

## Self-Reliant Dalit Journalists in the Digital Sphere: A Quest for Equality and Dignity in Indian Media Ecology through Social Entrepreneurship

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### **Abstract**

*India's journey of development in post-independence phase is closely related to the role of media in taking the issues of marginalised sections or neglecting them. Media is considered one of the four pillars of democratic system and plays the important role of opinion making. It also keeps checks and balance on other fundamental institutions of democratic set up such as legislature, executive and judiciary. The critical theory tradition under Marcus and Adorno highlights the nature of media content and pointed towards the monotony of thoughts which media tend to generate. The marginal communities of India, especially have very scanty presence in the Indian media industry, they are more concentrated in the news collector segment and other logistics job in the media industry. They are not news creator in mainstream media. Their marginalised position in media affected the coverage and presentation of the issues of marginalised communities by mainstream media. The marginalised communities and discourses created the domain of alternative media to counter the mainstream and hegemonic discourse propagated by the elite class of a society. Different medium at different period have played the role of the alternative media to marginalised community of that period. The emergence of internet-based platforms in last three decades have opened new window of opportunities for marginalised communities to utilise this domain as alternative media. The Dalits in Indian public sphere in this digital age harnessing these opportunities through various endeavours with the objectives of social emancipation. This research paper strives to examines the various dimensions of new media entrepreneurship by Dalit journalists with socio-political objectives.*

**Keywords:** Self-reliance, Dalits, Digital Sphere, Social Entrepreneurship, Indian Media Ecology, Dignity, Equality

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## **Introduction**

One of the key figures in the transcendentalists school of thought, Ralf Waldo Emerson (1841) in his essay “Self-reliance” elucidate the essential characteristics of the concept of self-reliance. According to Emerson, self-reliance emanates from confidence of a child, nonconformity, and eagerness to experiment with life rather than being consistent. He terms self-reliance as transformative and revolutionary. During India’s freedom struggle against colonial British government father of nation Mahatma Gandhi propagate the philosophy of self-reliance by advocating the cause of *swadeshi* and *swarajya* to strengthen Indian masses and building Indian nation. After attaining independence Indian government adopted self-reliance as one of the fundamental goals of its economic policy. Recent economic turmoil and political instability in neighbouring countries of Sri Lanka and Pakistan once again underlines the importance of the philosophy of self-reliance for the development of a country.

The policy of self-reliance came into limelight again with a new vigour in the form of *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan* of present Indian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With the economic package of twenty lakh crores government of India aims to revive the five pillars of self-reliant India as economy, infrastructure, system, demography, and demand (PIB,2020). Media has always been an integral part of any developmental policy adopted by Indian government. Media has multidimensional relationship with all five pillars of *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*. Apart from legacy media such as print, radio and television, information and communication technology revolution has ushered a digital era in media ecology that resulted into the development of various new media platforms (Sunita Sen Narayan and Shalini Narayan, 2016).

Dalit journalists in digital sphere are trying to operate as an agency to change the status quo of Indian media ecology. The concept of agency refers to the freedom to make choices and set goals and trying to achieve them despite any adverse circumstances (Kabeer 1999). It includes both negative such as deception, manipulation, subversion and resistance and positive aspects such as decision-making and negotiation (Subramaniam 2011). The effectiveness of working as an agency can be measured in terms how much control these Dalit journalists is having in shaping the discourse related to the Dalit issues.

Thus, Dalit journalists are aiming to utilise the cultural power of digital media to change the status

quo in the field of Indian public sphere. Digital media more popularly called social media is have enormous ability to integrate multiple aspects of personal identities in comparison to traditional media which is more compartmentalised. Participation in social media or in other online communities “solidify a certain understanding of yourself”. Digital spheres provide different tools to the participants such as “images, texts, audio, and video to tell their stories. They can use short, snappy soundbites and extended, more nuanced explanations of problems and proposed solutions. They can use humour, or emotion, or cat pictures to draw people in and they are more likely to be successful.” (Theresa Petray, 2015).

According to Dr. Theresa Petray successful online activism has three elements; first, they have clear targets. They are very specific about what changes they are aspiring to achieve and in which arena. Second, social media involves people at mass level through availability of choices to take clear and easy actions such as signing a petition and clicking the like button also called ‘slacktivism’. The availability of actions at different level on social media platforms helps in engaging people and can motivate them to become participant in the movement and finally people might be transformed into activists. Third, A clear distinction between different constituents of movement on online media movements helps them to sustain the movement in the long term. According to Foucault, “Power is everywhere and it comes from everywhere.” The emergence of social media provides opportunity to create and spread alternative discourses related to local issues against discourses propagated by mainstream knowledge production apparatus. Various Scholars across the globe such as Diana Oates (2006), Dalton (2008), Johnson et al. (2011), John Street (2011), Bartlett (2015) and Mali and McCabe (2016) have recognised the potential of Social media platforms in political communication.

Yashica Dutt (2019) highlights the impact of Rohith Vemula movement on herself and elaborate upon how this movement inspire her to accept her Dalit identity proudly like Rohith Vemula. In her memoir Yashica highlights the important role being played by New media in connecting and inspiring various Dalit intellectuals across the globe. She herself run a new media platform called “Documents of Dalit Discrimination”. Yashica Dutt (2019) analysed the role of civil society and media in forcing authorities to do justice and igniting public opinion in case of gender violence. She compares the role played by media and civil society in Nirbhaya case of 2012 and Jisha case of 2016. While in the Nirbhaya Case, mainstream local and national media played very active role

but in the Jisha case mainstream media ignore the issue of sexual violence in the beginning. Yashica Dutt categorically highlights the role played by social media in forcing the mainstream media to cover the Jisha case. She termed this apathy of mainstream media in Jisha case as an example of media selectively ignoring the serious crimes based on caste. She cited an article in *The Citizen* in this context. She also highlighted the objections of mainstream media to dalit activists and social media in including Jisha's dalitness as one important reason of crime. Yashica Dutt admits the role of internet in making discourse related to women rights more democratic and inclusive as Dalit women's voice can register their presence through various social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Our investigation into working of Dalit journalists as social entrepreneurs in digital sphere is based on three empirical questions: It is very pertinent to ask these journalists why they choose to establish their own digital media ventures. They have the alternative to work in the mainstream media industry. It has always been very challenging to establish a media venture what inspire and encourage them to take such a risk taking and challenging path. Many of these journalists have professional qualification required to work in any type of mainstream media. It would be very interesting to explore the issues related to Dalits which they are covering and how they are presenting their story and how it is different from mainstream media organisations and what strategies they are adopting to make these ventures sustainable and maintaining their editorial autonomy.

The objectives of this research paper are to provide in depth critical analysis of these newly developing Dalit media start-ups as example of social entrepreneurship in digital ecology in terms of ownership, organisational structure and size, editorial policies, professionalism in reporting, financial viability, and their potential in transforming as mainstream media organisation in future. The theoretical framework of the study located in the idea of Self-reliance, Social entrepreneurship, alternative media, and public sphere.

### **Dalits and Social Entrepreneurship in Digital Media Sphere**

Conventional entrepreneurship is guided by the pure commercial objectives in which entrepreneur tap the best available opportunities for profit making. In contrast social entrepreneurship makes

“innovative use of resources to explore and exploit opportunities that meet a social need in a sustainable manner” (Sud et al. 2009, p. 203). Social entrepreneurship synthesises the objectives of profit making and social change in sustainable manner. It is a crucial element in generating social values for social change.

Dalits are increasingly aspiring towards Social entrepreneurial ventures riding on their improved strengths in the field of education, jobs, professional skills, and overall quest for achieving equality and dignity in the Indian society. Traditionally social and cultural norms of Indian society had restricted their access to education and important networks in the economic, political, and social field. By adopting social entrepreneurship practices Dalits are aiming to break free from the clutches of caste system and concentrating their efforts in disrupting the status quo in social hierarchy. Emancipatory entrepreneurship is based on the three pillars of “autonomy, authoring and making declaration”. Their desire to achieve autonomy aims to get rid of any controlling authority in deciding the day-to-day activities of their venture. By removing traditional constraints of limiting their social, economic, cultural, and political dynamism, Dalits are creating new possibilities for themselves and for the overall society.

Social entrepreneurship in the field of media by Dalit journalists empower Dalits in terms of awareness about their constitutional and human rights, availability of content, coverage of their issues and mainstreaming of their grievances, aspirations, and requirements. Empowerment refers to the enhancement of capacity to make choices and availability of choices for the concerned actor (Helen M. Haugh, Alka Talwar 2014).

Social entrepreneurs come out from the clutches of traditional constraints with the help autonomous decision-making power and author new arrangements with the strongholds of power. They do not completely reject the existing arrangements but try to bargain for mobilisation of resources and for achieving their social objectives along with making their ventures sustainable. After acquiring much needed autonomy and authoring revised arrangements with the existing establishments social entrepreneurs declares the social objectives of the project which are aimed to achieve some kind of social change and change in status quo in the society. The social objectives of such ventures are spelt out through various medium and through their day-to-day activities. The content of this campaign “might explicitly expose contradictions between the existing and intended

positions in an effort to generate stakeholder support for social change” (Helen M. Haugh, Alka Talwar 2014).

There has been tremendous growth of new media platforms run by Dalits in last decade. These new media platforms simultaneously utilising YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Websites to establish professional media organisation entirely situated in digital ecology. Some of these platforms have millions of subscribers. The sustainability and growth of these digital media Start-ups may have the potential to diversify media ownership. There are at least ten YouTube channels that have more the half million subscribers. National Dastak, largest among them is subscribed by around six million users. Other major new media platforms are Dalit Dastak, MNTv, Samta Awaz TV, Dalit News Network, SM News, Awaaz India TV and ActivistVed (Dilip Mandal,2020).

### **Research Methodology**

The qualitative research methodology adopted to gain in-depth understanding of relevant dimensions of these ventures and to contextualise the evolution of these digital media platforms of Dalits in broad cultural framework. The qualitative method of participant observation is adopted to explore the working culture, ethics, editorial policy, day to day challenges, aims, objectives and ideology of the digital media platform. The duration of the participation observation is two months in the Dalit Dastak, which is one of the leading digital media platforms dedicated to the coverage of issues and lives of Dalit community in national and international arena. In-depth interviews of editors, staff of major digital media platforms related to dalits are conducted to address the research questions of the study. Apart from these, in-depth interviews of mainstream media professional are also conducted to explore their point of view regarding evolution of digital media platforms run and controlled by Dalits.

### **Research Context**

These new media platforms based on digital technology has the potential of transforming the nature of mass communication (Sunita Sen Narayan and Shalini Narayan, 2016). Digital media ecology has been revolutionised and transformed in last three decades. Digital ecology is now the backbone of media. It refers to “A close set of digital and non-digital artifacts and a user acting

*as nodes of network where its boundaries are specified by an activity and the structure, and the patterns of organisation are either user and/or designer defined.”* (Dimitrios Raptis, Jasper Kjeldskov, Mikael B Skov and Jeni Pay). Digital technology is also one of the essential components of vision of self-reliant India. The government of India promoting initiatives in the media sector that generating content in vernacular languages, conceptualised and executed entirely in India as it strengthens soft power potential of India. According to Google, “97% of content on its YouTube platform is now consumed in local languages and similar trend was seen across most of the OTT platforms” (Mint, 2020). This increasing trend of localisation in global digital ecology highlight the need to focus upon the interaction of technology and socio-cultural ground realities as it will have impact on the construction of social realities.

The social, economic and political inequality within Indian society even after 75 years of independence poses tough challenge for the success of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The functioning of traditional or mainstream media has also been criticised in terms of absence of social diversity in workforce and ownership, neglect of issues of marginalised communities especially Dalits and *Adivasis* and biasedness in coverage towards dominant section of society (Keeneth J. Cooper, 1996, B.N. Uniyal, 1996, Robin Jeffrey, 2001 J. Balasubramaniam, 2011, J.V. Vilanilam, 2005, Yogender Yadav, Jitender Kumar, Anil Chamadiya, 2006, Ajaz Ashraf, 2013, Yashica Dutt, 2019). These limitations of traditional media prompted media professional from marginalised communities especially Dalits in last one decade to become media entrepreneur and establish media organisations in newly developed digital arena focussing on the issues and history of Dalits (Dilip Mandal, 2020).

The spread of affordable New Media platforms among masses has opened a window of opportunity for traditionally marginalised groups in mainstream media. New media, and particularly the Internet, provides the potential for a democratic postmodern public sphere, in which citizens can participate in well informed, non-hierarchical debate pertaining to their social structures. India is a developing nation with one of the most unequal, diverse, and complex society that is making remarkable progress towards development through the Information Strategy, the process in which New Media are used as a means of furthering socio-economic development (Arvind Singhal, Everett Rogers, 2001).

## **Social Entrepreneurship Ventures of Dalit Journalists**

Dalits in India have been utilised various new media platforms such as web portals, YouTube channels, Facebook, twitter etc. National Dastak, Dalit Dastak, Dalit Camera, Round Table India, Dalit Voice, Dalit Chetna, Lord Buddha TV, Aawaz India TV, Justice News etc. are some important new media platforms which have been emerged as medium of counter-hegemonic discourse related to different issues of Dalits.

### ***Ved Prakash***

Ved Prakash did his diploma in Mass Communication from IIMC, Delhi. He has worked in various media organisations. He has also worked as teacher in Bihar government school. He belongs to *Pasi* community, one of largest caste of Dalits in Bihar. He is full time YouTuber Journalist. He started his YouTube channel, “ActivistVed” in 2016 in Hindi Language. His YouTube channel is dedicated to raise the issues related to the marginalised sections, especially Dalits. He has uploaded more than one thousand videos on his YouTube channel. He has subscriber base of more than six lakh on YouTube. Apart from YouTube, He also use Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and [blogspot.com](http://blogspot.com). He has more than sixty thousand likes on his Facebook page and His Personal Facebook ID has more than thirty thousand followers.

He mainly covers socio-political issues related to the Dalits through his different social media platforms.

### ***Ashok Das***

Ashok Das also completed his Diploma from IIMC, Delhi. He has working experience of more than 5 years in various mainstream media organisations. He is the founding editor of “Dalit Dastak” monthly magazine. He started it in 2012. He also started a Youtube channel with the same name in 2012. Dalit Dastak YouTube channel has more than six lakh subscribers. Ashok Das personal Facebook ID has more than five thousand followers. Dalit Dastak Facebook page is followed by fifty-eight thousand Facebook users. Dalit Dastak twitter account has more than thirteen thousand followers and more than six thousand tweets.

### ***Veeru Ji***

He is Self-employed and describe himself as poet. He is from Madhya Pradesh and belongs to Chamar caste of Dalits. He mainly uses Facebook to express his personal views regarding burning issues related to the Dalit community across India. He has more than fifteen thousand followers on his personal Facebook ID.

### ***Dr. Ratan Lal***

He is Associate Professor at Hindu College, Delhi University. He is also a social and political activist and one of the important voices among intellectual section of society who is fighting for the social, economic



and political rights of Dalits in Indian society. He has more than twenty-four thousand followers on his personal Facebook ID. He has more than twenty-three thousand followers on Twitter. His speeches at various Dalits right's movements, programmes are widely covered by various digital media platforms. He regularly uses his social media platforms to propagate the ideology of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar and makes public, especially Dalits aware about currents events which has relevance for Dalits rights.

### **Bhanwar Meghwanshi**

He is an author, journalist, and Dalit Activist from Rajasthan. He has more than twenty-five thousand followers on his personal Facebook ID. He started his YouTube channel named 'Shunyakal' in 2017 in which he covers issues related to marginalised sections, especially Dalits. This YouTube channel has subscriber base of more than one lakh. He especially raises issues about violence and atrocities against Dalits in Rajasthan. He also uses twitter with more than five thousand followers to highlight issues related to Dalits.

After analysing the social media accounts of these Dalit personalities on different social media platforms following major themes emerges from the content they posted:

- All highlight the neglect or misrepresentation of Dalit issues by mainstream media.
- Major Dalit issues related to the implementation of reservation policy, Violence against Dalits, Impacts of various policies of government on Dalits.
- All Dalit activists highlight the need for Dalits to build a common front along with other marginalised communities to strengthen their movement.

Among these Dalit Dastak has been selected for the Participant observation and thematic content analysis.

**Table 1: Major Media Ventures of Dalits in Digital Sphere**

Digital Media Platform	Subscribers (Youtube)	Estimated Earning on Youtube (Monthly) Source: <a href="https://socialblade.com">socialblade.com</a>	Total Videos
Dalit Dastak	1.03 Million	\$1K-\$16.2K	3.8K

The Mooknayak	54.2K	\$13-\$202	1.2K
The Activist	1.41 Million	\$1.4K- \$21.8K	4.9K
National Dastak	7.5 Million	\$19.3-\$309.4K	35K
AmbedkarNama	257K	\$456-\$7.3K	3.7K
Lord Buddha TV	35.2K	\$15-\$241	1.3K
Dalit Camera	92.5K	\$13-\$215	3.3K
Awaaz India TV	1.86 Million	\$1.6-\$25.2K	10K
Ambedkarite People's Voice	909K	\$628-\$10.1K	14K

Date: 8/5/2023

Dalit Dastak is a print and digital media organisation. Dalit Dastak is a Delhi based web portal and YouTube channel. It publishes monthly dalit centric Hindi news magazine with the similar name. It was first issued in 2012. Ashok Das is editor-in-chief of this media organisation. In the first phase, Dalit Dastak magazine was started to address the issues related to Dalits. In second phase, Dalit Dastak YouTube channel and website was launched. At present it has presence on all major social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.

The office of Dalit Dastak is in the Pandav Nagar, New Delhi. The office is in a residential colony. The structure of the building in which office situated is residential. The office is at the first floor of the building and have two rooms, kitchen, and bathroom. The office building is an old structure, and it is moderately maintained. The basic infrastructure of the office are tables, chairs, production equipment's such as camera, tripod, lights, microphone etc. and one Desktop computer. The rooms do not have air conditioners and normal ceiling fan is installed in each room. The main room in which editor works has pictures of Dr. B R Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Kashiram on the walls in the form calendar and photo frame. The chief editor always has latest print version of Dalit Dastak magazine on his table.

The strength of office staff is small and fluctuating. It depends on the workload, for example during election time, it can be increased upto 12 to 15 and in normal period it can be 5 to 7. Generally, one or two staff members works with the chief editor Ashok Das permanently. They can be different person on different days, it depends on the nature of work. The Chief Editor and owner of Dalit Dastak Ashok Das, mostly follow professional dress code during working hours but other staff members generally wear casual clothes on the working day. There is no official direction regarding dress code in the office or in the field reporting. The social profile of office staff is dominated by members of scheduled castes. The chief editor Ashok Das belongs to Jatav community of Dalits.

**Table 2:** Editorial objectives of major YouTube channels covering Dalits (Source: YouTube)

Digital Media Platform	Objectives
Dalit Dastak	<p>“Dalit Dastak means the knock given by the marginalized people of India for their rights.</p> <p>Dalit Dastak is a YouTube channel dedicated to the cause of the marginalized people of India, also referred to as Bahujans, because they form a majority of the population.</p> <p>We strive to highlight the Bahujan culture and provide coverage to the problems affecting the downtrodden masses of India – the Bahujans, Dalits, Adivasis and the minorities.”</p>
AmbedkarNama	<p>“AmbedkarNama” is a platform which is committed to social awareness particularly to the Bahujan community. Our vision is to reach out to a larger audience spreading the ideas and thoughts of Dr B R Ambedkar an other Bahujan icons.”</p>
National Dastak	<p>“Even today a major portion of mainstream Indian media is giving representation to the concerns and aspirations of only elite section of society. Mainstream Indian media is ignoring the struggles and interests scheduled castes. Scheduled tribes, women, minorities, labourers and farmers who are situated on the margins of Indian society. National Dastak is an effort to become the voice of marginalised section of society.”</p>
The Mooknayak	<p>“The Mooknayak is dedicated to Marginalised and unprivileged people of India. It works on the principle of the Constitution.”</p>
Awaaz India TV	<p>“The vision is to become the "Voice of the Nation”.</p> <p>As far as the "Mission" Statement is concerned (which happens to be the subset of the vision statement) we can break it in parts as</p> <p>1 - Mobilising and organising the noble minds of the country to work for the liberty, equality and fraternity.</p>

	<p>2 - For this, providing a platform to all the Bahujans, young and the old to voice their opinion, demonstrate their cultural ethos.</p> <p>3 - Providing a stage to demonstrate the true "unity in diversity" of the nation and not just the culture that "one class" of the segment portrays.</p> <p>4 - In a way, provide the Bahujans to unleash their creative minds, abilities that have not been tapped so far by the media.”</p>
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The description of objectives, vision and aims in the table 2 of these digital media platforms of dalits delineates the contours of their social cause based on these initiatives decide their day-to-day practices and overall editorial policy. The major characteristic of their editorial policy includes spread of Ambedkarite ideology, cementing the Bahujan identity by covering the issues of minorities, scheduled castes, women, and other backward classes. Apart from marginalised communities, constitutionalism is another major objective of their editorial policy. For example, YouTube channel, The Mooknayak describes their vision that “The Mooknayak is dedicated to Marginalised and unprivileged people of India. It works on the principle of the Constitution.” These social entrepreneurship ventures in digital field aims to make aware the dalit community regarding their constitutional and human rights and want to change the traditional status quo of Indian society in terms of social status which categorised dalits as untouchables and put them at the margins of Indian social structure. One of the main objectives of Awaaz TV is “Mobilising and Organising the noble minds of the country to work for the liberty, equality and fraternity”.

**Table 3:** Major themes of In-depth interviews and the responses of Interviewees

Major Themes	Responses
Coverage of Dalit Issues in Mainstream Media	<p>“According to me there is no mainstream media in India. It would be better to call Indian media as manustream media as there is no participation of dalits and adivasis and other marginalised sections in Indian Media”. (Interviewee 1)</p> <p>“After Independence Majority of Indian media is covering dalit issues from victim perspectives only, there is hardly any</p>

	<p>positive and constructive coverage of dalits like their success stories in different fields. The main reason of this approach is that Indian media is filled with the people who have anti-dalit mindset”. (Interviewee 1)</p> <p>“According to him mainstream media in India follows the agenda of Manu wadi ideology, in which success stories of Bahujans remains ignored”. (Interviewee 2)</p>
Utilisation of Digital technology by Dalits	<p>“Dalits are utilising digital media space by creating YouTube channels, Facebook accounts etc. They are making videos and clicking photos and propagating through this new medium of digital technology”. (Interviewee 1)</p> <p>“He especially emphasises upon the need to follow canons of journalism in running the alternative media platform in digital age”. (Interviewee 5)</p>
Relevance of Digital Technology in Dalit Movement	<p>“Especially after Institutional murder of Rohith Vemula and the following movement against it, social media played a key role in almost every Dalit movement in bringing dalits together and organised them for movements. But I am not absolutely optimistic that this technology would works perfectly for Dalit movement. This technology is owned by big media companies and there are many restrictions in utilising these social media platforms. So social media activism has its own limitations and I see it only as medium to reach people”. (Interviewee 1)</p>
Credibility of Digital media platforms of dalits	<p>“We started our YouTube channel in 2017 but we are not very regular in terms of production we are still working on making it regular. We should work on fact checking and credibility issues as only emotions will not work. We should also be careful about the ideological aspects as we cannot broadcast anything in the name of Ambedkarism”. (Interviewee 1)</p>

	<p>“He is strictly oppose to the idea of political intervention in functioning of his media ventures and consider professionalism as one of the key pillars in the long term sustainability of alternative media. Without naming anyone he criticises the tendency among some new media news platforms to criticise some political parties even without reason. He is in the favour of impartial analysis of dalit related issues”.</p> <p>(Interviewee 5)</p>
Ideology of Digital media platforms of dalits	<p>“The Editor without any hesitation said that the channel is based on the ideology of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar”.</p> <p>(Interviewee 2)</p> <p>“He regularly uses his social media platforms to propagate the ideology of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar and also makes public, especially Dalits aware about currents events which has relevance for Dalits rights”. (Interviewee 4)</p>
Management of financial resources	<p>“The channel manages its resources from advertisements and contribution of general public for which appeal is regularly broadcasted from the channel side on social media platforms and also included in its videos”. (Interviewee 2)</p>
Challenges in running the digital media platforms of dalits	<p>“The Editor of National Dastak also highlighted some limitations and challenges. He said that they worked in very threatening environment as they covered the issues Bahujans. He also admits that lack of availability of smartphone with marginalised communities is one of limiting factor”.</p> <p>(Interviewee 2)</p> <p>“He admits that it is difficult to sustain in the realm of traditional media. He especially focusses upon the importance of New media as it has proved platforms which can be</p>

	sustained with minimum workforce and capital”. (Interviewee 5)
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There is consensus among the editors, owners, activists, and journalists belonging to dalit community who are running these digital media platforms that the mainstream media has neglected the issues, concerns, and aspirations of dalits. The mainstream media had been an important instrument in peddling the traditional stereotypes of caste system in Indian public sphere. This is the main reason behind the emergence of digital media platforms of dalits. They are filling the vacuum left by mainstream media in the coverage of dalit issues.

## **Conclusion**

The domain of media has seen fundamental changes in last three decades. Information and technology revolution and evolution of internet have facilitated the enormous possibilities of broadcasting and interaction in the field of digital media. The progress achieved by a small section of dalit community in field of education, jobs and activism in post-independence period has enabled dalits to make use of opportunities in the field of digital media. Many professionals of dalit community in the field of media have become social entrepreneurs by integrating their commercial and social motives. These social entrepreneurs have chosen the path of self-reliance by venturing into the field of digital technology and aiming to make society more equal and human for dalit community.

Although these social entrepreneurs have achieved considerable degree of autonomy in their day-to-day functions of their digital media platforms, but the compulsions of market pose tough challenges for them. Their resources are largely dependent on advertisements and community funding. As dalits form one of the most marginalised sections of Indian society in terms of income, education, and social status it puts limitations on these digital platforms of dalits in terms of revenue they get from advertisements and funding support from the community. Apart from this they are also facing the competition from mainstream media as they are also hugely investing in digital sphere. These individual ventures of dalit journalists can hardly match the resources

available for mainstream media even in digital field in terms of human as well as financial resources. So, at present they are not able to match the monetary and technological clout of mainstream media but with the unique powers of social media they have been able to raise the voices of dalits in Indian public sphere effectively and sometimes mainstream media has been forced to cover any issue of dalit community.



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