

Review Article

Reproducing Misogyny: Cultural Adaptations and Radicalization in the Indian and Malayali Manosphere

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Recent times have witnessed a significant resurgence of anti-feminist sentiments globally manifesting primarily through digital communities collectively known as the manosphere. This paper outlines the complex landscape of online misogynistic communities, exploring their ideological structures, radicalization processes, and potential societal implications. By looking into the emerging discourses, the paper aims to map the emerging landscape of Indian and Malayali manosphere communities, examine their distinct characteristics, and contribute to the limited academic discourse on manosphere variants outside Western contexts. The paper provides a preliminary look at the Indian manosphere characterized by content creators mimicking global misogynistic influencers and self-styled mentors who provide relationship advice rooted in deeply misogynistic ideologies backed by conservative political structures. The Malayali manosphere is presented as a regional variant with a distinct identity, distinguished by innovative terminologies and spanning both Kerala and the global Malayali diaspora.

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Introduction

The past decade and half has witnessed a notable resurgence of anti-feminist sentiments and movements globally with various local variants, posing significant challenges to the progress of gender equality and women's rights^{[1][2]}. This phenomenon has been characterized by the rise of right-wing political leaders, the amplification of anti-feminist narratives on social media, emergence of new anti-feminist icons, and the emergence of primarily online movements^{[3][4][5]}. These developments have

sparked concerns about the potential regression of hard-won gains in gender equality and the need for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors and implications of this phenomenon.

At the centre of these developments is the emergence of the *manosphere*, a heterogeneous group of online misogynistic communities. It consists of diverse groups with some common features that make it possible to analyse them together as a coherent unit. These communities have their distinctive jargon and internal tensions, and are often associated with online harassment, radicalization, and violence, including mass killings motivated by misogyny^{[6][7][8][9]}. The manosphere facilitates a migration, especially of older men from milder to more extreme and violent communities^[8].

Radicalization of young men that happens within the manosphere has also spilled over to physical violence including mass murders^[10]. Given its scale and its potential influence, this phenomenon which some have called a virtual war against women^[11] needs to be understood and theorized as a new backlash emanating from the manosphere^[11] that is not only opposed to the feminist movement, but also to the idea of gender equality^{[3][4]}.

The Manosphere: An Outline

Different definitions of the manosphere have been suggested, almost all of them agreeing on some common points such as the manosphere being a constellation of loosely related communities, it as existing primarily on the internet, and united by a masculine perspective and a generally negative attitude against women and/or feminism^{[12][6]}. Social media platforms including TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, and various independent websites are the platforms on which the manosphere exists and operates^{[7][13][14][15][16]}.

The term manosphere itself first appeared on the internet in 2009 and became popular with a book by ‘porn reviewer’ Ian Ironwood in which he likened the manosphere to a comet and defined it as “a collection of internet blogs, cultural discussion groups, interpersonal interactions and digital clubhouses whose focus revolves around issues and interests common to men and masculinity”^[17]. This idea of the manosphere being a collection of independent entities that look like the parts of a ‘dirty snowball’ while moving together in a shared direction resonates with the nature of the manosphere.

While some contemporary scholars explain it as a detached set of websites and social media groups^[18], some have explained it as a fragmented group of communities that promote misogynist discourses^[19]. Simplistic explanations of manosphere as a new form of Men’s Rights Activism that fail to cover the

entire complexity and diversity of the phenomenon have also been proposed^[20]. The idea of hegemonic masculinity is used to explain the attitudes and behaviour of those who are considered part of the manosphere^{[6][21]}. Indeed the culture of violence against women that is promoted in the manosphere may be a reflection of hegemonic masculinity as explained by Connell^[22].

The analysis of the evolution of ideological communities of men in response to the feminist movements and the resultant changes in social order as presented by Messner^[23] through his conceptualization of historical gender formation offers an avenue to understand the progression of the manosphere and its components. From a focus on family, education etc. and issues related to divorce such as alimony and custody of children which characterised the early communities such as the now defunct Men's Liberation Movement, a shift towards themes like sexuality, socialization of women, and an alleged oppression of men is happening^{[24][19]}.

Drawing on the historical evolution and the current nature of the constituent communities, the manosphere can be defined as a heterogeneous group of online communities commonly characterized by their opposition to feminism, promotion of masculinity, and misogynistic and sexist beliefs which are reinforced and escalated within echo chambers. It includes constituents such as men's rights activists (MRAs), *Incels* (involuntary celibates), *Red Pill* groups, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), pick-up artists (PUAs), and fathers' rights groups among others. These communities have developed their distinctive jargon and internal tensions and are often associated with online harassment, radicalisation, and violence, including mass shootings motivated by misogyny. A cursory description of each of the constituent communities of the manosphere is given below.

Men's Rights Movements (MRM) and Men's Rights Activism (MRA): Men's Rights Movements are the oldest and probably the most organized part of the manosphere. Having originated in the 1970s, the present-day MRM can be understood as an embodiment of the fears, anxieties and rage of primarily privileged men^[25]. The MRM in the United States operates with the conceptualization of the white man as the new 'victim', often taking offence at policy issues such as divorce and alimony laws, and benefits provided to single mothers etc. as discriminatory and penalizing men^{[26][25]} even while some of their arguments on alimony are not supported by evidence^[27]. More commonly called as Men's Rights Activists (MRA) in India, similar groups rally behind similar issues and have equal online and offline presence^{[28][29]}.

Pick-Up Artists (PUA): Relying mostly on pseudoscientific principles of seduction borrowed from practices such as Neuro Linguistic Programming^[30], the movement of Pick-Up Artists is built on the conceptualization of women as sexual objects. These are communities of men – mostly online but also with offline presence – where self-proclaimed pick-up artists act as gurus or coaches to less experienced men on how to attract and have sex with women^[31]. The objectification of women in the PUA community is evident in the condescending and objectifying language used to refer to women^[32].

Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW): Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) is claimed to be a separatist movement that advocates for men to separate themselves from women, built on the belief that feminism has corrupted society. Founded and mostly operating online, the MGTOW movement carries the paradox of claiming to be a separatist movement of men going their way, the central theme of the entire movement is a fight against gender equality^[33] whereby the majority of discourses within the community contains polarising and misogynistic language which promotes violence against women and feminism^{[33][34]}.

Red Pill: With the term borrowed from The Matrix movie, the Red Pill communities, also claimed as following a certain Red Pill philosophy^[14], present what is supposed to be a form of parallel reality regarding the world, especially gender relations. Within the Red Pill community there is rampant objectification of women, explanatory hierarchies for men with specific jargons for each *level*, and strong negative sentiments towards men who are allies of feminism^[19], all presented while discussing what is claimed to be self-help or seduction techniques^[35]. It is also suggested that membership in such communities could increase one's chances of committing violence on intimate partners^[36]. A self-image of men being logical and rational in comparison to women is also promoted within Red Pill communities^[37].

Involuntary Celibates (Incel): The community of Involuntary Celibates (Incel) started out as an internet based subculture of those who were not successful in obtaining sex and romantic relationships. The term introduced by Alana Boltwood, a queer female student who meant it to include people of any gender^[38], was later appropriated by heterosexual men and has grown into an echo chamber of amplifying violent discourses^[11]. Initially considered a fringe, online only entity, the Incel community gained notoriety and became known outside the manosphere with the 2014 mass murder in California committed by Elliot Rodger who published a 'manifesto' before the act. Though Rodger never described himself as an Incel and identified with a group known as PUAHaters, he was considered an Incel by many commentators

because of his stated motivation for the killings, and also for his glorified image within the Incel community as an *inclebrity* and a motivation for further violence^{[39][40][41]}. Recent academic debates have suggested the need to classify Incel violence as acts of terrorism^{[42][43]}. One more facet regarding the Incel community is the suggested possibility that hardened identification with the Incel community may be associated with certain mental disorders and mental health issues^{[10][44][45]}. The incel ideology has motivated different forms of online violence, including revenge pornography^[46].

The incel community itself has become an umbrella with several different variants emerging. The term *currycel* refers to men of mostly Indian and South Asian origin who blame cultural heritage and ethnicity as an additional reason for their inability to obtain sexual or romantic relationships^{[47][48]}. *Currycels* blame women of Indian and South Asian origin of favouring white men over them^[48] in addition to the alleged influence of feminism. There is another community of *ricecels* who are men of East Asian origin, harbouring similar complaints as *currycels*. Female incels known as *femcels*, male homosexual incels known as *gaycels*, and transgender incels known as *transcels* also exist, though in comparatively small numbers and not as a mainstream within the Incel community, which is predominantly heterosexual and male.

Apart from these communities that principally constitute the manosphere, there are more groups organized through messaging boards such as 4chan and 8chan, and messaging platforms such as clubhouse and telegram and independent websites which can be considered as part of the manosphere^{[49][15][50][16]}.

The Societal Implications of Manosphere

As discussed earlier, the constituent communities of the manosphere differ from each other in their fine workings, but operate on some common attitudes and sentiments, with misogyny as one of the core elements. Most members, especially of the newer communities, enter these communities seeking self-help advice or solution to some issue that they experience, such as a lack of intimate relationships or a break-up from a relationship^{[35][51]}. What happens within the communities needs to be understood in detail.

Nature of Discourse: The discussions that happen within the different communities of the manosphere are complex and multifaceted. Based on an analysis of the contents from different communities, Han and Yin^[19] categorized the discourse that happens within the different manosphere communities as that of

an anti-feminist countermovement, and personal masculinist discourses. For instance, the majority of content on MGTOW forums were found to be misogynistic^[34], and othering of women, creating a binary opposition of us vs them^[33] which can also be seen as a desperate defence of patriarchy. Earlier, it was shown that the discourse within manosphere contained different forms of misogynistic rhetoric involving physical and sexual violence, racism, homophobia etc. and that the hostility and violence within manosphere is increasing steadily^[52]. A form of networked misogyny is suggested as a defining feature of the discourse within manosphere^[18].

Indoctrination and Radicalization: Communities within manosphere act as echo chambers, amplifying violent ideas and attitudes. Indoctrination happens when young men enter these communities seeking guidance on a variety of issues such as fitness, managing breakups, overcoming loneliness, self-improvement, financial advice etc^[51]. Once inside, there is a step-by-step process of indoctrination which starts from harmless – and oftentimes beneficial – activities such as diet control and physical fitness, which later graduate into the spreading of violent ideas against women, feminism, and men who support feminist ideas. Loneliness is converted into resentment or anger and later into hatred^[53]. These extreme ideas are solidified because of the echo chamber effect of these communities^{[54][51]}.

Radicalization that happens within the manosphere is not limited to young men, and is not related to the proliferation of ideas alone either. While young and vulnerable men are the most likely targets^[20], older men are also influenced by the exchange of misogynistic ideas. A large scale analysis involving more than 28 million posts on the manosphere communities found considerable overlap of members between different communities and a migration of members from older and less violent ones (such as MRA and PUA) to newer and more toxic ones (such as Incel and the Red Pill)^[8]. Radicalization in the manosphere can start with mere participation, and has implications to the targets' attitude and behaviour in the physical world^[55] and could lead to instances of physical violence including murders^[56].

Convergence of Groups and Ideologies: Manosphere communities can act as a catalyst for otherwise disconnected and sometimes opposing ideologies and groups to converge, motivated by the common thread of misogyny and opposition to feminism^[18]. It has been suggested that manosphere can act as a gateway to far-right groups^[15]. Studies on far-right extremist communities on social media have included manosphere among the analytical categories^[57].

There have been instances of far-right western Islamophobic commentators softening their stand towards Islam because of a perceived common ground of opposition to feminism and LGBTQ rights

activism. Conservative Muslim and Christian groups have started opposing SOGIESC training in schools^[58]. Reciprocally, popularity of gender equality debates and activities is seen as a threat to traditional Muslim masculinity and this reflects in the surge in a rising support and fan base to manosphere poster boys such as Jordan Peterson among conservative Muslim men^[59].

The popularity of the concept of Red Pill within different manosphere communities reflect a propensity for conspiracy thinking. Across the manosphere there is belief in ‘misandry’, the notion that feminists hold prejudice and hatred towards men, despite strong evidence against such wide existence of misandry^[60]. This, coupled with evidence-based misogyny, the use of discursive tools of abuse and misinterpretation of statistics, studies, news etc. to support misogynist narratives^[61] and the trend of misuse of scientific fields such as evolutionary psychology^[12] provide a common ground for the manosphere with the far-right in using conspiracy theories and misinformation as political tools. Anti-feminist views are an important political issue in the United States^{[62][25]} and elsewhere^{[2][5][63]} with major implications for the future of democracy.

The Terrorism Argument: The radicalization within manosphere and especially in the Incel communities could pose a real threat of the emergence of a new form of terrorism, which has already come into existence according to some^[64]. It is argued that the narrative of Incel murderers being ‘lone wolves’ is not valid since there is a stepwise pattern of emergent behaviour from digital hate speech to physical violence^[54]. The celebration of murderers like Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian as *Incelebrities* within the manosphere, the global existence of misogyny as a social phenomenon, and the echo-chamber effect of the online communities are all presented supporting factors to approach the manosphere from a lens of terrorism studies^{[42][43][64][56]}.

Regional Variants of Manosphere

Apart from the United States, there are multiple regional ‘versions’ of manosphere that have been discussed including Swedish, Spanish, Bulgarian, Canadian ones^{[65][66][67][68]}. Though referred to by geographical names, these online communities are better understood as linguistic entities. For instance, a member of the Spanish manosphere can be residing in any part of the world, as long as they are part of an online community and shares the jargons and attitudes cultivated within it.

The Present Study

Despite growing awareness of the manosphere and its implications, there remains a critical gap in understanding its regional manifestations, particularly in the Global South. This paper examines the complex interactions between masculinity formations and anti-feminist sentiments within manosphere communities, with particular attention to their manifestation in the Indian context. By synthesizing existing literature on the global manosphere phenomenon, the paper illustrates how these discourses are localized and transformed within India's specific socio-cultural landscape. Through analysis of a regional variant of the Indian manosphere, this research contributes to the growing body of literature by exploring how masculine identities are negotiated in response to changing gender relations, and discusses a research agenda to address the topic in the feminist academic discourses in India.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative content analysis of manosphere communities across social media platforms (YouTube, Clubhouse, Facebook, Reddit, Telegram) and dedicated websites, examining posts, comments, and multimedia content in Hindi and Malayalam languages. Data were collected from publicly available online platforms. The analysis focuses on identifying recurring themes, terminologies, and patterns of discourse within these communities. While the data collection process was not exhaustive or statistically representative, it was designed to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the prevailing trends, terminologies, and ideological frameworks within the Indian and Malayali manospheres. This approach acknowledges the fluid and decentralized nature of online communities, where content is constantly evolving and regenerating, making traditional sampling methods less feasible.

The researcher's positionality – as someone situated within the same cultural and linguistic milieu as the Malayali manosphere – both informs and shapes the analysis. This insider perspective allows for a nuanced understanding of cultural references and subtleties that might elude external observers. At the same time, the researcher remains vigilant about potential biases, actively interrogating their assumptions and interpretations throughout the process.

Results

An analysis of Indian language anti-feminist communities, particularly the ones with Hindi and Malayalam as primary languages, offers some critical insights into the regional adaptations of global

misogynistic ideologies. While these communities exhibit parallels with the global/English manosphere - such as the usage of terms like Incel and Red Pill - they are distinguished by unique linguistic innovations, cultural resignifications, and intersectional dynamics tied to caste, class, and religion. For instance, the Malayali manosphere's coining of terms like Meninism and Peacock Feminism reflects localized efforts to legitimize anti-feminist discourse through cultural specificity. The sections that follow outline these findings, situating the Indian manosphere within broader global trends while highlighting its socio-political and cultural particularities.

The Indian Manosphere

The existence of an Indian version of the manosphere has received only limited attention from the academia though there have been writings in popular platforms and media on the topic. Contemporary India presents factors favourable for the flourishing of manosphere communities including the normalisation of misogyny even by influential persons^[69], political climate and messaging that emphasises masculinity^[70], a renewed trend of celebrating ascetic masculinity^[71], and the rise in internet penetration which is also correlated with high prevalence of violence against women online^[72].

While trying to situate the manosphere in the Indian context, the first hurdle faced is the lack of a common language. India has 22 official languages and numerous others, including many dialects. Hindi is the most used Indian language on the internet and is expected to outgrow English as the dominant language^[73]. Hence the nature of the Indian manosphere has to be assumed as having different compositions and characters, depending upon the major language used. Each language community may evolve its own terminologies and narratives, albeit influenced by the global/English manosphere. Here is an attempt to look at the evidence that exists for the existence of an Indian version of the manosphere and an argument for why the manosphere in the Indian context is to be understood through the various language variants of it, through the case of a regional language variant.

Features of the Indian Manosphere

Defining and understanding the Indian manosphere is made difficult because of the linguistic diversity of the Indian diaspora. Hence as a starting point the various components of the manosphere ecosystem with the majority of content being produced and consumed in Hindi is being taken as the unit for analysis. While this may have shortcomings, Hindi being the most prominent Indian language on the

internet provides a vantage point for an analysis. An effort is made here to illustrate how there is an Indian manosphere which has considerable influence on Indian men and what the components of this manosphere are. It is to be noted that Hindi is not spoken or understood equally across India, with specific regions having very little usage of the language.

Video sharing platforms like YouTube and social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit are among the most active platforms on which the manosphere content thrives in India^{[74][75]}. Each platform may cater to different demographics of men. Some media writings such as blogs and media articles have labelled the anti-feminist discourse happening on YouTube and social media platforms under the term of Incel violence^[76] but there has been scarce discussion on how these are part of the manosphere ecosystem. Most academic work on the anti-feminist movement in India has been limited to the Men's Right Activism (MRA)^{[77][78][79]} and not covered the other elements of the manosphere.

A major proportion of Hindi content creators belonging to the manosphere ecosystem concentrate on providing advice to young men on sexual and relationship matters. Most of these content creators are young adults, and model themselves on Western misogynist influencers like Andrew Tate^[80]. Some of these creators attract huge followership. The language employed and style of these creators mimic that of the global PUA community. Some use the term 'dating coach' to describe themselves and even offer courses and seminars for a fee^{[81][82]}. Even if the platforms shut down the accounts following complaints of misogynistic and violent content, new accounts are created and the cycle of the content continues^[83].

There is another set of content creators whose content can be described more as misogyny and objectification presented as self-improvement advice for young men. Though their content come with titles related to grooming and health advice, the underlying misogyny and objectification is obvious^[13]. One such creator named Sarthak Goel who describes himself as a "Men's Personality development Mentor & Life Coach" has a subscriber base of more than 551,000 on YouTube. He is active on other platforms such as Instagram and Facebook as well. The most popular video on the channel had more than 12,04,000 views as of December 2024 and provides advice on how to develop a *playboy* mindset, an obvious reference to sexual objectification of women. Other popular videos also contain similar or more misogynistic content including ones that claim to explain female nature and flirting and messaging tips. Under the topic of 'Psychology', his website provides advice on how to control girls, how to make girls obsessed with oneself, and how to break girls' ego among other topics. He also offers one-on-one

consultation sessions for a fee. Many of his videos reflect the typical PUA themes, but the language used is largely reminiscent of the MGTOW rhetoric which reproduces hegemonic masculinity^[84]. Another case is that of a popular influencer on Instagram with the profile name 'A J Bhairav' who has more than 2.8 million followers and presents his Reels mostly as videos without dialogues, but only subtitles in English. Though styled as life advice for young men, the misogyny and objectification of women in his content is hard to miss.

Some content creators, who are also referred to as 'influencers' cater to the right-wing and conservative political ideologies similar to the case of their western counterparts, and this provides them with a loyal followership because of the synergy between conservative political ideologies and misogyny^[85]. Unlike the Western manosphere, where violence like the 2018 Toronto van attack by Alek Minassian was explicitly tied to Incel ideology^[42], the Indian manosphere's impact remains less documented. However, its mimicry of global manosphere influencers indicates a potential for a spillover to offline harm. A case in point is that of the controversial influencer Elvish (Siddharth) Yadav who has a total subscriber count of more than 23 million and 3 billion views on YouTube as of December 2024. Despite public displays of misogyny and other uncivilised conduct^{[86][87]} there has been no concrete action taken that could address the issue of this person continuing to influence a large population of youngsters.

Among the various communities within the manosphere, the Incel subgroup is arguably the most recognizable to users of Indian social media platforms. On social media, the term incel is used widely to refer to young men who use misogynistic language or subscribe to anti-feminist ideas. Such usage of the term may not be based on an accurate understanding of the term, but used as a way to put a label to communication deemed as anti-feminist^[74].

Though the term *currycel* is used to denote Indian men too, not many within the Indian incel community self-describe using either of these labels^[74]. The concept of 'black pill' which is inspired by the red pill analogy of incels and also a passing reference to skin tones^[88] is popular in the incel discussion forums. The black pill ideology is criticised within the manosphere as promoting nihilism and hopelessness^{[89][90]}. There is also an apparent overlap between the *currycel* and MGTOW communities in India, evidenced by a number of men who self-identify as *currycels* using the term 'mgtow' in their profile names on platforms such as Facebook^[48]. There is also a dedicated Indian MGTOW website with articles having references to 'red pill' and other terminologies typically used within Incel communities. The tendency of self-deprecation seen in the incel groups could also be an indication of low self-esteem or deeper mental

health issues^{[91][92]} which need to be addressed at policy and advocacy level, particularly given the propensity for violence and the propagation of hopelessness^[89].

Fathers' rights groups similar to those in the west are not found in India. However there are distinct groups working under different names which share the common focus on *saving* the Indian family system. Their demands and working mirror the MRA movements and fathers' rights groups. Some of these groups take up the issues of fathers in domestic disputes and their rights related to visiting their children^[93]. In India several men's rights activists and groups have also taken up legal advocacy and activism, particularly targeting the alleged misuse of Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code which was introduced to address criminal violence against women related to the outlawed practice of dowry^[94].

The western manosphere has found allyship from the 'Trad Wife' movement which consists of women content creators who attempt to glorify conformity to traditional gender roles assigned to women^[95]. On the Indian social media too there is a growing trend of women who style themselves on the western model of trad wives, often portraying traditional gender roles. Not all of them may necessarily self-identify as trad wives or subscribe to the far-right ideology of western trad wives, but nevertheless add to the growing phenomenon of romanticising traditional and regressive ideals^{[96][97]}.

Regional Variants: The Case of Malayali Manosphere

As discussed earlier, it is to be expected that every regional language diaspora in India can be expected to have their own specific variations of manosphere communities, influenced by factors such as cultural milieu, literacy and education, technology use, and exposure to global communities. Kerala presents an interesting case in this context given the historical contacts with the other parts of the world, high levels of literacy and technology use, and a sizable migrant community across the world providing constant channels of communication with the outside world. The Malayalis or persons who speak Malayalam as their native language have their presence in at least 182 of the 195 countries of the world^[98] with the numbers estimated to be more than 5 million.

Keralites have been known for keeping up with cultural changes and literature from across the globe, exemplified by the translation and popular reception of renowned books to Malayalam^{[99][100]}. In trying to locate this regional manosphere variant, I use the term 'Malayali Manosphere' because the participants in this ecosystem are equally likely to be located within and outside the geographical boundaries of

Kerala and India, especially in the context of increased International migration of Malayali youth driven by aspirations and affordances^[101].

Kerala has had a history of misogyny in the public and private sphere despite the overall human development it has achieved^{[102][103][104]}. Misogyny is evident in the public discourse, ranging from social media discussions that shame women and marginalized groups^{[105][104]} to news outlets treating blog posts arising out of moral panic related to young women asserting their agency on marriage as scientific research^{[106][107]}. Hence it is to be expected that given the backdrop of cultural exchanges with the western world and the high levels of connectedness, the manosphere discourse would have a Malayalam version, with participants from the global Malayali diaspora. Indeed Malayalis online have adapted the various components of the western manosphere and have also formed communities and synthesised terminologies of their own.

There is a sizable number of YouTube videos in Malayalam that offer tips on self-improvement for young men, using terms such as 'looksmaxxing' and 'voicemaxxing'. These terms are part of a glossary of 'tools' prevalent within the global incel and red pill communities, ostensibly used to improve their 'sexual market value'^[108]. While it can be argued that these creators may not necessarily form a part of any misogynistic groups, there is a real threat of further indoctrination of the consumers of such content, as seen in the global manosphere ecosystem.

The Malayali manosphere has also coined terminologies of their own along with using concepts and ideas drawn from the western manosphere as such. There is the term 'Meninist' which is used by some men who consider it to be an opposite for feminist^[109]. There is a YouTube channel named Mallu Meninist (*Mallu* is an informal term used to denote Malayalis). The channel produces videos denigrating women, transgender persons, and feminists and has content that is inspired by multiple western manosphere communities. There are other social media pages too with the same name, producing memes that abuse women and feminists. Those who advocate for

Another term that is used widely in the Malayali manosphere is "pavada", which translates to skirt in English and is used as a synonym for the term *Simp*, which is a slang for men who support women and is therefore weak or not masculine enough. Feminist women are usually addressed using the derogatory term "feminichi". YouTube content creators with large following who do not necessarily form part of any manosphere community also use these terms frequently^[110]. Perhaps the most interesting coinage is that of "Peacock Feminism" which was introduced by a writer and atheist campaigner named C.

Ravichandran through one of his speeches which was published on YouTube later. He describes peacock feminism as a tool used by men who want to get the sexual or romantic attention of women by calling themselves feminists^[111]. The term is used as a derogatory label for men who support feminist ideals by many on the Malayali manosphere. Misogyny expressed by atheists is also a global issue which seems to have found its Malayalam version^{[112][113]}.

The Red Pill movement in Malayalam is active on multiple social media platforms and has established a funnel for indoctrination of potential members. There is a dedicated website providing links to Red Pill groups on different social media platforms. It also disseminates written articles and links to various other content, such as books and the Indian Men's Right Activists' websites. There are multiple YouTube channels where content from English are reproduced in Malayalam, and independent videos are produced. The Red Pill Malayalam YouTube channel has videos that claim to debunk feminist research findings and other content creators who produce feminist content. The Clubhouse group named 'Red Pill Malayalam' has a mix of male and female members who describe themselves as rationalists and those who are religious fundamentalists. The members of these Red Pill groups are called by others including feminists, as incels. The members rarely use the term to describe themselves^[74].

The discourses have also improvised on the language of the western manosphere. It also produces its own instructional content to educate the community members. There are social media content and blog posts that paint intersectionality as a form of identity politics and as a major reason for the difficulties faced by young men and for them being 'oppressed'. This is an adaptation and improvisation of the explanations used on western manosphere spaces^[51].

The Malayali Manosphere has provided an interesting meeting place for non-religious groups or rationalists/atheists and religious fundamentalists with opposition to feminism as their common ground^[109]. The religious fundamentalists use the term 'mazhavil (rainbow) mafia' to denigrate those who advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and similar sentiments are echoed by some self-proclaimed rationalists as well. This presents an even more interesting parallel to the phenomenon that is emerging in the west where religious fundamentalists have found common ground with the far right^[58].

Men's Rights activism is found both online and offline in Kerala. There have been instances where men accused of sexual harassment were felicitated when they were released on bail by self-proclaimed men's rights activists^[114]. Men who claim to be such activists are also invited by television channels as panellists in discussions on various topics involving women's rights or violence against women and are

allowed to be part of TV shows as well^[110]. There is a Facebook group named *Purushavakasha* Commission (translated as Men's Rights Commission) with more than 94,000 members. There have also been public demonstrations conducted by different collectives demanding the formation of such a commission by the government^[115]. Members of such groups tend to include older men when compared to the other manosphere communities.

Discussion

Research interest on the manosphere has grown significantly in the recent years, with a surge in the number of publications specifically mentioning the manosphere starting from 2019 onwards. Given the patriarchal and traditional social structure in India, it is quite feasible that the manosphere exists and thrives in the Indian internet space as well. This paper has examined the interactions between masculinity, cultural norms, and anti-feminist sentiments within Indian manosphere communities, revealing a complex ecosystem of online spaces that reproduce global misogynistic ideologies while adapting them to local contexts.

Based on the evidence presented, the Indian manosphere can be conceptualized as a heterogeneous network of primarily online communities spanning multiple languages and platforms, characterized by anti-feminist discourse and misogynistic ideologies adapted to Indian socio-cultural contexts. Unlike its Western counterpart, the Indian manosphere demonstrates greater fluidity between different ideological strands and exhibits unique intersectional dynamics related to caste, religion, and regional identities^[48]. It operates through content creators who mimic global misogynistic influencers, self-styled mentors providing relationship advice rooted in misogyny, and diverse regional variants with distinct terminologies and cultural references.

The meaning of the term incel in the Indian context is being debated in the Indian online space^[74]. At the same time the influence of manosphere ideologies from the incel and red pill communities is quite visible in discourses in the Indian manosphere. Most of the popular content created by influencers like A J Bhairav objectify women and are built around the themes such as women's chastity, hypergamy, and traditional roles for women. Most dating advice online also carry the undertones of denigrating and objectifying women. The objectification and categorization of women using labels can be seen as a direct import from the western manosphere recontextualized within traditional Indian values and norms.

Unlike in the western manosphere, there are no identifiable discrete Red Pill communities found on the Indian social media. Those who subscribe to the red pill ideology and the variations of the same are probably a part of the Incel groups as has been seen in the case of currysels. However, compared to Hindi or other Indian manosphere spaces, the Malayali manosphere has developed a sizable group of young men (and a few women) who subscribe to the so-called Red Pill ideology and consider themselves part of the Red Pill community. This suggests varying degrees of ideological consolidation across different regional variants of the Indian manosphere, possibly mediated by factors such as literacy rates, internet penetration, and exposure to global discourses.

The intersection of manosphere themes and traditional norms in the content produced by Indian manosphere influencers is typical of the intersectional and networked nature of communities that form the manosphere^[34]. The so-called "dating tips" promoted in PUA forums perpetuate the dehumanization and abuse of women^[18]. While empirical studies specifically linking such discourses to online violence in India are limited, these harmful narratives likely exacerbate existing patterns of gender-based harassment. These forms of abuse are further compounded by intersectional dynamics, including caste and religious identity, which amplify vulnerabilities for marginalized women^{[48][116]}.

India's uneven male-biased sex ratio may exacerbate involuntary celibacy, which could increase the chances of young men subscribing to the incel ideology^[117]. This demographic pressure, absent in Western contexts, and the traditional son preference and the resultant sense of entitlement among young men could amplify resentment among young men intersecting with cultural narratives of masculinity and relationships. This unique demographic context represents a significant difference between the Indian and Western manosphere ecosystems and warrants further investigation into how population dynamics shape misogynistic discourses in different cultural contexts.

As a regional variant, the Malayali manosphere presents a particularly interesting case study of how global misogynistic ideologies are localized within specific cultural contexts. The Malayali manosphere has developed extensive terminological innovations, including terms like "Meninist," "pavada" (as an equivalent to "simp"), "feminichi" (a derogatory term for feminist women), and "Peacock Feminism" (a disparaging label for male feminist allies). These linguistic innovations show how anti-feminist discourse is culturally embedded and adapted to resonate with local audiences.

The convergence of non-religious and religious fundamentalist groups within the Malayali manosphere reflects a broader global trend where ideologically disparate groups collaborate in opposition to feminist

and LGBTQIA+ rights. However, in Kerala, it is predominantly Hindutva right-wing groups that align with atheist communities in their anti-feminist stance, rather than Islamic fundamentalists as observed in Western contexts^[118]. This alignment can be understood in relation to Hindutva's apparent efforts to influence Kerala's cultural sphere^[119]. Such alliances illustrate the adaptability of anti-feminist movements, which exploit both secular and religious rhetoric to legitimize cis-heteronormative agendas. The formation and evolution of the Indian and Malayali manosphere resonates with analyses of male supremacism in the West, which trace connections between patriarchal traditionalism and radicalized anti-feminist movements like inceldom and the alt-right^[120]. In both contexts, anti-feminist ideologies function as a unifying force, bridging otherwise disparate groups such as religious fundamentalists, self-styled rationalists, and political conservatives.

What distinguishes the Indian manosphere, however, is its intertwining of caste hierarchies, demographic pressures, and religious politics to legitimize misogyny within specific cultural frameworks. The Malayali manosphere's strategic weaponization of terms like "peacock feminism" and "mazhavil mafia" reflects a calculated adaptation of global anti-gender discourse to local contexts. These parallels highlight the remarkable adaptability of anti-feminist rhetoric across cultures while underscoring the necessity for region-specific analyses that address unique intersectional dynamics.

This analysis of the Indian manosphere contributes to the growing field of critical masculinity studies by demonstrating how online spaces function as sites for negotiating masculine identities in response to perceived threats from feminist movements. The defensive posturing observed in these communities reveals deep anxieties about changing gender norms and relations in contemporary Indian society. The manosphere provides a virtual space where hegemonic masculinity is not only reinforced but actively reconstructed in opposition to feminist progress.

The findings also suggest that studying online manosphere communities offers valuable insights into how masculinities are being reconfigured in digital spaces across the Global South. Rather than viewing these communities as merely mimicking Western patterns, this research highlights how anti-feminist discourses are culturally embedded and locally produced, reflecting specific historical and social contexts. Such an understanding is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at addressing online misogyny and preventing extremist radicalization.

The Way Forward: A Research Agenda

The dearth of research on manosphere communities active within the Indian diaspora represents a significant gap in our understanding of how misogynistic ideologies are translated and adapted across cultural contexts. To address this gap and develop evidence-based interventions, we propose a comprehensive research agenda with the following priorities:

Mapping the Linguistic and Cultural Landscape: Future research should systematically map the various linguistic and cultural adaptations of manosphere ideologies across different Indian language communities. Such mapping can document region-specific terminologies, narrative patterns, and rhetorical strategies to understand how global misogynistic discourses are localized. Such work would benefit from computational approaches to analyze large-scale datasets from social media platforms while maintaining sensitivity to linguistic nuances.

Examining Intersectional Dynamics: The intersections of caste, class, religion, and masculinity within Indian manosphere discourse require in-depth analysis. Research should investigate how traditional hierarchies interact with newer forms of misogyny, and how these intersections shape the specific character of anti-feminist sentiments in different regional contexts. This intersectional approach could illustrate how different marginalized identities are positioned within manosphere narratives.

Tracing Radicalization Pathways: Understanding the pathways of indoctrination and radicalization mediated by culturally-specific factors is crucial for developing effective prevention strategies. Longitudinal studies tracking how young men encounter and become immersed in manosphere communities could provide valuable insights into vulnerability factors and potential intervention points. This research should engage with broader scholarship on digital radicalization while accounting for the unique features of the Indian context.

Analysing Political and Institutional Enablers: The role of political systems and institutions as enablers of systemic misogyny deserves critical examination. Research should investigate how mainstream political discourse, media representations, and institutional practices may normalize or legitimize manosphere ideologies. This analysis should consider how anti-feminist backlash operates not only online but within broader sociopolitical structures.

Developing and Evaluating Interventions: Finally, research is needed to develop and rigorously evaluate interventions aimed at countering manosphere radicalization. These interventions might include digital literacy programs, counter-narrative campaigns, or community-based approaches that address

underlying vulnerabilities. Effectiveness studies should consider both short-term attitudinal changes and longer-term behavioural outcomes.

Limitations

Being a pioneering attempt at outlining the Indian and Malayali manosphere, this study has several limitations. The manosphere itself being an emerging field of study, the analysis is primarily descriptive rather than based on systematic data collection. The literature cited also contains popular articles and non-peer reviewed content. The study has only covered one regional variant of many potential ones within the Indian manosphere ecosystem. It is hoped that this work will inspire more systematic and mixed-methods research employing digital ethnography, quantitative content analysis, and interviews with community participants and former members to provide more robust empirical evidence.

Conclusion

This paper provides one of the first academic explorations of the Indian manosphere, with particular attention to the Malayali manosphere as a regionally distinct variant. It has demonstrated how global manosphere ideologies are transformed and recontextualized within India's specific socio-cultural environment. The evidence presented suggests that the Indian manosphere represents not simply a replication of Western patterns but a culturally embedded phenomenon shaped by local histories, social structures, and political dynamics. The findings call for urgent attention to the mechanisms of indoctrination and radicalization within these communities, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive interventions. While this work represents only an initial mapping of the Indian manosphere landscape, it lays critical groundwork for more focused empirical studies on these communities. It also advances critical masculinity studies by illuminating how masculine identities are being negotiated and reconstructed in online spaces in response to perceived threats from feminist movements. As this field continues to evolve, further research employing qualitative and quantitative methods will be crucial to developing actionable strategies for mitigating the harms caused by the manosphere.

Further research on the Indian manosphere demands a comprehensive approach that maps the linguistic adaptations of misogynistic discourse across regional contexts while examining how traditional hierarchies of caste, class, and religion intersect with emerging forms of digital misogyny. Understanding these dynamics requires tracing culturally-specific pathways of radicalization that lead young men into these communities, alongside critical analysis of how political systems and institutional practices

legitimize such ideologies beyond online spaces. This research gap must be addressed through evidence-based interventions – ranging from digital literacy programs to counter-narrative campaigns – whose effectiveness should be measured through both attitudinal and behavioural outcomes. By developing this nuanced understanding of how global misogynistic ideologies are translated and adapted within Indian cultural contexts, researchers can help mitigate online and physical violence while addressing the underlying vulnerabilities that draw young men toward radicalization.

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