Alternative Media as Serving the Community: a Content Analysis of Dalit Websites and Blogs in India

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Abstract: Dalits have been subjected to numerous atrocities and injustice for centuries. It’s been 68 years since India attained its freedom; still the practice of caste system prevails in most part of it. The political rhetoric and constitutional protection have failed in eradicating caste cruelties and Dalits continue to bear the brunt of caste violence and discrimination. According to the census 2011, in India Dalits including Scheduled Tribes comprised 25 percent of total Indian population and the by now the percentage would have gone much higher. Dalit empowerment and upliftment from the current status quo is much needed only from the constitution and politicians but from the mass media as well as they have great potential to achieve this phenomenon. Mass media can create awareness and empower Dalits as they have the capability as prime mover of change in the society. Unfortunately, the mass media which supposed to present unbiased social reality and resort balanced position, has shifted its focus as profit-making Corporation. Thus are the emergence of alternative media came into being. Alternative media helps the marginalized and the minority communities to speak against the oppression at the gross root level. To call a media an alternative media, it should have characteristics of an alternative media. Bailey et al., 2008 in their book understanding alternative media propose four basic approaches to alternative media which make a medium as an alternative media. One of the approaches is that an alternative media should ‘serve the community’. This article focuses on how Dalits in India have begun using internet as the alternative media for sharing information and how Dalits websites and social networking sites such as blogs fits into the approach ‘serve the community’.

Keywords: Dalits, Alternative media, Internet

Introduction

Caste-based discrimination is a form of discrimination prohibited by international human rights law, which subjects millions of people globally on the basis of work and descent. Victims suffer a hidden apartheid of segregation, modern-time slavery and other types of prejudice due to the result of having been born into a marginalized group or caste. Discrimination based on the caste constitutes one of the most grave and prevalent global human rights challenges today, creating impact on large proportions of societies in many places of the world, which goes on to function as a deeply rooted system of serious human rights violations. In India, caste system is based on a certain hierarchical status according to Hindu religious beliefs. According to the Vedas, there are four castes which are further divided into many sub-categories. Dalits do not fall in any of the category of people and thus they fall outside the caste system. As members of the lowest strata of Indian society, Dalits undergo discrimination almost in all levels. Dalits are denied education, deprived of basic facilities such as water, medical facilities, entry into religious places, burial ground and the list goes on. The discrimination against the Dalits is significant because of the number of people affected are approximately 170 million Dalits in India, comprising over 16 percent of the total population (Dwivedi, 1997) The Dalits, known as Untouchables, Harijans, or Scheduled Castes have historically been poor, deprived of basic human rights, and treated as social inferiors in India. They still face socio-cultural, economic and political discrimination in the name of caste (Gochhayat, 2002). “This hidden apartheid for centuries has perpetuated discrimination and denial of their human rights, has resulted not only in the creation of numerous other obstacles that hinder Dalit’s ability to change their situation, but also in Dalits representing a disproportionate amount of the poor in India” (Artis et al., 2003).

At this juncture, the mass media in India is expected to play a pivotal role in eradication of caste system and bring justice to all the Dalits affected and suffered under the caste system. But there is a hue and cry from the Dalits activists and academicians that mainstream media has time and again let them down. That is the reason as to why they have resorted to other forms of alternative media to speak for themselves.

Internet has proved a powerful tool of empowerment for minority nationalities with access to the web since it represents a terra nullius where readily accessible “virtual archives” of
alternative histories can be constructed and maintained. Mitra (2001) articulates that Internet serves as a medium where marginalized individuals can exercise discursive power, and resist damaging representations. Socially marginalized groups speak to one another as they speak against authority. He says “On the Internet, the marginalized can call on the dominant and put the dominant in the difficult position of acknowledging the marginalized, or further distance the dispossessed by ignoring the call”.

In the case of Dalits’ usage of internet in India, Tirumal (2003) in his research paper proposes that educated Dalits’ presence is felt in the cyberspace. He says that internet has empowered the educated Dalits with much more than other technology or the media in the recent Indian history. Educated Dalits are beginning to use the internet as a platform to discuss issues concerning their community and to mobilize for their just place in the wider public sphere. There have been a number of efforts by Dalits needing to be articulated in the media for a long time – a media different from the current format. Speaking to the Dalit Camera, a Dalit websites which brings out videos of Dalit issues, about the advantage that the internet has thrown to the marginalised population like Dalits, activist and one of the members the Dalit website roundtableindia.co.in Nalgundwar (2013) and the moderator of kufr.blogspot.in says that the freedom given by to Dalits by the internet is unaffected by the Indian civil society and the mainstream media. Internet has helped thousands of voices to come together. Dalit websites like roundtableindia.co.in is the place of different articulation of Dalit related poetry, documentary, research, history and literary and creative Dalits. Further he adds, “readership in the Dalit websites and blogs are young and very educated coming from diverse background across region, continent and country” (ibid). Internet provides a platform outside the status quo of disenfranchisement allow some kind of negotiation with the global community. Furthermore, internet has opened the door for counter-hegemonic public sphere (Tirumal, 2003). With the exponential growth and the increasing availability of internet, many marginalised people in the globe are producing their presence in the cyberspace. As mainstream media has closed its door for their ‘presence’, internet offers a plethora of space for the marginalised to rearticulate their social perception. Social media platforms of internet such as Facebook, Blogger, Twitter, WordPress, LinkedIn, Tumblr, MySpace and Wiki provide a place to air marginalised views in a media field previously dominated by media giants, corporations and moguls, favouring the powerful voices in society.

Alternative Media

For centuries alternative media has been in existence, but not until in the middle of 20th century, the concept managed to emerge as a specific form of media communication. In many countries social fermentation began to spread predominantly on various issues such as race, religion, lifestyle, orientation, politics and social organization. Thus there was a need to have own means of communication strategy. Thus, innumerable small press began their own publication. Brochures, newspapers, and eventually magazines provided a foundation for what was soon identified as fringe media, denoting the fact that these views were not generally held by the majority of the populace (Devi, 2012).

By the 1960’s, alternative media moved out from printed productions to the consideration of low low budget motion pictures, and in addition autonomous radio and TV telecasts that were syndicated on low-frequency media outlets. Over time, some of these underground or alternative publication created significant reader bases, and are able to build the scope and the nature of their work. Others remain productions that serve a specialty base of readers and keep on operating with generally little resources. Thus, with expansion of innovation option media ranges from community radio to fanzines to news websites, it covers a wide extent of media structures that challenge the status quo. (Pickard, 2007).

Alternative media has begun to attract many research scholars as it is evident from the proliferation of its scholarly works (Haas, 2004). The concept of alternative media emerged as a response to the problems posed by a profit-driven media industry in which only a handful corporation adjudicate on what sort of media content to made, which topic will be discussed, whose voice will be seen/heard, and whose voice will be intimately silenced (Furness, 2007).

In its most expansive and popular use, the term “alternative media” includes all media that are somehow opposed to or in tension with mainstream media (The Encyclopedia of Media and Politics, 2007). Alternative media is perceived to the fundamental agent in providing diverse content to democratic societies. Alternative media, which are situated out of the mainstream media, have been said to articulate a ‘social order different from and often opposed to the dominant’ (Hamilton, 2000). Alternative media, which is seen quintessentially different from the mainstream media, has the capacity to ‘transform spectators into active participants of every day dealings and events affecting their lives’ (Tracy, 2007). In other words, alternative media publish information which is generally not accepted and published in the mainstream media.
Internet as an Alternative Media

In the 20th century, alternative media was mostly called as "leftist" and the most significant characteristics of it is to give readers insights into the world that mainstream publications did not, but with a distinctly collectivist perception. The Internet has changed this notion of mainstream media. Today's non-traditional press is distinctly alternative with a bias toward libertarian and "free-market" analysis. While there are plenty of leftist and rightist publications, many blogs and other analyses are truly free of the faux left/right taint and its Hegelian antecedents. They choose instead to analyze and comment from something approaching a libertarian perspective (Daily Bell, 2012).

One of the important innovations in recent years has been the use of the Internet as a form of alternative media. As it is in the case of radio, television, and movies which have been around for decades, the creation of alternative websites and its features like blogs and other social networking sites that focus on minority points of view in politics, music, fashion, lifestyle, and other areas have proliferated. Today, it is possible to find media online that addresses just about any idea, concept, or opinion by conducting keyword searches using a reliable Internet browser. These online media outlets continue to offer the opportunity to explore different understandings and ideas that are either overlooked media, or receive relatively little attention from the more conventional media outlets (Tatum, 2013).

Atton (2002) suggests that there are there various types of alternative media and they are diverse in their forms and perspectives. Internet has developed into a place of non-profit. The ability to pass the traditional media gatekeeper is the central reason for the internet’s ability to become an alternative media. Internet enables to free expression which is not found in the mainstream media. It helps to fight for various causes.

People those who work for the betterment of civic society, due to the use of their own alternative media, particularly the Internet, to circulate information, to generate a forum to create consensus, and to organize and call for a protest demonstration. Alternative media play a vital role at the level of local communities, offering their members’ access to an (alternative) media system and providing them (as publics) with wide sets of alternative discourses and representations that are often missing in the mainstream media.

The alternative media is most commonly found on the Internet. It takes a variety of forms – alternative news sites, forums, blogs, wikis, zines. Unlike the mainstream media, there is a great deal of discussion and experimentation going on. Some of this debate is focused on the Internet itself. The mainstream media and their government allies are trying to seize control of the Internet in order to harness it for political and profit-making purposes. So, an important battle is being waged to keep the Internet as a vehicle for free expression, creativity and dissent (Orwell, 2012). The Internet has provided a much wider range of notions and facts to be seen and heard. This range evidently includes positions that have been traditionally outside of mainstream media. Alternative media are often created in “explicit opposition” (Dowmunt & Coyer, 2007) to mainstream media. “The development and growth of alternative media covered upon a relatively stable trajectory until the invention of the Internet, which led to an alternative media explosion.” The rise of internet and its features like blogs have grown over the last thirty years (Kenix, 2011).

He goes on to say that the internet will continue developing as the central platform for alternative media and as content in general multiplies, sites that are more explicitly political will gain popularity to attract the attention of a broad market in search of unique information. Atton (2002) in his book on alternative internet, stresses the need for considering internet as an alternative media as its existing complex features and pressure which are at once technological, historical, social, cultural, economic, and political”.

Theoretical Framework

Bailey et al., (2008) theoretical approach to alternative media form the basis of this research. This theoretical framework provides an important scientific basis that complements the data the researcher gathered to analyze that the Indian blogs and web websites/websites run by Dalits have the characteristic as alternative media. Bailey et al., (2008) that contends alternative media as having four important roles. The first two approaches are media-centered and discuss alternative media activities from the perspective of the media producers in relation to the community and mainstream media. The latter two approaches come from a society-centered perspective that sees alternative media’s potential for the betterment of society and democracy by being part of a civil society, and balancing the power play against/with the hegemonic institutions. The researcher utilizes Bailey et al., (2008) four approaches to alternative media as the theoretical framework to present holistic view in understanding Indian blogs and web websites as an alternative media to Dalits (Bailey et al., 2008).
Alternative Media as Serving the Community

Community and participation are two important aspects in describing alternative media roles in serving the community. Alternative media organizations may serve a particular community by giving opportunities for it members to discuss and share about topic of interests, and act as an alternative venue of information by representing the voices and stories from the particular community usually not present in the mainstream media. ‘Access’ by the community and ‘participation’ of the community are values as the key defining factors. Alternative media not only permit the community voices but also facilitate the participation of members of the community in both the produced content and the content producing organization. One of the important goals of the Alternative media is to ‘validate and strengthen’ the community. Topics that are considered relevant to the community can be ‘discussed by members of that community’. The aim of the alternative media approach is to serve the community is often translated as enabling and facilitating access and participation by members of the community. ‘Common people’ are given the opportunity to have their voices heard and valued. Marginalized communities that are misrepresented, stigmatised, and disadvantaged, or even suppressed can especially benefit from using the channels of communication provided by Alternative media, manifesting this identity to the outside world and strengthening their internal identity and thus supporting social change and/or development. Thus alternative media can be an opening a ‘channel of communication’ for misinterpreted, stigmatized or repressed societal groups.

Content Analysis

The content analysis method, widely used in communication studies, is a research technique which makes “replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis is one of the more common methods for studying the web. As with other media, the researcher who researches the web uses content analysis codes the web content, either written text or images, based on particular criteria and places them within relevant categories or themes; in other words, the researcher codes the content of web than web users. Within web studies, content analysis is primarily has been employed as a comparative tool, allowing the researcher to make meaningful comparison of contents (Masanes, 2006).

There are two types of content analysis - quantitative and qualitative- used in this research to find out whether the Dalit websites and blogs form an alternative media to voice their opinions and grievances. The quantitative method is “concerned with the frequency of occurrence of given content characteristics” (George, 2008). While the qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005) Mayring (2000) defined the qualitative method as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification”.

To give more nuance and context to the research, qualitative and quantitative content analysis of Dalit web Portals and Blogs was conducted to gauge how they provide a platform for alternative media in giving space for raising their voices. The quantitative portion of the content analysis measured frequencies and other descriptive and inferential statistics of the Dalit websites and blogs as defined by predetermined categories. The qualitative aspect of the content analysis helped to make meaning out of the quantitative portion. It went beyond the numbers and gave concrete examples of how Dalit websites and blogs act an alternative media to the dalits and non-dalits working activity for Dalit cause. The qualitative content analysis helped to identify common themes that emerged from the data.

A content analysis of Dalit blogs was conducted to gauge how they act as alternative media in providing space for articulating Dalits’ voice. The first step in developing a methodology

Table 1.1
Four approaches to alternative media (Bailey et al., 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media-centred</th>
<th>Society-centred</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous identity of the Community media (essentialist)</td>
<td>Approach I: Serving the Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity of Community media in relation to other identities (relationalist)</td>
<td>Approach II: An alternative To Mainstream media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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of the inquiry was to decide the sample size. Therefore, in total ten Dalits moderated blogs were chosen for the analysis. Purposive sampling method was adopted to choose the Dalit blogs as there are limited in number. The criteria for the inclusion of the study required for the blogs of Dalits are 1) written in English 2) regularly updated. The content from the Indian Dalit blogs were analyzed and studied from January 1 2010 to December 31 2012. The content of the blogs was analysed and studied based on one of the four Bailey’s et al., approach of alternative to mainstream media. It is noteworthy to mention that the characteristic of the approach was narrowed down to themes for the convenience of coding. The characteristics of this approach were applied to the content of Dalit blogs to find out whether Dalit blogs can be rightly called as an alternative media.

Results of the study

Alternative Media: Dalit websites and Blogs as Serving the Community

In the theoretical framework of Bailey’s et al., (2008) ‘access and participation’ by the members of the community is one of the important components of alternative media as serving the community. “Moreover, the aim of alternative media in approach one – serving the community – is often translated as enabling and facilitating access and participation by members of the community” (Bailey et al., 2008). In accordance with the statement, it is found in the table 5.1 that all the ten websites provided space for writing and responding in Dalit websites in the form of feedbacks or testimonials. While analysing the content it was observed that Dalit websites encouraged and provided space for Dalit issues to be published for the others to read and respond. For example when a protest was organized by one of the Dalits’ wings to condemn the alleged killing of Elavarasan1, invitation calling people to participate in the protest was posted in www.roundtableindia.co.in. In follow up to the post, many persons responded by asking further details about the rally and some of them endorsed such move by the Dalit wing. Likewise it is found in the study that Dalit websites provide a place for readers to post and participate. One of the readers posts:

This is very useful site. Thanks for such a hardworking task. I love this site. I will visit this site again and again for my up

1 Dalit youth E. Ilavarasan, whose marriage to a Vanniyar girl had resulted in caste violence in Dharmapuri Tamil Nadu 2012. He was mysteriously found dead on a railway track. Dalit activists claim it as murder but the post-mortem reports revealed it as suicide.

Thus, it is found from the content analysis that Dalit websites and blogs are in compliance with the characteristic ‘access and participation’ by the readers. Further, in-depth interview from the Dalit activists and academicians too supports this view of access and participation in Dalit websites and blogs.

Alternative media provides a place for ‘discussion’, is another characteristic of the approach ‘Serving the Community’. “Topics that are considered relevant to the community can be discussed by members of the community. This empowers its members by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be broadcast” (Balily et al., 2008). So, it is found from the table that nine out of ten websites gave prominence to ‘discussion’ in the form of conference, seminars, workshops and forums. www.dalitforum.com says:

This website provides an opportunity to all dalits and human right activist to discuss all atrocity committed on dalits, share the pain, anguish of fellow dalits who are killed, raped, boycotted and all kinds of atrocity committed not because he/she is a criminal or rapist or terrorist, but he/she is born in particular caste. It provides an opportunity to discuss social, economical and political issues.3

Third characteristic ‘Educating Dalit’ is covered by all Dalit websites except ambedkar.org. One of the Dalit websites www.scststudents.com says:

The purpose of this websites is to make efforts towards creating and sustaining various nation-wide platforms for Dalit and Adivasi youth, particularly students in higher education, and to facilitate the process through which they are able to use these platforms for creating conducive environment in the educational spaces so as optimize their potential, their intellectual growth, career advancement and fight against caste-based prejudices and discrimination prevalent in educational spaces4

Another post in the website says;

The Centre for Coaching and Career Planning is providing specialized coaching for various competitive examinations with special focus on the aspirants from SC/ST and minority communities. This centre is running UGC sponsored scheme of

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1 www.ambedkar.webs.com
2 www.dalitforum.com
3 www.dalitforum.com
4 www.scststudents.org
coaching for students from SC, ST and minorities. The students are eligible for joining any of the coaching programme based the performance of entrance test and interview organized by the centre.\(^5\)

Next, ‘Supporting a cause’ for Dalits, ‘Dalit culture’ and ‘Dalit identity’ related information were found in eight out of ten websites.

In order to bring out the faded Dalit art forms such as Kalilattam, Thappattam, Oyilattam, Raja Rani Attam etc., the DRC took up the pioneering effort of conducting annual Dalit Cultural Festivals right from 1996 onwards with different themes every year.\(^6\)

Further, it is also found that Dalit websites are seeking financial help either to donate for the website or to assist Dalits who are in need of money for a particular problem. This aspect was given prominence by seven websites.

With regard to the characteristics of ‘Dalit websites and blogs as a communication channel for

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5 www.scststudents.org
6 www.drcctts.com

Theoretical approaches to alternative media: Dalit websites as serving the community

|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Discussion/Conference/Seminar/workshop/forum | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 9/10
| Educates Dalits | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 9/10
| Dalit Culture/identity | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 8/10
| Seeking financial support | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 7/10
| Supporting a cause | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 8/10
| Access & participation/Feedback/testimonial | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | 10/10

Dalit’, all the interviewees of the in-depth interview gave mixed responses. While most of them consented that Dalit websites and blogs are communication channels for Dalits, some of the interviewees said that the aspect of communication channel is applicable only to a segment of educated Dalit who access internet. To the question on whether Dalit websites and blogs are communication channel for Dalits Hugo Gorringe says;

Yes and no. Whilst they are clearly important communication channels for educated and computer literate Dalits, their significance is still limited to a particular class of Dalits at present. As access to computers and internets improves then more and more Dalits will be able to benefit from these media.

Amol Nirmala Waman, owner of the website www.navayan.com enunciates:

Internet will be the prime mode of communication and resources and debates on Ambedkarite-Buddhist websites/blogs will certainly make difference. It is cheap, easily available, which makes effective in communication.
Table 5.2
Percentage and frequency of topic discussed in Dalit websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Alternative media as serving the community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/</td>
<td></td>
<td>673</td>
<td>3.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference/seminar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Dalits</td>
<td></td>
<td>2124</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking financial</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting for a cause</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ participation/ Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>660</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N= 22353

The table 5.2 demonstrates the percentage and frequency of Dalit websites as serving the community. Among the total number of topics found in all the ten websites, 9.50% (2124) of topics deal with characteristic of educating Dalits, 3.01% (673) of the contents deal with the characteristics discussion/conference/seminar/workshop and 2.97% (660) of the content are based on the access and participation in the form of feedback. Seeking financial help and supporting for cause occupy 0.27% (59) and 0.39% (74) respectively.

Theoretical approaches to alternative media: Dalit blogs as serving the community

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>10/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference/Seminar/workshop/forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educates Dalits</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalit Culture/identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeking financial support</td>
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<td>10/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting for cause</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/participation/Feedback/testimonial</td>
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<td>10/10</td>
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The next characteristic ‘Educating Dalits’ such as Dalits’ rights and their reservation benefits is found in all the Dalit blogs. It is noteworthy to mention that the preservation of Dalit culture and the significance of Dalit identity are present in six out of ten blogs. In www.samathain.wordpress.com, the blogger updates events and programmes on Dalit culture taking place in and around Tamilnadu. He writes:

*Traditionally art was considered as the domain of the so called upper castes in Tamilnadu. In the recent years, The Dalit Rights movement has asserted that the Dalits have a rich artistic and musical tradition. The dalit art forms are related to rituals for ages but considered untouchable. Despite the awareness created on Dalit art forms, awareness about Arunthathiyar art forms is scanty. There are other initiatives like this organized across the state, but very few Arunthathiyears get chance to perform share, express and this cultural night is a follow up action to strengthen and sustain Arunthathiyars hope on their talents and excellence.*

It was noticed that none of the blogs was ‘seeking financial help’ either to support them or to help others. Finally, the characteristic ‘supporting a cause’ is found only in four out of ten Dalit blogs. Findings from the in-depth interview reveal that participants of the interview accept the capacity and potential of blogs being the media that serves the community. It is also observed that participants of the interview were not regular visitors of the Dalit blogs chosen for the study. Thus, the interviewee blatantly agreed on the potential of Dalit blogs in serving the society.

**Table 5.10**
*Percentage & Frequency of topic Discussed in Dalit Blogs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/ Conference &amp; Seminars/ workshop</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Dalits</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Financial Support</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting for a Cause</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ Participation/ Feedback</td>
<td>1552</td>
<td>34.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N= 4539*

The Table 5.10 indicates the percentage and the frequency of topics discussed in Dalit blogs are presented to prove that Dalit blogs contain the characteristic of alternative media as serving the community. It is found that 34.19 % (1552) of the contents is occupied with themes on ‘access and participation’, 3.06 % (139) of the topics on ‘Discussion, Conference, Seminars/ workshop’, 0.57 % of the content on ‘educating Dalits’ and .35 % of the content on ‘supporting for a cause’. It is observed that none of the contents is on seeking financial support.

**Conclusion**

Alternative media emerged when the mainstream media failed to speak for the marginal and minority communities. In an effort to provide platform for such people, alternative media found it existence. Hence, various forms of alternative media mushroomed in all parts of the world. Currently, the situation has egressed where the mainstream media is looking out to the alternative media for their source of news. All the media cannot be called as an alternative media unless and until it possesses the characteristics of alternative media. Bailey et, al,. (2009) have identified four types of approaches of alternative media. While studying the Dalit websites and blogs under the approach ‘Alternative media as serving the community’, it is revealed from the study that truly internet has become a powerful platform and alternative media as well for the marginalized communities in India. Tirumal (2008) in his extensive study on the presence of Dalits in the cyberspace found that educated Dalits are beginning to use the internet as a platform to discuss issues concerning their community and to mobilize for their just place in the wider public sphere. This statement is proved again by the current research which reiterates that Dalits websites and blogs are participatory media.
Reference
Gochhayat, A. Human Rights Violation and the Dalits: A Theoretical Background with Special Reference to Odisha.