Analysis Of Gadamer's 'Fusion Of Horizon' In Kudumbashree

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Abstract:
This article explores the application of Hans-Georg Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' within Kudumbashree, a grassroots women's network in Kerala, India. The study conducts a qualitative analysis through interviews with eight Kudumbashree members from Adhichanallor Panchayat, Kerala, India focusing on personal growth and empowerment through social, political, and cultural lenses. It reveals that Kudumbashree meetings exemplify Gadamer's theory, promoting mutual respect and shared visions. The fu[1]sion of horizons emerges as a transformative force, fostering solidarity and collective action, which is crucial for community development and women's well-being. The organization's commitment to developing social capital is highlighted as a key factor in enhancing welfare provisions and facilitating empowerment. The findings demonstrate Kudumbashree's significant impact on societal transformation, supporting local women's upliftment and contributing to Kerala's welfare. The study affirms the practical relevance of Gadamer's hermeneutics in empowering individuals and reshaping societal norms towards inclusivity and equity.

Keywords: Gadamer, Kudumbashree, Empowerment, Social Capital, Community Development, Welfare Provisions, Societal Transformation, Hermeneutics.

1. Introduction
The notion of a 'fusion of horizons', as expounded by the German thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer, holds a pivotal role in the realm of interpretive endeavours (Edling et al., 2020; Nielsen & Lynch, 2022; Urizar & Esteban, 2023). In this framework, both the interpreter and the object of interpretation bring forth their individual preconceptions and biases, shaping their unique horizons of comprehension. As the interpretative journey unfolds, these horizons gradually meld, culminating in a shared grasp of the subject in focus.(Dobson, 2022; Pertierra, 2022; Sadler, 2021). Amidst the vast expanse of knowledge and understanding, Gadamer emphasizes the fusion of horizons as a pivotal aspect in unravelling the depths of history and insight, diverging from conventional doctrines (Barak, 2022; Edling et al., 2020; Nelson, 2021;

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Shuang, 2020). In delving into this discourse, the authors gain profound insights into the intricacies of Gadamer's theory and its profound tethering to the hermeneutic lineage. By honing in on the concept of 'fusion of horizons', (Santos Alexandre, 2022; Yunkun, 2023) we unravel diverse facets of interpretation and hermeneutics within the tapestry of Kudumbashree, spanning political, social, structural, and philosophical dimensions. This dialogue endeavours to offer a holistic comprehension of how varied strata of interpretation contribute to the rich fabric of Kudumbashree.

1.1. Overview of Gadamer's 'Fusion of Horizon'
In this article, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is utilized to analyze the social contribution of Kudumbashree in the context of Kerala. According to Gadamer, our way of reaching understanding about things is authorized by the historical nature of whom we are and how we stand in time (Edling et al., 2020; Gonzalez, 2022; Noveanu, 2021; Zimmermann, 2021). The concept of the Fusion of Horizons, as proposed by Gadamer, can be further understood through insights from other philosophers. For example, Kant's notion of the transcendental ego (Cavallaro, 2020) and Husserl's theory of intentional consciousness (Hosseini, 2021) both emphasize the subjectivity of human experience and the importance of interpretation in understanding the world. Nietzsche's ideas on perspectivism also contribute to the idea that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective (Abu-Fares, 2021; Knoll, 2021). Additionally, Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world highlights the interconnectedness of human existence and the environment, further emphasizing the need for a fusion of horizons in interpretation. (Hetterley, 2022; Mertel, 2020). By exploring these philosophical perspectives, we can see how Gadamer's concept of bringing together different horizons in dialogue resonates with broader philosophical discussions on perception, interpretation, and understanding. Humans are finite and they are essentially bounded by their historical life. For a genuine understanding, Gadamer proposes that the interpreter must locate ways to overcome this temporal distance. He meets this objective by offering a progressive understanding, called the 'conversation of past and present'. This is an expansion of the Romantic idea of 'historical effect', attempting to push the concept further (Bourgault, 2020). Gadamer proposes that when interpreting an earlier event in history, the event has affected how the interpreter stands and situates in history today. He provides the analogy of spatial distance in that the interpreter stands in a different location in history to the event been examined, thereby creating a 'temporal distance'. Desire to overcome this gap and locating the conversation emphasises the importance of obtaining self-understanding. When speaking of prejudice, Gadamer does not mean the biasness within the modern day understanding. Instead, it is the a priori structures which condition how we understand our world. Gadamer suggests that there is a need to reach a certain point in understanding for a prejudice. He gives the example of when a newcomer acquires a new 'pre-judice'. Initially, the idea and the wonder will be knowledge and acceptance. However, for the 'pre-judice' to be meaningful, Gadamer argues that the conversation between the present and the history is the only thing that helps to create and foster the beneficiaries for the 'pre-judice' (Birhane & Guest, 2020; James et al., 2020; Luraschi & Finnegan, 2021).

1.2. Intoduction to Kudumbashree in Kerala

The state of Kerala is internationally famous for its geographical beauty, (Thomas, 2023) high literacy and responsible tourism (Chaudhury et al., 2023) but it is also home to a revolutionary women's organization. Kudumbashree, which means "prosperity of the family" in Malayalam, the local language of Kerala, is essentially a poverty eradication programme that began in 1980 and became a national project by 1998. The success of Kudumbashree is staggering. It currently

reaches out to more than 4.6 million women community network spreads across Kerala and has managed to uplift a mind-boggling number of people from the poverty line. The organization has provided a means for women, to gather in small groups to support each other and increase their income. And all this has been done through the mobilization of local resources and a leadership style that is democratic and bottom-up. (Dutta & Fischer, 2021; Menon et al., 2023). It is no wonder that this model, the Kudumbashree model, is emulated around India and has - in adapted form - influenced international bodies such as the United Nations. The basic principle of Kudumbashree is to gather people together to work as a community against poverty. This begins with very local projects (like waste management or organic farming) and this community participation has a component of 'social engineering' whereby people are empowered and society is revamped through giving local people control over decision-making processes. The open membership policy of Kudumbashree and its targeting of all women means that organization adapt to and grow with circumstances and cultural change. It also means that Kudumbashree does not, and should not, have a set 'uniform' model for development. (Manoj, 2020; Rajagopal, 2020; Venugopalan et al., 2021). The dynamism and resilience of this modern social movement is very impressive. Such is the power of Kudumbashree, it has influenced policy changes and gender empowerment strategies within India and beyond. It is a great example of how effective grass-roots campaigns can change lives and society for the better.

2. Kudumbashree: Towards New Horizons

2.2. Understanding Kudumbashree's goals and objectives

Kudumbashree exists under the joint liability group model. This is a community development strategy that has proved widely successful in India in terms of grassroots economic development. Each Kudumbashree group (NHG) has around 10-20 members, which consists of women. The reason why statistics show more women in these groups is mainly attributed to the fact that the joint liability model in which Kudumbashree operates is a self-help method that not only empowers and mobilizes women but also helps them to work towards their social and economic upliftment. (Chandran, 2023; Rajagopal, 2020). This is in line with the objectives of the Kudumbashree model which is more about helping women overcome communal problems that exist societally as opposed to perpetuating patriarchal oppression. The model focuses on 'women first' programs that empower them culturally, financially and socially and enable them to take control over their own lives and destinies. The ultimate goal of Kudumbashree is community development and poverty eradication; which is mainly achieved through programs targeted at giving women control over household income (Menon et al., 2023; Shehzad et al., 2021; Venugopalan et al., 2021). The group works among destitute women, have gathered them into neighborhood groups and look into the social development of members and ensures that they have stable income. By venturing into economic enterprises, Kudumbashree has been successful in various poverty eradication programs.

2.2. Explanation of 'Fusion of Horizon'

The concept of fusion of horizon goes back to Heidegger who said that in any conversation, two different horizons meet to create a kind of a common horizon. Gadamer reformulated and expanded this concept to assimilate the historicity for that dialogically constituted truth. According to Gadamer's application of the fusion of horizons, when interpreting something in a conversation or in a written response it isn't just one person's perspectives and experiences that must be taken into consideration, but the individual's and also those of who have held that particular perspective in the past. He famously said that "fusion thrust of understanding the

historicity of human truths and methods of inquiring the said truths and how they evolve throughout history". (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Bartley & Brooks, 2023; Pertierra, 2020). Because if we are interpreting something and are only considering solely on our perspective then it isn't serving a purpose to the deeper analysis of the historicity of human truth. His opinion and others is considered because conformity and taking note of the historicity which is the long tradition that leads to a development of knowledge over time. Gadamer's fusion of horizons essentially is building from the solid positive which every individual possesses in other word perspectives and experiences and using it to learning from other people's perspective. (Barak, 2022; Bartley & Brooks, 2023; McBride, 2023). Every individual's truth is created from perspectives and experiences and by not being judgemental we have a chance to produce a solid argument from others. This doesn't mean that one abandons their perspective and experiences but rather it shows the significant of combining knowledge so as to learn from one another in the conveyance of a particular historicity (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). His application of historicity to the contemporary social, philosophical, political, historical and scientific understandings can be fully understood with the evolution of knowledge over time.(Stark, 2020).

2.3. Application of the concept in social contexts

The idea of the 'Fusion of Horizon' as delivered by Gadamer has been generally recognized by different educated people and researchers to propose a few answers for issues that are looked in the present society. In the contemporary social and political circle, there is regularly the issue of the individuals' difference that is activated by political, social and cultural angles (Pertierra, 2020; Shuang, 2020). Such is seen to deny social equality and quest for joy. Be that as it may, Gadamer's hypothesis of the 'Fusion of Horizon' has given thought on the best way to make shared belief on such insignificant issues which he alluded as 'pre-judging'. 'Pre-judging' in this unique situation, includes the individual's frame of mind towards social and cultural topics in the public eye. By investigating thoughts concerning this hypothesis, it offers better comprehension of the present cultural communication in accomplishing great social orders (DeMarco, 2023; Meadows & Reaney, 2024). One of the triumphant projects under the neighborhood self-government and the wellbeing office in Kerala, Kudumbashree has obtained the idea of 'Fusion of Horizon' in applying the financial specialist administrations to help the penniless and the poor in Kerala. Kudumbashree is a "game changing" venture and it has accomplished a "social transformation" in Kerala the previous years (Krishna & Jacob, 2022; Rajagopal, 2020). According to recent studies conducted on Kudumbashree, the organization has been working towards a specific goal since the beginning of the project. Various initiatives have been implemented to ensure that Kudumbashree's goals and objectives are being met(Divakar & Singh, 2022; Menon et al., 2023). Kudumbashree surely has taken the astuteness from many experienced figures. By utilizing the current "wellbeing staff" and the network for the usage of the objectives, Kudumbashree has increased present expectations of financial specialist administrations (Parvathy & Kumar, 2023). Gadamer contends that the plan of seeing should be mission-or truth-oriented (Gressgård, 2022). Kudumbashree have doubtlessly being such sort of a crucial worker oriented world so game plans is the key in the comparable way of reasoning.
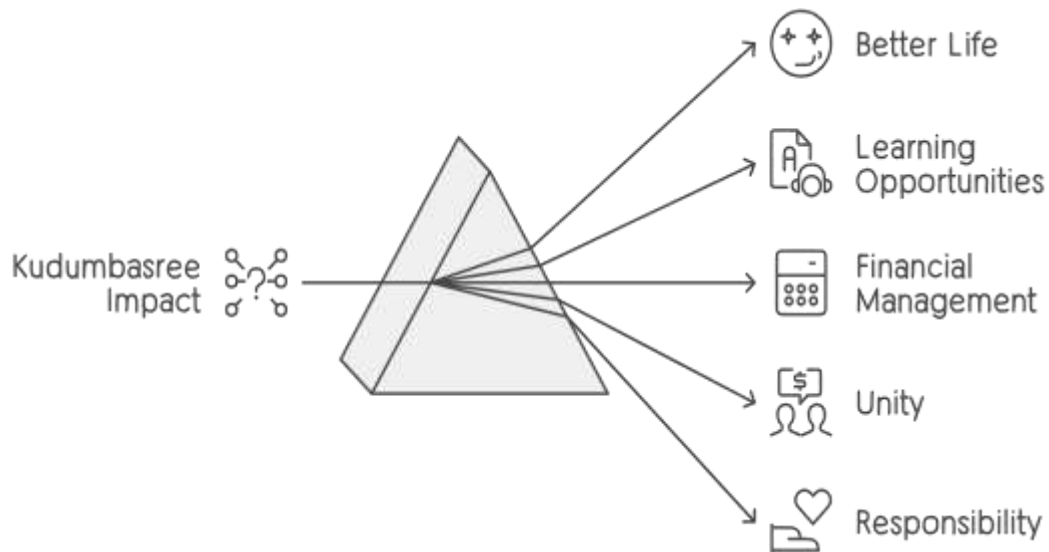
Exploring the operational factors of Kudumbashree through the lens of Gadamer's Fusion of Horizon theory reveals how the organization strives to create sustainable family enterprises, foster employment opportunities, and drive social progress for women in Indian society. This approach emphasizes the importance of interpretation and understanding, where personal backgrounds and historical contexts merge to deepen comprehension. (Ilha Villanova & Pina e Cunha, 2021). Rather than viewing empowerment as a purely instrumentalist endeavor, Kudumbashree empowers women to see themselves as agents of change capable of reshaping

societal norms. (Sathiyabama et al., n.d.; Thorpe & Gaventa, 2020). By expanding their perspectives and embracing new meanings, women involved with Kudumbashree can truly grasp the essence of their roles in creating a better future for themselves and their communities. (Rajagopal, 2020; Varghese & Ranganathan, 2021). While differences in horizons among individuals and groups may pose challenges to mutual understanding, kudumbashree itself acts as a unifying horizon. (Cuhls, 2020; Dutta & Fischer, 2021; Kordeš & Demšar, 2021; Venugopal, 2022). It provides a platform for women to collaborate, share diverse viewpoints, and collectively strive towards empowerment and societal transformation. By embracing the fusion of horizons within its operations, Kudumbashree weaves the fabric of Gadamer's theory into tangible actions that drive positive change for women in Indian society (Nuchian et al., 2024; Parvathy & Kumar, 2023; Prakashan, 2023).

3. Analysis and Evaluation

The evaluation of Kudumbashree's performance entails a structured and logical approach, with particular emphasis on a qualitative study conducted within the Adhichanallor Panchayat. In this study, ten Kudumbashree members were interviewed using eight specific questions, aimed at discerning their perspectives on how Kudumbashree has facilitated their personal growth, as viewed through the lens of Gadamer's concept of the Fusion of Horizon in terms of social, political, and cultural empowerment. The outcomes of the study revealed that the Kudumbashree unit's meetings align harmoniously with the established theoretical framework, as members skillfully harness mutual respect and shared visions to empower themselves. Furthermore, the significance of collective community efforts in fostering empowerment became evident during these meetings, as participants engaged in conversations surrounding strategies to support one another and achieve sustainable development. The analysis of these conversations highlighted the transformative power of the Fusion of Horizon in Kudumbashree, as it fosters a sense of solidarity and collective action among its members. Through the Fusion of Horizon, Kudumbashree members are able to transcend their individual perspectives and collectively create a shared understanding of their goals, leading to effective collaboration and community development. Moreover, Kudumbashree's steadfast commitment to developing social capital emerged as a pivotal factor in enhancing the well-being of local women, promoting the advancement of welfare provisions, and facilitating social, economic, and political empowerment. This study underscores how Kudumbashree's practices substantiate the theoretical principles elucidated in Gadamer's perspective, thereby highlighting the organization's substantial impact on the community and its potential to uplift local women from impoverishment, consequently contributing to the overall welfare of the state of Kerala. By analyzing the various dimensions of Kudumbashree's implementation of the Fusion of Horizon, it becomes evident that the organization not only empowers women at an individual level but also plays a crucial role in transforming societal structures and norms, ultimately paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society. Five questions are raised to 8 kudumbashree members for an in-depth interview.

1. How has being part of Kudumbashree made your life better? Does it help you earn more, get involved in your local community, and learn about government programs? What are the things you find difficult about it?

2. Do the workshops and classes offered by Kudumbashree help you learn new ways to earn money on your own? What are the things you find hard about them?

3. Has Kudumbashree helped you plan and manage your household finances better? What are the things you find difficult about it?

4. Does Kudumbashree help bring people together, regardless of their background or beliefs? What are the things you find hard about it?

5. Has Kudumbashree made you feel more responsible and willing to help others in need? What are the things you find difficult about it?

3.1 Discussions and Insights

Transformation through Kudumbashree:
Kudumbashree has been a transformative force in the lives of its members. The impact goes beyond just improving their circumstances; it fundamentally changes their outlook and possibilities. As expressed by the members, 'Kudumbashree didn't just make my life better – it transformed it.' This sentiment is echoed throughout the narratives, emphasizing the profound shift that being part of Kudumbashree brings. The transcript excerpts illustrate how Kudumbashree has facilitated the fusion of horizons for women engaged in various entrepreneurial ventures. By providing economic empowerment, community engagement, and knowledge enhancement, Kudumbashree has not only improved the financial status of these women but also enhanced their social standing and empowered them with knowledge and skills. This holistic approach has led to tangible improvements in their lives, including increased income, active participation in community affairs, and awareness of government programs and services. Overall, these findings highlight the transformative impact of Kudumbashree in promoting women's empowerment and socioeconomic development at the grassroots level.

Economic Empowerment and Social Transformation:
Kudumbashree facilitates a powerful "fusion of horizons" for women entrepreneurs by addressing their needs holistically. It empowers them economically through microloans, connects them with markets and resources, and fosters community engagement. This approach not only improves their financial status but also elevates their social standing and equips them with valuable knowledge and skills. The results are tangible – increased income, active participation in community affairs, and better access to government services. This highlights Kudumbashree's transformative impact in empowering women and driving socioeconomic development at the grassroots level.

From Artisans to Entrepreneurs:
The workshops and classes offered by Kudumbashree act as a catalyst for personal and professional development. They emphasize skill enhancement, business development, and empowerment. This transforms the mindset of participants, shifting their perception from mere artisans to confident entrepreneurs. The workshops go beyond practical knowledge; they instil

a sense of self-belief, encouraging continuous improvement and innovation. These initiatives effectively foster sustainable livelihoods and economic empowerment among Kudumbashree members.

Shared Experiences and Collective Knowledge:
The concept of "fusion of horizons" comes alive in the shared experiences of Kudumbashree members. Each woman brings their unique financial situation and challenges, but through the program, they find common ground. They share insights, learn from each other, and collectively navigate financial management more effectively. This exemplifies how individual horizons (personal experiences, knowledge, and challenges) converge with the collective knowledge and support provided by Kudumbashree.

Financial Literacy and Management Skills:
Kudumbashree significantly enhances financial literacy and management skills among its members. Through educational workshops, it encourages saving habits and fosters a supportive community environment. This empowers individuals to take control of their finances, plan for the future, and overcome challenges collaboratively. This not only improves individual financial well-being but also strengthens community bonds and fosters a sense of empowerment and agency among its members.

Unity in Diversity and Collective Action:
Kudumbashree exemplifies the concept of "fusion of horizons" through themes of unity in diversity, shared goals, and collective action. Women from diverse backgrounds come together, share common struggles, and work towards common goals despite their differences. This signifies the merging of their individual perspectives into a collective horizon of unity and empowerment. This highlights the power of shared experiences and collective action in driving progress and creating positive change.

Responsibility, Compassion, and Community Empowerment:
The experiences of Kudumbashree members highlight the program's impact in fostering responsibility, compassion, and a sense of community empowerment. By expanding individuals' perspectives, promoting collective action, and encouraging sustainable solutions, Kudumbashree empowers women to address community challenges. Recognizing themes like the need to balance responsibilities, overcome challenges, and prioritize long-term solutions is crucial for further enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of Kudumbashree's initiatives. A list of major themes and their sub themes along with the major excerpts is attached to portray the conceptual structure.
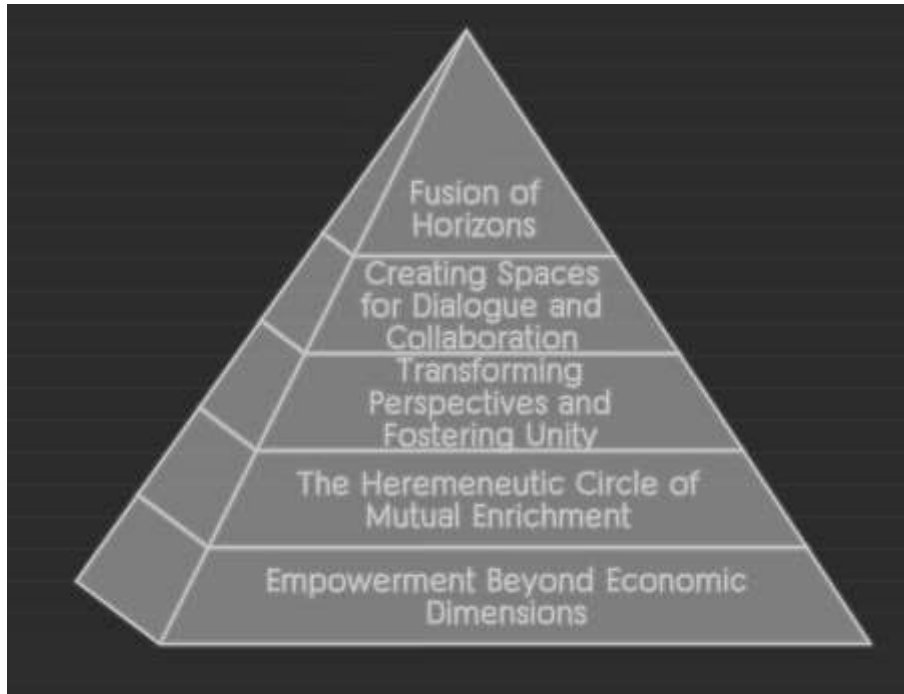
Themes	Sub Themes	Excerpts
Economic Empowerment	Financial Independence	"The income has been life-changing. Now, I contribute to the household... I feel proud sending them off each day knowing I helped make it happen." - Leela
	Improved Standard of Living	"The extra income is a godsend... That peace of mind, it's worth more than any money." - Vasanthi
	Access to Financial Resources	"We started with basic varieties, then experimented with natural ingredients... Now instead of a few jars, we're making large batches." - Prabha

Community Engagement	Social Support	"Kudumbashree meetings connect me to other women, we discuss important things, support each other. I have a voice in my community!" - Leela
	Networking	"Kudumbashree isn't just about the soap, though. It's about the connection. In our meetings, we discuss everything from health to how to spot misinformation." - Santha
	Participation in Community Events and Programs	"Our jewelry started flying off the shelves... Seeing women wearing our creations... Now, I have my own savings account, I help with my daughter's school fees." - Lilly
Knowledge Enhancement	Information Sharing	"Through Kudumbashree, I learn about government programs, how to get my child's immunization cards, even where to go for legal help if needed." - Leela
	Skill Development	"Kudumbashree helped us with everything – securing a small loan, getting training on cooking and hygiene, even finding the right location in our village." - Leela
	Awareness of Government Schemes and Services	"Through Kudumbashree, I'm also aware of various government schemes... My son got a scholarship because of the information we shared in our meetings!" - Vasanthi
Skills Enhancement	Business Know-How	Leela: "I learned about basic accounting, how to set prices fairly based on our costs..."
	Marketing and Customer Service	Vasantha: "They taught us simple ways to market ourselves – putting up flyers, creating a small social media presence..."
	Design and Innovation	Rani: "We learned about color theory, printing techniques, and creating more eye-catching designs."
	Ingredient Innovation and Sourcing	Santha: "Kudumbashree brings in experts who teach us about different natural ingredients, essential oils..."
Business Development	Expanding Market Reach	Thara: "A workshop on e-commerce possibilities was a revelation!"
	Costing and Finance	Prabha: "Workshops on basic accounting and pricing have simplified things..."
	Branding and Packaging	Raji: "Workshops on packaging and labeling helped us transform our products..."
Empowerment and Mindset Change	Thinking Beyond Traditional Roles	Prabha: "These workshops have sparked a thirst for knowledge and innovation within me."
	Entrepreneurial Mindset	Vasantha: "Now, I'm thinking about how to improve, make our products stand out, and reach even further."
	Continuous Learning and Improvement	Santha: "Kudumbashree has ignited a passion for continuous learning and improvement."

Financial Education	Budgeting and Tracking	"Those budgeting workshops were an absolute revelation!" - Thara
	Saving Habits	"Kudumbashree emphasized saving even small amounts regularly." - Lilly
	Long-Term Planning	"We're now saving for my children's education." - Leela
	Financial Literacy	"Understanding concepts like loans and interest rates gives me confidence." - Vasanthi
Challenges	Temptation vs. Discipline	"Sticking to the budget requires discipline." - Raji
	Financial Complexity	"The world of finance is full of confusing terms." - Santha
	Life's Unpredictability	"Even with the best plans, life throws curveballs." - Prabha
Community Support	Open Discussion	"In our meetings, we discuss finances honestly." - Vasanthi
	Learning from Others	"Sharing struggles and solutions with other women has been empowering." - Leela
	Accountability	"Even holding ourselves accountable – it's been invaluable." - Santha
Unity in Diversity	Breaking Down Barriers	"Our SHG is a mix of women from different backgrounds - age, religion, caste, doesn't matter." - Leela
	Embracing Diversity	"Our SHG is a diverse group of women - different ages, some with more education than others, varying family backgrounds." - Vasanthi
	A Melting Pot of Talent	"Our SHG is a diverse group of women - some have formal education, others traditional skills passed down through generations." - Lilly
Shared Goals and Dreams	Shared Struggles, Shared Successes	"Kudumbashree meetings are a safe space to share challenges, not just about business, but also about life." - Leela
	Common Ground	"Kudumbashree meetings aren't just about umbrellas. We discuss challenges we all face – raising children, concerns about health, finances." - Vasanthi
	Understanding Through Shared Experiences	"Kudumbashree meetings aren't just about work. We talk about raising children, caring for elders, celebrating joys, and navigating sorrows." - Lilly
Collective Action	Collective Action	"Kudumbashree inspired us to go beyond just the hotel. We organize village clean-up drives, raise awareness on health issues, even hold skill-sharing sessions open to everyone." - Leela
	Working for the Common Good	"Success in our soap business has inspired us to give back. We've participated in village clean-ups, organized awareness drives about women's health, and even taught soap-making skills to underprivileged girls." - Santha

	Investing in Our Village	"The success of our business has fueled a desire to give back. We've participated in health awareness drives open to all, supported scholarships for underprivileged children, even beautified our village with murals and gardens." - Lilly
Responsibility and Compassion	Expanding Perspective	"Before Kudumbashree, my focus was primarily on my own family. But Kudumbashree has broadened my perspective. Sharing experiences with other SHG members has highlighted the struggles and hardships faced by many." - Raji
	Power in Collective Action	"The success of our ornament business is a testament to the power of collective action. It has inspired me to leverage our combined resources and skills to uplift others in need." - Lilly
	Community Impact	"We've organized health screening camps accessible to all, supported scholarships for underprivileged girls, and even contributed to improving sanitation facilities in our village." - Lilly
Empowerment and Support	Sisterhood of Support	"My Kudumbashree sisters have become my extended family. They've been there for me through thick and thin, which fuels a powerful desire to extend that same support to others who might be struggling." - Lilly
	Beyond Selfish Goals	"Kudumbashree opened my eyes to the struggles of others. Hearing the challenges faced by my fellow SHG members awakened a sense of empathy and the desire to act." - Prabha
	Sustainable Solutions	"Kudumbashree teaches us that lasting change comes through empowering people, not simply through charity. Finding the most effective ways to support others in becoming self-sufficient takes thought, effort, and ongoing learning." - Santha
Challenges and Growth	Balancing Responsibilities	"Sometimes it's a struggle to balance running the business, my family responsibilities, and the desire to contribute meaningfully to the community." - Lilly
	Overcoming Overwhelm	"It can be overwhelming to see so much need in our community. I want to alleviate everyone's pain, but I've learned to focus on making an impact where I can." - Lilly
	Long-Term vs. Immediate Needs	"Sometimes, it's tempting to address immediate needs, like providing food for a family in crisis. But Kudumbashree has also taught me the importance of thinking long-term, of empowering people with the tools and skills to lift themselves out of poverty in a sustainable way." - Prabha

4. Evaluation of the Theoretical Framework

The functioning of Kudumbashree exemplifies the Gadamerian concept of "fusion of horizons," which highlights the dialogical nature of understanding and the integration of diverse perspectives. The theoretical evaluation of the concept of "fusion of horizons" in the context of Kudumbashree reveals a profound alignment with Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy. Kudumbashree's holistic approach facilitates a dialogical encounter, integrates diverse perspectives and lived experiences, exemplifies the hermeneutic circle, embraces tradition as a living entity, harnesses the transformative potential of understanding, and fosters the intersubjective nature of understanding. This evaluation underscores the relevance of Gadamer's insights in comprehending the transformative impact of Kudumbashree on women's empowerment and socio-economic development within communities through the harmonious fusion of diverse horizons, which goes beyond mere financial empowerment and fosters a fusion of the participants' lived experiences and their individual horizons with the transformative potential of the program.

4.1 Creating Spaces for Dialogue and Collaboration

Kudumbashree, a renowned community organization in Kerala, orchestrates a variety of workshops and collaborative initiatives that serve as platforms for transformative exchanges among individuals from a multitude of backgrounds. Within these interactive environments, participants are encouraged to voice their distinct perspectives and life experiences, leading to a rich tapestry of collective wisdom and shared learning. This amalgamation of insights prompts participants to re-evaluate and, at times, fundamentally alter their long-held beliefs and assumptions, opening the door to novel paradigms of thought and behavior. As dialogues unfold and new understandings emerge, the attendees of Kudumbashree's programs often undergo a significant transformation. They begin to question and move beyond entrenched stereotypes or societal roles previously considered immutable. This cognitive shift transcends mere intellectual understanding. It permeates their emotions and self-perception, leading to a powerful reconfiguration of their identities. Participants find themselves integrating their personal aspirations with the experiences and opportunities presented by Kudumbashree, aligning their individual goals with the collective empowerment ethos that the organization champions. The outcome of such profound engagement is multi-dimensional personal development. Individuals emerge not only with new skills and knowledge but with an enhanced sense of self-worth and a stronger belief in their ability to effect change within their lives and communities. This heightened sense of self-efficacy has a ripple effect, inspiring other community members and contributing to a more dynamic and resilient social fabric. In essence, Kudumbashree facilitates a journey of personal and collective empowerment, where each participant's growth contributes to the community's progress and vice versa, fostering an environment of mutual support and continual enrichment.

4.2 Transforming Perspectives and Fostering Unity

In its dedication to progress and social enrichment, Kudumbashree serves as an incubator for a powerful evolution in the participants' views on commerce and innovation, intertwining their individual economic aspirations with the organization's philosophy of proactive entrepreneurship and communal accountability. Such a 'fusion of horizons' reinforces a collective determination among Kudumbashree's members. It cultivates a forward-looking attitude that transcends passive acceptance of socio-economic circumstances, emboldening participants to take command of their financial destinies with vigor and strategic foresight. The transformative experience at Kudumbashree not only augments the participants' business acumen but also aligns their personal growth with the broader objectives of community upliftment. Gadamer's insights on the intersubjective nature of understanding, which emphasizes the connection and unity forged through shared experiences and dialogue, echo profoundly within Kudumbashree's mission to engender harmonious change across diverse social fabrics. By offering a forum that brings women from various walks of life into a constructive and respectful dialogue, Kudumbashree successfully nurtures stronger, more cohesive community networks. Within these enriched environments, an esteemed sense of unity and collaborative responsibility emerges, serving as a bedrock for the community's continual development. This not only fortifies the existing social structure but also paves the way for cultivating a tradition of shared endeavor and knowledge that profoundly shapes the experiences and perspectives of those who will follow. In this ongoing cycle of growth and understanding, each new set of participants benefits from and contributes to an evolving collective consciousness, underpinned by Kudumbashree's resilient and inclusive framework.

4.3 The Heremeneutic Circle of Mutual Enrichment

Within the vibrant ecosystem of Kudumbashree, a unique interplay of relationships manifests, encapsulating the essence of the hermeneutic circle—a concept that posits the idea of a reciprocal and evolving process of understanding. Here, amidst a network of trust and concerted endeavor, the interactions between participants and the program become a living example of mutual enrichment. As members share their experiences, knowledge, and aspirations with the collective, they simultaneously absorb the organizational values and insights offered by Kudumbashree. This dynamic exchange, much like the dialogic encounters that philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer described, turns into a nurturing ground for individual and communal insight to flourish.

In this setting, learning and growth are not merely a transmission of static information but a vibrant confluence of the collective's wisdom and individuals' lived experiences. Every workshop, meeting, and shared activity becomes a thread in the fabric of this communal tapestry, weaving together varying threads of cultural, economic, and personal perspectives. As participants and the program interact and respond to one another, both are transformed: the organizational agenda is continually shaped and reshaped by the needs and feedback of its members, just as the members' worldviews are broadened and deepened by their active engagement with Kudumbashree's initiatives.

This perpetual 'fusion of horizons' fosters a community culture where diversity is not merely acknowledged but genuinely valued as a source of strength and wisdom. In this space, the appreciation for varied viewpoints and beliefs transcends tolerance and evolves into a deeper empathy, cultivating a rich soil from which innovative ideas and synergistic collaborations can surface. As a result, Kudumbashree becomes more than a program—it transforms into a living, breathing entity, a microcosm that mirrors the collaborative spirit and adaptive ecosystem

4.4 Empowerment Beyond Economic Dimensions
Kudumbashree's transformative impact on individuals, businesses, and communities underscores the relevance of Gadamer's insights into the dialogical nature of understanding and the potential for the fusion of horizons to catalyze positive change. By fostering a harmonious integration of diverse perspectives and lived experiences, Kudumbashree has empowered women, fostering personal growth, and catalyzing positive social and economic change within communities.

The role of Kudumbashree in women's empowerment is evident through its holistic approach, which extends beyond financial empowerment. By facilitating the fusion of the participants' individual horizons with the transformative potential of the program, Kudumbashree has instilled confidence, a sense of purpose, and a heightened sense of self-worth among its members. This empowerment transcends economic dimensions, enabling women to become contributors, businesswomen, and inspirations within their families and communities.
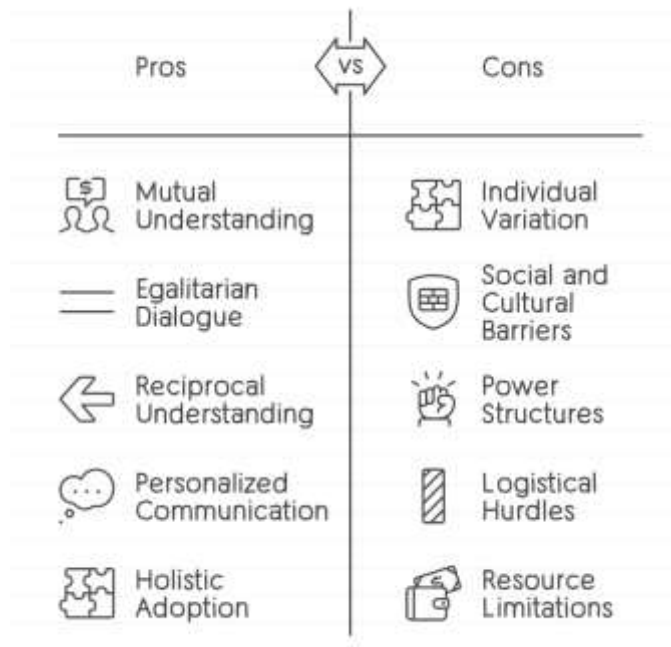
4.5 Impact on Socio-Economic Development
Kudumbashree's role in socio-economic transformation extends beyond conventional development paradigms, forging a profound link between individual financial empowerment and communal advancement. This symbiotic fusion redefines the very essence of business within the community, taking it from a limited endeavor constrained by traditional expectations to an expansive view that recognizes each enterprise as a vessel of boundless potential. For the individuals involved, it's not just about starting or running a business; it's about unlocking opportunities that once seemed unattainable. In learning the intricacies of enterprise through

Kudumbashree's programs, participants gain the acumen and confidence needed to leverage their ventures as levers for prosperity, forging ahead with boldness to craft destinies laced with autonomy and financial independence. This newfound empowerment facilitates a cascade of positive outcomes, as each successfully cultivated business contributes incrementally to the collective economic dynamism and self-sufficiency of their communities.

Moreover, Kudumbashree stands as a beacon of unity, adeptly demonstrating the power of inclusive growth in a region marked by cultural plurality. By embracing a mosaic of community identities, Kudumbashree has become a catalyst for a kind of social alchemy—transmuting diversity from a potential source of division into a foundation for fortified unity. This has significant ripple effects across Kerala, engendering a sense of shared purpose that transcends individual community borders. As a result, villages are not merely clusters of homes and businesses; they form interconnected hubs of innovation and mutual support. The cooperative ethos cultivated by Kudumbashree rallies these microcosms of society around shared economic and social ambitions, amplifying their collective voice and agency in shaping regional development narratives. This keystone initiative, discernibly more than just a development program, is a critical agent in knitting a more cohesive socio-economic tapestry where every thread—every community member—strengthens the overall fabric of society, contributing to a resilient, integrated narrative of collective progression and societal advancement.

5. Challenges and Limitations

Pros	VS	Cons
Mutual Understanding		Individual Variation
Egalitarian Dialogue		Social and Cultural Barriers
Reciprocal Understanding		Power Structures
Personalized Communication		Logistical Hurdles
Holistic Adoption		Resource Limitations

5.1 Obstacles faced by Kudumbashree in achieving its objectives

In its mission to empower communities and eradicate poverty, the Kudumbashree program confronts several practical challenges that influence its capacity to achieve its wide-reaching objectives. One such challenge stems from resource constraints. Despite its ambitious scope, Kudumbashree often grapples with financial limitations that can restrict the scope and quality of the services it endeavors to provide (Pandala et al., 2022). The program's expansive participant base requires substantial and sustained funding to support various initiatives, which is not always readily available, thereby impacting the implementation and expansion of its projects.

Furthermore, deep-seated socio-cultural barriers present significant hurdles, particularly in the context of gender. Traditional norms and rigid societal expectations regarding women's roles can limit their active participation and leadership in Kudumbashree's activities (Prof Nehajoan Panackal et al., 2017). Such cultural restrictions directly impinge upon the empowerment objectives at the heart of the program, potentially disempowering the very individuals it seeks to uplift. Educational disparities among Kudumbashree participants also pose a notable challenge. The varying levels of education and skills can affect the members' ability to fully engage with, contribute to, and harness the benefits of the program. Such disparities may result in uneven program outcomes, with those possessing higher education and skills reaping greater benefits than their less-educated peers **(Shihabudheen & Economics, 2013)**.

Coupled with educational challenges are the issues of scalability. As the program expands, it faces the complex task of scaling up interventions while ensuring they remain effective. This encompasses maintaining the quality of services and personal touch that characterizes Kudumbashree's approach while extending its reach to a larger population.

Market integration remains yet another hurdle, as the program strives to connect its micro-enterprises to broader markets. The small-scale nature of these ventures means they often face significant challenges in accessing larger, more competitive markets, which are crucial for their economic sustainability and growth (Joy, 2016).

The labyrinth of bureaucratic processes represents a further impediment. Navigating the complexity of administrative systems and government regulations demands valuable time and resources that might otherwise be directed towards program activities, thereby affecting the efficiency of service delivery.

Political interference can also disrupt the continuity and focus of Kudumbashree's work. With shifts in political climates and changes in government, the program may encounter revised policies and agendas that could reshape its operational strategies and priorities.

In addition to political and administrative issues, the program must also institute effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The vast scale and diversity of interventions necessitate robust systems to assess impact, gather feedback, and refine approaches—an undertaking that is as critical as it is challenging.

5.2 Limitations of Gadamer's concept in practical implementation

The practical application of Gadamer's Fusion of Horizons within the context of Kudumbashree's operations is met with several challenging limitations, each adding layers of

complexity to an already intricate process of mutual understanding. One of the fundamental constraints lies in the individual variation in how participants engage with the program. While the philosophical concept assumes a level playing field for dialogue and perspective alteration, in reality, differences in education, language proficiency, and income levels among participants lead to disparities in their ability to fully engage with and contribute to the collective learning process. This is further exacerbated by social and cultural barriers—Kerala's richly diverse social fabric, marked by a variety of religions, castes, and traditions, could potentially act as a bulwark against the free flow of ideas and perspectives. Pre-existing beliefs and societal norms often resist the fusion of differing worldviews, making it difficult for certain conversations and transformations to take root.

Even more insidious in its effect on the fusion of horizons are the power structures that exist within these communities. Kudumbashree, though aspirational in its goals of egalitarian dialogue, must navigate a landscape where existing power relations—be they gender-based, economic, or societal—play a significant role in mediating who gets heard and whose perspectives are valued. This, in turn, disrupts the foundation of reciprocal understanding that Gadamer champions. Additionally, the organization faces logistical hurdles as it scales its operations. The intimacy and immediacy of personalized communication that foster transformative exchanges can become diluted when expanded across a broader demographic, potentially undermining the genuine horizons' fusion on a larger platform.

The aspirational goal of facilitating such in-depth exchanges also confronts very real and tangible resource limitations. The dedication of time and personnel for dialogue, reflection, and learning is integral to the process but can strain Kudumbashree's financial and human capital. Communication barriers present yet another challenge; participants 'disparate linguistic abilities and literacy rates necessitate tailored approaches to ensure that the process is accessible to all. Moreover, the engagement of external stakeholders is imperative for a holistic adoption of Gadamer's philosophy. Policymakers, funding bodies, and other non-community members who hold sway over Kudumbashree's operations need to participate actively in this fusion process as well. However, differing agendas and external pressures can impede the alignment necessary for a unified goal of understanding.

Finally, measuring the impact of such abstract philosophical engagement through the conventional quantitative metrics may not do justice to the depth and breadth of the change it seeks to bring about.

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