlled environment. Relate, as the website is called, is open only to the staff and students of the school with entry being controlled by the school through issuing the login username and password. It works as a forum for students and teachers to interact with and amongst each other for academic and social purposes. It mimics the layout of Facebook and allows each user to post on a wall, 'friend' other members, create groups & forums and start chat conversations. However, usage is monitored and a prominent notice informs members of the 'etiquette' to be followed in the site and the consequences for breaching rules of appropriate conduct.

The main objective of this internal social networking site is to make sure that the children, specifically in the grades between 5th and 9th are coached and taught on how to use an external social networking site like Facebook

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responsibly and not find themselves in trouble or awkward situations. Further, the management and teachers view this simulation of a social networking site as a two-way learning experience, where both sides gain knowledge through ICT.

Students and teachers use this website in different ways and for various purposes. Social greetings for festivals or other holidays are common among students. Staff member also 'friend' other members of staff and have social interactions on this site. Teachers also use the website to comment on curricular events like projects and exhibitions conducted by the students. In turn, students conduct polls on issues of interest among other students and teachers giving them a taste of the democratic process. Finally, homework assignments have also been posted on the site for students to complete with immediate clarifications made possible through chat with the respective faculty members. Along with facilitating interactions among members, Relate also allows them to post videos (mostly educational and only posted by teachers), appropriate photographs (posted by students and teachers) and links to external sources like websites and blogs.

However, as the management themselves agree, though this is open for all school children from the 5th grade onwards and is completely voluntary, they see this being used by more of the middle school children than the older kids. Further, there seems to be a difference in pattern of how the girls use this compared to the boys. While boys prefer sports, girls seem to prefer paintings. Further, as this school provides every student with an email id when admitted, the sign up to site is through using this email id.

The Sign in Page of this networking site is provided below

Image 6.1: Sign in Page of intra-school networking site
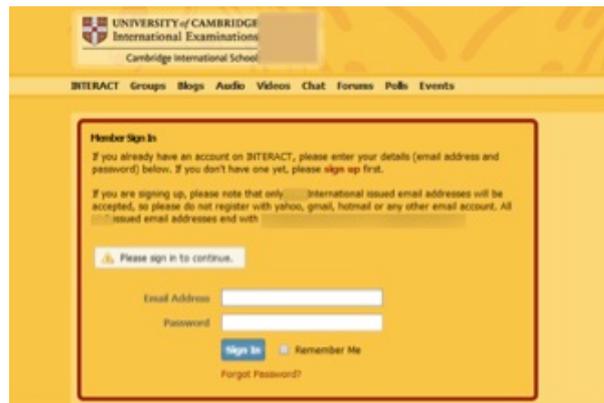
Extensive usage of ICT has also challenged the IT team of the school who are scurrying to keep pace with ICT related challenges like cyber bullying, posting of inappropriate pictures and other media on the common social networking platform and general use of internet for purposes other than classroom or education related research.

6.9 Conclusion

The chapter started with two seemingly disparate case studies of Ranjith and Pandian. However, viewing the same case studies now with an understanding of how the macro structure of education and other socio-economic factors influence this seemingly micro level use of social media in everyday life is what the chapter intended to explore. But to understand this, the diversity of schools found in the area, which range from these high fees paying affluent schools to free government schools that serve the lowest income migrant workers from other states had to be reviewed. We can now see why this introduction was so important, since almost every aspect of social media use in the school system seems to differ systematically along this spectrum from the most cosmopolitan to the most local in the school system, reflecting not

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only attitudes of teachers but also pupils and the expectations and aspirations of parents. In turn this reflects the wider context of a field site in which the imposition of a new IT complex also reflects a top down imposition of ideas such as the knowledge economy. But even if poorly understood it has been clear that all sectors of the population, even those with the lowest incomes, recognise that the futures of their children will be enhanced if somehow education can also mean access to technology and skills related to IT, so in a sense everyone has embraced the ideal of a knowledge economy at some level or other.

In this chapter, we have also explored the implications that this has on the presence of social media in schools, starting from the attitude that these schools have towards phones and access to technologies, right through to issue of personal connections on social media between teachers and students. Also, the categorization of social media and technology as useful educational tools and as distractions by the teachers had to be explored to understand why in affluent schools, the teachers frowned upon certain social media, while in the less-affluent schools, it was encouraged[204](Miller et al., 2016). This kind of categorization was also apparent in how the parents of these wards viewed social media. While the parents in the lower socio-economic classes who sent their children to the less affluent schools saw their child's membership in social media as exhibition of a technical competence needed to survive in the knowledge economy that Panchagrami had grown into, the upper middle class parents viewed social media as a distraction to education. This is in a way like how social media was viewed in the respective schools that their children attended.

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[204] This is also related to informal education that could be gained through social media. This is discussed in a comparative perspective in the book Miller et al., 2016

However, what was evident was that the idea of understanding and handling social media was still a messy mix throughout the school systems. It was apparent from the fact that none of the schools had a concrete social media policy and though some had an internet policy there was no mention of social media. Rules regarding social media were ever changing, as they kept grappling with the newer issues it brought about. Though, all schools acknowledged the inescapable pervasive presence of social media, not everything was discussed proactively and acted upon by these schools.

While students were friending teachers on Facebook, on the teacher's side, anxiety, confusion and caution, with respect to friending students or even asking students for technical help prevailed in affluent schools. On the other hand, in less affluent schools, friending on social media was encouraged and even operationalized upon. While this was more visible amongst the middle school students, the older students hesitated friending their teachers, due to thoughts of being under constant surveillance[205] (Miller et al., 2016). This was much more apparent with both the parties hesitating to connect over WhatsApp since that involved exchange of phone numbers. This was also visible in the schools discouraging their teachers from sharing phone numbers with the parents of their students fearing disturbance and invasion of privacy. Privacy in these cases was layered based on the social media in question, so though Facebook was still viewed as a legitimate platform for official institutional communication, WhatsApp was a private channel and was

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[205] More about surveillance is discussed in the book Miller et al., 2016 This also speaks to why when in certain countries it was seen as a platform for surveillance by schools, in China it was apparently so, due to the functionalities that the Chinese social media platforms offered.

discouraged, since it allowed one to one interaction with teachers[206]. So, while Facebook and WhatsApp seemed to be the platforms most discussed within these circles, what was not visible was the use of Twitter with the exception of one very affluent international school. However, even this school used Twitter along with other platforms. The use of Twitter amongst the students in affluent schools was not as popular as Facebook or WhatsApp and this trend is different from the use of Twitter amongst the students in the UK field site – The Glades[207] (Miller, 2016).

Also, while cross gender friending was apparent in affluent schools, it was only the male teachers friending male students in the less affluent schools, due to socio-cultural issues of girl students accessing social media or even mobile phones. The deeper we get into this; we see that the perceptions of schools about social media are relative to the socio-cultural aspects of the larger society that influence the schools themselves.

But, what is significant is the process by which the schools handle these apparent relative perceptions of social media by adopting contradictory practices. The last case study of a social media that an affluent school had created for its students is noteworthy. The affluent schools which discourage, caution and frown upon their younger students using social media, end up creating another social media to combat and strategically drive their students away from Facebook, while in less affluent schools, though they encourage and support social media, they don't have the necessary economic power to create something for their use. The apparent contradiction that is striking is

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[206] During the latter part of the fieldwork, an official WhatsApp group for a couple of schools seemed to be created, with one official school phone number.

the use of social media by systems of education that frowns upon it and the non-use of social media by systems that in reality support it.

In conclusion, social media is an unprecedented development that schools are coming to terms with by constantly testing and experimenting with it. They all seem to be handling it in their own style, which is relative to the socio-cultural scenario that they are embedded in, which was very apparent in the cases of Ranjith and Pandian.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion – Social Media and its Continuing Complexities

Sundararajan, a 57-year-old auto spare parts dealer from an upper caste, upper middle class Hindu background, owns a couple of two bedroom apartments in one of the multi storeyed apartment complexes in Panchagrami. His intention was to rent out one of his apartments, but only to a strictly vegetarian upper caste Hindu. Sundararajan initially tried the classified section in the local newspapers but wasn't happy with the inquiries he received. Later, he met with a few upper caste Hindu neighbours in the same apartment complex and asked them to post his rental ad on their networks on Facebook and WhatsApp. In an interview, a couple of months later, Sundararajan noted that he received around ten inquiries from upper caste vegetarian Hindus in response to his neighbours' postings and could let out his apartment successfully to someone he liked. He quipped that he wasn't surprised by the response, since he knew that all his neighbours socialized mostly with upper caste Hindus and had surmised that their networks on Facebook and WhatsApp would not be any different.

Sundararajan's casual observation was confirmed through both interviews and an online visual census of the profiles of the upper caste Hindus. On an average, 58% of their friends and contacts were from their own communities. Though online friendships with others happened, most were with people they already knew offline. When this was brought up during interviews, some were surprised, some were shocked and others rationalised this pattern. But, almost everyone agreed that while their offline social circles comprised people of other castes too, a majority were people of their own communities. These connections married a caste-based community to an emergent class factor

that was aligned with it. Interviews revealed that even within the community of their own caste their primary contacts were with the middle classes. Where there were contacts from lower classes, these were limited and most were functional rather than social[208]. For example: If someone was in touch with their cook (such as Kavitha in chapter five who sent WhatsApp voice messages to her cook/care taker), who was from their own caste on WhatsApp, this was to ensure that they could discuss what needs to be cooked for dinner and wasn't a social process of building peer to peer friendship, which involved forwarding jokes, memes and other visuals intended as a part of building sociality.

This pattern was also visible in the social media contacts of the long-term residents of the village. Their contacts from even within their own villages were mostly of their own socio-economic class. Strategic use of their networks as in the case of Sundararajan was also visible; for e.g. chapter five explored how Dharshan and Naga from the lower socio-economic class used their online networks to secure jobs for youngsters of their community in the lower rungs of the IT sector. While, Sundararjan's use of his network was for his own personal ends, the use of networks by the Dharshan and Naga was geared towards aspiration and development of their community[209]. But, both ended up using their networks to serve their own purposes.

Apart from class or caste, other forms of online network homophily (McPherson, 2001) exist, but tend to be the result of more of an unconscious choice influenced by offline contacts. Such network homophily reinforces a

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[208] Though, one can always argue that even such functional interactions could be a part of sociality. The idea here is to stress that it was not seen as a peer-to-peer process of building sociality.
[209] Though it indirectly resulted in Darshan and Naga acquiring status and respect within their own community, their gesture was ultimately beneficial to their community.

sense of 'online otherness', where each group views everyone else as an 'other'. The socio-cultural dynamics of Panchagrami as seen in chapter one, automatically contributes to this idea of 'otherness', where most interactions arise out of in-group associations. Interactions between the upper middle class IT/non-IT residents and the long-term village residents (irrespective of their class) are transactional - for example: interactions that could happen in the market place over buying/selling. This trend continued online too. Though the otherness is not apparently demonstrated, the in-group associations automatically lead to it.

While social continuity (Mandelbaum, 1970; Mayer, 1996) in India (as seen in chapter one), has been explored in rural and urban spaces, this thesis explores such continuity between the offline and online space and the background set up to do this is a space that is in transition from a rural to an urban landscape.

This also in a way corresponds to the initial set up of the field site itself, which offered itself as two distinct categories, namely the newer IT residents and the long-term resident villagers.

The first chapter offers the background where the study is situated i.e. an area that has seen the radical juxtaposition of an infrastructure for a massive knowledge economy in a traditional rural space dominated by agriculture. Panchagrami is undergoing massive changes not only in infrastructure, but also with respect to other socio-economic factors creating the basis for a messy situation; characterised by dynamism and change where tradition meets modernity and the local meets the global.

While informal and indirect classifications based on class exist between the newly settling residents who primarily comprise the IT and associated services workforce and the long-term resident villagers, people here are also categorized by the age-old endogamous category of caste (Beteille, 1996; Fuller, 1996). As shown in the first chapter this single category of caste not only comprises of a series of different dimensions e.g. marriage practice, reflected in the hundreds of endogamous class categories that have long been studied by anthropologists (Fuller, 1996) but also today incorporate a whole series of government labels (e.g. OC, BC, OBC, SC and ST) and ordering principles that have been placed alongside the more traditional categories and labels.

The ethnography suggests that social media has become a series of platforms through which such social categories or divisions manifest themselves. Rather than a progressive emancipation from such social categories, we more commonly observe their reassertion online.

The first chapter dealt with the traditional social categories of the long-term residents in the village. The general rise in the economic prosperity of these long-term residents, due to real estate deals along with their closeness to the IT sector, their aspirations and the affordability of communication technologies have naturally led to an increased use of phones (Jeffrey and Doron, 2013) (non-smart/ smart phones) and social media by this group, which is closer to the practice of the IT sector than to villagers in other regions.

The first chapter also revealed the IT sector as an ecosystem[210] that encompasses several occupational categories such as highly skilled IT employees, to semi-skilled to drivers and housekeeping staff, which gives rise to various socio-economic groups. When people belonging to these occupational classes settle in the area along with the long-term residents, it provides for a dynamic interplay between the different social categories and their use of social media. Hence, the second chapter provides details on the history of social media and the use of social media by the various groups at Panchagrami.

By this point it is already clear that in Panchagrami a discussion of social media will always involve a complicated mixture of at least caste and class. Contrary to expectations which saw social media as a potential panacea creating equality or at least digital equality, there is little evidence that social media at Panchagrami offers equality of any kind i.e. digital or social. While the increased affordability of communication technologies has offered most a chance to be on social media, i.e. there is an equality of presence, this mere presence on social media does not necessarily lead to any wider equality. This general observation that online equality does not lead to offline equality is common to many of our fieldsites (Miller, 2016).

Unlike some other fieldsites, however, issues of affordability remain pertinent for this site. As discussed in chapter two, while affordable pre-paid data cards have allowed even the lower socio-economic class to access social media, in practice, the lower socio-economic groups spend their pre-paid (pay as you go) monthly internet bandwidth in the first twenty to twenty-two days and therefore go without any internet connection during the last eight to ten days.

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[210] Chapter five gives a deeper view of the IT sector at Panchagrami

Similarly, approx. 84% of their postings is done in the first fifteen days after a recharge of their pay as you go plan. The time cycle of their Internet recharge coincides with their monthly pay cycle. Therefore, for the lower socio-economic classes even a mere presence on social media for all the days of the month cannot be taken for granted.

Chapter two to six also presents clear evidence that most interaction through social media occurs within the different socio-economic groups and not between them. This becomes apparent when we observe the kind of interactions between the middle/upper middle class and the lower classes. As discussed earlier, they are mostly transactional and functional and aren't intended for socialization. Not many upper middle class individuals encouraged the practice of their driver or cook forwarding them jokes; irrespective of the caste the latter came from, which was visible from Sindhu's (chapter two) apprehension in receiving a message from her male domestic help. Though, this might seem as a gender issue to start with, class plays an important role as well. Kavitha's case of interacting with her cook/care taker, who was from her own caste illustrates that even in intra-caste communications, class influenced the kind of communication i.e. functional vs. social. Irrespective of the caste group, as the gap in the class increases, the communication on social media becomes more functional rather than social.

While it may look like the continuity from offline to online space, influenced by caste and class, is pronounced through network homophily, in fact the same social categories coupled with kinship helps us see the common threads of activities and responses (e.g. their visual culture, network conformance etc.) on social media by the people of Panchagrami. This in a way is influenced by a deeper Tamil culture and leads us to see commonalities rather than

oppositions between the different social categories or between the super groups of IT vs. the villagers. So, the conclusion that on social media people largely keep within their older social groups, does not preclude a separate conclusion that there is a surprising degree of commonality with respect to how people across this whole caste and class spectrum have been impacted by social media. So, the ethnography also shows fewer differences between the professional IT sector and the villagers than was original predicted.

One of the most apparent commonalities in the social media postings between these groups is their devotion to two public genres that Tamil Nadu has been well known for, namely Cinema and Politics. This becomes clear from the analysis of their visual postings on Facebook in chapter three. The upper socio-economic groups constantly share posts on cinema, which they might call as 'intelligent' cinema and political news articles and political satires on their pages. The lower middle and lower socio-economic classes, tend to be more explicit about their passion for cinema and politics by posting visuals of their favourite actor or actress on Facebook and images of the political party they support. Further, these groups generally tend to be more explicit when it comes to posting political satires in the form of trolls on their Facebook pages.

Chapter three also reveals other visual genres, which have easily migrated from prior offline precedents. For example, the commonality in posting pictures of themselves was spread across classes[211]. This was explored through both solo portfolio images of themselves as well as through group images. Irrespective of the classes, the pictures posted by women tended to follow certain conservative social norms with respect to clothing and posing

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[211] This could take the form of Selfies or photographs taken by others. Though, Selfies don't have an offline precedent, the idea of postings pictures of themselves does have a continuity with an offline practice.

for pictures. Mixed gender posing by single men and women for social media photographs most often involved a group rather than a couple. Even in the upper middle class, posing as couples was accepted only if the parents knew of the offline friendships of their wards and were sure that it was not a romantic relationship.

Another common theme is the development of an offline practice of wishing people into an online form of daily greetings such as Good Morning or Good Night along with scenic or religious images. While some connected this to building sociality, others connected this to building Karma points and positivity.

What was also evident was the conformity of the visuals to their networks' expectations. So, posting neutral images such as greetings or images that don't necessarily express dissent were frequently found on their respective profiles on Facebook or even in their communication with different groups on WhatsApp. Understanding the necessity for social conformance and non-confrontation with their networks, people also strategically crafted their visual communication, as witnessed in the cases of Jyotsna and Sagayam. Even if they wanted to express dissent, most expressed it through private chats, or through silence (by not commenting or liking on the post as a response). As seen in chapter two, one way of expressing dissent and opinions contrary to the normative expectations was through the use of multiple profiles or fake identities. All these disintegrated selves were authentic for these people and together formed their identity.

The dominating field of communication at Panchagrami that cuts right across all groups is that of kinship as is evident in chapters five and six, but more

specifically in chapter four, which is focused on communication within immediate and extended family. The true essence of multiple media is covered in this chapter. This becomes another example of tradition manifesting itself through these modern tools of communication. Hierarchy based on age, the formal relationship that one family member holds with another, the nature of the media itself, the placement of each member in the kinship system, all contribute to determining the medium of communication one must choose to communicate within a family circle. While the closest family circle and especially communication with the elders might still warrant a voice based communication due to varied reasons such as age, hierarchy, literacy, love etc. as seen from cases such as that of Raghavan's, Ravi's mother, Shobana, Lakshmi or Rahul and Sukrithi's parents, communication with extended family moved to WhatsApp family based groups. This might move to communication over Facebook when the purpose is to inform about events in the family to a wider circle of kin and others, which people like Raghavan feel are impersonal and disrespectful to the elderly.

What happens between kin is a complex interplay between the concepts of Polymedia (Madianou and Miller, 2013), scalable sociality (Miller et al, 2016) and media-multiplexity (Rainie and Wellman, 2012) as seen in chapter four. Social media, especially Facebook, seems to act as a performative medium (through Likes and comments) where family members come together to perform and portray an image of a unified and ideal family to their wider network of friends on Facebook. However, this is not actually a reflection of the familial use of social media. Facebook is used as a strategic outer facing tool that has a performative role and is not given importance for within family communication in comparison to WhatsApp. Hence, it is not surprising that

Raghavan displays anger, when Facebook is used for intra family communication.

Within family circles, the role of Facebook as a public and less intimate medium for intra-family communication is seen in the different rationale expressed with respect to certain intimate postings. For example: Some postings exhibit a more traditional rationale such as avoiding posting pictures of a new-born on Facebook for at least a couple of months since its birth, for the fear of evil eye. However, pictures of a new-born are shared over WhatsApp privately. So, though Facebook might reach extended kin, the perceived fear of it also including non-kin networks and the visibility to a wider world poses a problem. But, such a fear is absent for WhatsApp, which explains the preference for the latter.

We can also see how traditional and normative order is re-established through new media. This was specifically visible on the impact that it had on gender norms. There is a constant nudging or imposing of restrictions placed upon women accessing social media by kinship and family circles which was in effect influenced by caste based ideals and normative discourses. Fear of inter-caste marriages and romance was prevalent in the lower middle and lower socio-economic classes and influenced them to restrict their young unmarried women from accessing phones and social media. Restrictions were of various kinds, some taking hard forms of surveillance and banning of mobile phones and social media usage, while some allowed the use of social media only within a safe space of their homes and further governed through time restricted access.

Space, both physical and online, assumes a masculine form here. The idea of banning social media is based on a perception that social media is a masculine space (Laughey, 2007; Gottdiener et. al, 2015) and so accessing that space exposes young women to unwanted distractions and causes disrepute to family honour. The same idea applies to how the space inside one's home is assumed as a safe space and the space outside home is perceived as a masculine space and thus dangerous for young women for accessing social media. This also in a way extends to time based restricted access to social media. The idea that young women should not access social media after 8 PM or 9 PM is also governed by a perception that after that time, they could be exploited. In a way, the intersection of time and space here assume a masculine form. Such restrictions don't allow women from these social groups onto social media. This has an indirect effect on young men of these groups and in a way drives network heterogeneity and increases friendships across class and caste. Traditionally the search for cross-gender contacts and relationships was very localised and concerned people you might otherwise see in everyday life. But the effect of social media has been to create a kind of force field, which throws these men out from this traditional centre into wider contacts as attempts to friend women locally fail, and young men look further to their educational institutions or work place or even other states and countries, to find less conservative women. They may never speak a word to them offline but they can express friendship and feel less shy in this more private space of social media.

Though the activities of the different classes on social media might seem distinct from each other, all of them commonly use social media to gain respectability and maintain their family honour. While the upper middle class might do it through performing as an ideal family unit on social media, the

lower middle class and the lower socio-economic class feel that they can maintain family honour by restricting their women from accessing social media.

What was also visible was the use of fictive kin terms in the way people addressed each other on social media. The idea of fictive kin is also something that spreads across all socio-economic groups. While addressing friends in fictive kin terms is common, addressing kin as friends was also seen and both tend to be influenced by normative discourses on kinship and friendship in the larger Tamil society.

Chapter five makes explicit a core theme to this study, which is to showcase how social media has radically challenged the boundaries of work and non-work, and constantly undermined them. While taking work, home is a social conformance to the modern workplace expectations, managing non-work aspects at work is generally viewed as dissent. However, such dissent is in conformance to the historical ideology of work in south India where such boundaries traditionally did not exist and constant interactions with the non-work space were considered a part of everyday sociality. Any such dichotomy in an Indian context was historically never as rigidly imposed across the world of work as might be the case in some other regions. This is manifested through a paradox in the work system, which allows for work- non-work boundaries to be constantly redrawn through opportunities to circumvent such impositions.

This discussion of work and non-work boundaries is situated in the context of a sudden transformation of what had been a traditional agricultural setting to a modern formal workplace setting at Panchagrami. A complex interplay

between caste and kinship (fictive kin) occurs for lower positions in modern work settings. The role of social media in such infiltration (recruiting, communication etc.) was discussed in chapter five. While this may particularly be the case for lower socio-economic groups, the role of social media in facilitating constant communication between the work and non-work spheres throughout the day and thus undermining the work and non-work boundaries for upper socio-economic groups was also examined with respect to kinship in chapter five. So, although this works in a different manner for the villagers and IT workers the general way in which people use social media to oppose recent attempts to separate work from non-work is common to all communities

Issues of hierarchy, which was prominent in chapter four and to a certain extent in chapter five, also manifest themselves in chapter six, which discusses school education. Here we find social media exposing tensions in how teachers and students understand and orient themselves to these new media for social communication. The uncertainty and ambivalence of how to align traditional hierarchies of teacher-student relationship to a new relationship of a 'Friend' on Facebook played havoc at Panchagrami. This varies between the different socio-economic groups and per different responses and attitudes of the school administrations. While for the affluent schools that cater to the upper socio-economic groups, the prevailing concern is whether social media might be a distraction to their students, for the less affluent schools that cater to the lower socio-economic groups, social media symbolises mobility, which they hope within a knowledge economy will lead to prosperity.

Thus, the teachers of the less affluent schools view friending students on social media as a visible encouragement to their students' aspirations. For a

student from the lower socio-economic background, friending a teacher might lead to showcasing his/her own intelligence and thereby gaining brownie points in the classroom. For students and teachers in affluent schools, friending each other might lead to a lack of privacy due to break down of hierarchy, all of which leads to a constant testing of waters in both directions.

This chapter on education thereby reinforces the findings found throughout the ethnography. On the one hand, it showcases the persistence of differences in class and caste and therefore more generally of inequality. This combines both a caste distinction, which remain absolute if people practice caste endogamy, and a class distinction, which is more scalable. While at the same time we see that the areas of concern within social media usage, just as kinship in previous chapters, the triangle of teachers, students and parents in this chapter, are common to all.

As we have seen throughout this ethnography, Panchagrami is in the process of being transformed from a rural to an urban landscape due to the influx of the IT sector, which by bringing forth socio-economic and cultural transformations, also brings forth opportunities and allows people to compete for economic and social mobility, often legitimized through the rise of the new skilled and educated middle class. The rise of the IT sector which fuels the idea of a knowledge economy also projects itself as a fair entity that only promotes skilled and knowledgeable workforce thus offering a fair selection process, thereby subtly hinting that one's recruitment into the IT sector (which can be viewed as a large in-group) is based on his/her achievement through exhibition of superior technical knowledge as compared to the general populace.

Further, as seen in chapter two, the local populace associate IT with swanky and clean office spaces, formal clothing, laptops and newer smartphones, high end consumerism and the idea of English as a lingua-franca. Such associations in a way act as a two-way differentiation where the IT sector by showcasing and probably subtly hinting at the idea of a differential marker through such exhibitions draws and clearly differentiates itself from the local and general populace and for its part the local populace by associating the IT sector with such material markers clearly differentiates itself from the former. Thus, the idea of we and you, or the binary of 'the IT ingroup' and 'others' gets projected by both the general populace and the IT sector. This gets further enhanced with the housing that the well settled IT workers invest in. As seen earlier in the thesis, housing specifically catering to the IT sector is aplenty in this area. Though, hierarchies within the IT sector gets mirrored in such housing projects for e.g. The Vice Presidents can afford luxury apartments, while a programmer can only afford a smaller functional apartment, in general, investments in such housing facilities at Panchagrami cannot be afforded by most long term locals. Further, banks and other financial institutions tend to offer the best of the loans to the employees of the IT sector thereby helping them own such apartments.

All of this is further accentuated by the kind of schools that the children of the well to do IT employees attend as compared to the local non-IT populace. Such schools also play a significant role in helping the inter-generational attainment that these skilled educated parents seek for their children. The idea of 'life settlement' is often associated with these children getting themselves prepared to enter a well-known engineering college, which might boast of a campus placement and finally finding themselves employed at a higher pay in the hi-tech sector (in other words, the IT sector). The

ethnography discussed the possibilities of the IT sector being broader than it is usually defined in most Indian studies of this sector, hence the people on the periphery of this sector also compete to get their children to be a part of this sector, by striving to enhance their knowledge thereby sending them to good schools. However, the good schools that these children attend are still markedly different compared to those that the well paid knowledgeable IT workers' children attend (as explained in Chapter 6) thereby causing a hierarchical shift in the attainment that these children might have within the IT sector in the long run. This is because of the kind of expectations that these schools set their children with. for e.g. Chapter 6 clearly outlined on what is viewed as an intergenerational attainment even with respect to the use of social media by children attending different schools in the same area.

The aspirations of the local populace to become a part of this group and thus striving to emulate the practices of the employees of this sector, right from the aspirations they hold for their children to use of social media to even the blatant copying of consumeristic aspirations of local young men striving to own the kind of hi-tech smart phones that the IT sector employees own and much more as explained in this ethnography can be seen as a parallel to the idea of Sanskritization of Indian society, where the people in the traditionally so called lower castes often sought upward mobility by emulating the rituals and the practices of the upper castes. This leads us to the question of can the IT sector be called as a Jati? Following Bear's (2007) idea of Jati as expressed in the study of the railway workers, the IT sector here has all the markers (as discussed above) to be called as a Jati.

What is of significance here is that even within the IT sector, there exists a hierarchy (sub Jatis' in a way), where the employees in the IT sector strive for

mobility through promotions within this structure, while employees of the ITES sector strive to somehow become a part of the IT sector and employees in the periphery of the IT/ITES structure, while recognizing their limitations somehow want their children to be within one of these sectors (most end in the ITES sectors). However, for the local populace, some association with the IT/ITES sector in itself is an upward mobility. This continues over generations through aspirations that these different groups in the area hold for their children. Further, even the class of friends that the IT employees seem to be connected to on social media showcases network homophily and subtly hints at a distinction that they wish to exhibit with respect to the tastes that they have, right from touristic destinations that they like on Facebook, to the world cinema that they seem to enjoy as a hobby.

What is fascinating is that while the IT sector in this area seems to be championing socioeconomic change, it also brings forth an underlying trend of social continuity which can be viewed as a parallel to the Indian idea Sanskritization.

Taken as a whole we are still confronted by a key question – Does social media matter at all? In the sense of what has thereby changed. An answer to this question has to start by confronting a key finding in chapter four.

Not all kinds of social media assume importance when it comes to the most significant set of relationships that matter to most people at Panchagrami namely the family with whom they live their lives. This is a key corrective to the natural tendency that having chosen social media as the subject of research one is tempted to ascribe a major role to it irrespective of the situation. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the limits of social media is

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that Facebook is used explicitly to demonstrate the love that exists within families to the wider family or to those that live outside of the family, but never used to express that love within families. This might seem to be contradicted by the familial use of WhatsApp, but this is because WhatsApp is often viewed as an extension of a scalable messaging service, rather than as a social media as seen in chapter two. This also in a way showcases, how social media tends to be categorized at Panchagrami, with Twitter being the most elite and the most public platform, followed by Facebook, which allows friending strangers, to WhatsApp which though scalable, is still seen as a private platform and interest group members are seen as acquaintances. This directly speaks to both the notions of Polymedia (Madianou and Miller, 2013) and Scalable sociality (Miller et al, 2016).

Overall the very term `social media' has a different connotation in this Indian case from many of the other studies. In some countries, today the term social media simply means that which extends out from merely individual and dyadic communication to the ability to deal with a wider group audience. But in India, social is synonymous with society, which is tightly organized by traditional principles like kinship, age, gender, class and caste. In other words, society is tightly ordered per groups and social media means understanding the way any media is socialized into these preordained groups. The theory of scalable sociality suggests that early social media was a scaling down to groups from public broadcasting and recent social media a scaling up to groups from dyadic communication. But in this region of south India social media is principally about group communication simply because it has always been about group communication.

This point is perhaps most powerfully established by the evidence that it contradicts the intentions of this research project and the premise that was associated with its initial choice as a location. This was not merely the juxtaposition of traditional and modern. This was bringing in 200,000 IT workers in the middle of a bunch of villages and fields within the course of ten years. The scale is extraordinary; the speed is extraordinary and the difference between these two communities is extraordinary. It seemed obvious and inevitable that this juxtaposition would have dominated the thesis throughout. But being India and given the openness of the ethnographic method, our perception of the use and consequences of social media quickly changed. It became evident that notwithstanding this juxtaposition of the ultra-modern with highly traditional rural structures, what mattered just as much is what these two groups have in common. While this study looked at social media under conditions of larger social change and transformation, what was also visible was an emulation of traditional issues peculiar to the Indian setting e.g. a kind of Sanskritization of the IT sector as discussed earlier. Because all the population of Panchagrami remains organized through a distinctly Indian system of order values and social categories, such as caste, class, the extended family, age and gender hierarchies, people's use of social media reflected and mirrored such traditional social categories (class, caste etc.) alongside the social hierarchies presented by the influx of the IT sector. Everything here was already intensely socialized and this all conspires to make these `social media' often more a reflection of these wider Indian sensibility and structures that remain rather different from those found in other societies.

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