

Transcending Complexity Science: The Historical Recurrences in Cultural Practices

Around Matted Hair in Southwestern India

Cultural practices surrounding the emergence of matted hair among women in Southwest India are an entangled phenomenon due to the intricate health and human rights implicated attached to it (Dhaske, 2019). In its progression, this phenomenon adds diverse social, cultural, and spiritual emergent meanings while concealing assertions of affected women. Culturally speaking, matted hair has been understood both as a sacred bodily transformation and a medical anomaly—an embodiment of divine power for some and a symptom of psychological distress or neglect within medical frameworks (Dhaske, 2019). On one side, the institutions (temples, psychiatric care, and caste structures) alternately celebrate or erase the concealed authentic phenomenon. The entanglement of the bodily autonomy of matted hair affected women through sacred assertion represents an intersection of self-organization, historical suppression, and recursive cultural systems, making it an ideal phenomenon transcending complexity science.

Complexity science offers a theoretical model to understand how historically contingent but structurally persistent systems evolve (Byrne & Callaghan, 2022). However, the phenomenological existence of matted hair transcends complexity science, critically impacting predictive formalization—emerging instead as a system that is historically bound yet perpetually fluid (Urry, 2005). This paper situates the phenomenological matted hair and its spatio-temporal existence as historically self-evolving within a complex symbolic universe. The unstable gendered cultural structure that emerged from the intersection of gender, caste, and spirituality, compounded with the medical system, shows resistance to full medicalization as well as complete ritual containment.

This paper reflects on the limits of complexity theory by expanding how social and cultural forces exceed formal scientific modeling within the evident health and human rights marginalization of women affected by matted hair. The paper explains how complex theory requires transcending conceptual tools to understand the role of reinforcing complexity's role in understanding recursive historical transformations.

Keywords: Complexity Science, Matted Hair, Caste, Phenomenology, Medicalization of Hair.

References

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