Abstract:
Media a fast tracking police van has taken out an excellent step to uplift the social condition of Dalit Woman. Besides broadcasting and penning words on their social and economical condition it has also become a satellite to telecast the physical assault for which they are exploited and drawn out from their community. This paper will come across each and every aspect of media intensifying the problems of dalit woman throughout ages giving an exclusive account of media and its sources in building out a historic change in their life. Instances of everyday discrimination are quite ubiquitous, but they are frequently documented with focus and in-depth coverage in India’s as well as in other countries’ mainstream news media. Media has started uploading videos illustrating contributions of the grass-roots level activists and also wrapping various issues concerning the Dalits, Adivasis, Bahuians, Muslims and other minorities etc. As a source, it is only media giving a chance to speak. It has provided an excellent platform to render violence against dalit woman as the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations and widespread exploitation and discrimination in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. This paper scrutinizes how media has made these women an instrument through which the social system replicates itself and systemic inequality is maintained. Violence against Dalit women is systematically utilized to deny their opportunities, choices and freedoms at multiple levels, undermining not only Dalit women’s dignity and self-respect, but also their right to development.

Key Words: Media, Dalit Woman, Social, Political and Economical Power

Images play an vital role in redefining social education, power and hierarchies as well as building up a counter – culture ‘praxis’ and space for the recovery and revival of the emancipator potential for an alternative cultural hegemony. Media as a creative cultural artifact can play an immense role in the portrayal of Dalit reality. They address the subconscious world of spectators and these cultural constructs are the construction of the subconscious. Thereby, they function as a potent tool through which the notions of superiority and inferiority are restructured to exert control in the external spheres of life. Pictures which were displayed on the calendars had played a major role in raising nationalist and social aspirations and organizing mass enlistment during the pre-independence days. The paintings created by dalit artists that portrayed submerged reality of Dalit lives—their experiences of pain, misery, hopes and aspirations – will stimulate them for the creation of a new world which is free of oppression.

“Women always face violence from men. Equality is only preached, but not put into practice.

Dalit women face more violence every day, and they will continue to do so until society changes and accepts them as equals.”

Bharati, West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh (who was beaten, verbally abused and forcibly incarcerated by dominant caste men of her village for contesting the panchayat elections in 1999) Dalits India’s former “untouchable”, are so called because their touch was considered polluting due to the work they did—handling dead matter or faeces. The fight against untouchability is of long standing. The efforts of two great modern Indian leaders, however, had the greatest impact in bringing public awareness of the need for eradicating this acute and particular form of oppression: Mahatma Gandhi—who called them “Harjians” or “children of God”, and B.R. Ambedkar, a brilliant lawyer, himself from an untouchable caste, who led the drafting of India’s constitution, and directed the government to take affirmative action to compensate untouchable castes for these historical wrongs, the stigma against them continues in both subtle and overt forms to this day. Accordingly, struggles by the oppressed castes have also persisted through both militant movements and advocacy.

The scheduled caste women, in India’s highly patriarchal and caste- based society, bear the triple burden of caste, class, and gender. Being positioned at the lowest social order of Indian society, scheduled caste woman suffer from many forms of discrimination, including lack of education, economic disadvantages, social disempowerment, domestic violence, political invisibility, and sexual oppression. In contravention of both national laws and international human rights standards that prohibit any physical, sexual or psychological violence against women, varying forms of violent acts specifically targeting SC women are occurring on a large scale across India today.

The convergence of these conditions leads to the wide-ranging and multiple layers of violence that pervade Dalit women’s lives, characterized by enduring violence in both the general community and in the family, from state and non-state actors of different genders, castes and socio-economic grouping.

Powerlessly positioned at the bottom of India’s caste, class and gender hierarchies, Dalit women experienced common gender-and-caste discrimination and violence as the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Their socio-economic helplessness and lack of political voice, when combined with the dominant risk factors of being Dalit and female, increased their exposure to potentially violent situations while simultaneously reducing their ability to escape. Violence against Dalit women presented clear evidence of extensive utilization and prejudice against these women subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. The altering scenario which became an impediment for the dalits as a whole could be voiced out by
media sources. With the advancement of new technologies, new sources developed for those mothers, sisters and daughters of dalits who struggled a lot for their caste and class. They are now able to narrate their stories through a medium which is termed as “MEDIA”. Bringing various sources such as television, Internet, Newspaper and Magazines on Dalits, it was a source with the help of which they were able to find their identity. These sources of media could make them stand in the crowd without vacillation and helped them to challenge the people exploiting them. The forthcoming activities of media widened in them the Renaissance spirit: the spirit to think, build, fight and voice out their sufferings. With the help of it they could realize the upper ones about humanism.

“The media is a weapon it can discharge volleys of meaning hurled toward the bull’s eye of truth; it can deafen the ear with the roar of a people’s voice clamoring for justice. It can kill lies emitted in ink from oppressor’s presses making beasts of holy men justifying their slaughters. The media has always been a white weapon; it must be wrested from the oppressor’s hands by black power.”

The popular attitude of the media towards Dalits has been a subject of consistent appreciation. Not only do the mainstream media accept to give prominence to incidents of Dalit atrocities (treating them as space-filler events like the regular crime beat) but it also effectively disallow space to Dalit movements.

Gender biases strengthen the impact of caste inequity, and Dalit women face double bigotry in all spheres of life. They are more affected by poverty, and a majority of them experience physical or sexual violence from dominant castes, often used intentionally to sustain the oppression of the Dalit community. Playing a pivotal role in intensifying the quandaries of these women, media has put all its efforts to emancipate the right of liberty for them. Few examples can be seen below:

![Image of Dalit women]

“Dalit women are at the bottom of the caste and gender hierarchy in Nepal.”

Protests over discrimination against Dalits in Nepal are delivering little. Credit: Mallika Aryal/IPS.

KATHMANDU, Feb 3 2014 (IPS) - Maya Sarki, a resident of Belbari in eastern Nepal, was returning home one summer evening last year when she was attacked. She was forced down on the ground and her attacker attempted to rape her. Moreover some few examples are quoted below how media has done its work which can be quoted as “MEDIA SPEAK”

1) UN Committee wants more from India on human rights. IANS, Webindia123.com Radio Coverage on AIR FM GOLD on 17th July 08, Download - English, Hindi
3) Mindset towards Dalit must change – Report, Rajasthan Patrika.
4) Argument against the condition of Dalit Women in Rajasthan, Mahaka Bharat
6) Argument for Dalit Women Report, Danik Navjyoti
7) Awareness for Dalit Women – Sumitra Singh, Mahaka Bharat
8) Worried for misuse of Dowry and Dalit laws, Rajasthan Patrika
9) Aware Dalit women about their Rights – Sumitra Singh, Rashtriyaadoot
11) High growth, but no rights for women, South Asian Media Net
12) Social Security a dream for most Indian Workforce, Mangaloren
13) 80% Indian don’t get enough to eat, Mint
14) Tourism projects a bane for local community: report, IANS
15) India has Failed to Provide Basic Entitlements to its People, Boloj.com
16) Mar. 02, 2008: Govt. silence on the issues of Social Security of Unorganized Sector Workers, Bharat Aajkal
17) Feb 27, 2008: Govt. failed to provide Social Security-42 Crores and 26 Lakhs Unorganized Sector Workers, Jansatta
20) Dec 29, 2006: Dalit Women’s will Survey for their Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Rajasthan Patrika
21) In the recent months, incidents of rape and other forms of violence against women have created lots of furor and anguish, and rightly so amongst middle class throughout the country. However, what is interesting to note is that the response to such crimes was/is highly selective. The following table enlists 101 cases of brutal crimes against Dalit Women (reported between Damini/Nirbhaya Case, 16th Dec 2012 and Asaram Arrest, 31st Aug 2013) which could hardly outrage the consciences of people. Hence, it’s important to ask that, Why Do Some Rape Deserve Anger and Others Do Not?

Have we ever noticed that media keeps on capturing the events and incidents happening in the society for whether it is of spreading awareness among the people for better governance and better government or it is to fight for all the creatures whether animals or human beings for their safety.
A GLANCE THROUGH the daily news papers reveal that the attacks on Dalits in various forms are increasing day by day. When the common people have to unite and fight against pauperization of their life under neo-liberal policies, the ruling class parties with the help of religious and caste forces are dividing them by provoking attacks on Dalits and intensifying casteist hatred against the downtrodden people. These were some of the examples being placed by internet, television, films, and newspaper to reawaken the unvoiced ones so that the upper ones responsible for the downfall of the Dalits could create an image of compassion, could feel their pain and suffering, could think hundred times before defaming them.

In India, Dalits comprise of more than 200 millions. But their socio, political and economic issues noticed by the mainstream media are miniscule in numbers. Thus, there is a need for the educated Dalit population to find an alternative media through which they can express and respond with outside world. In this scenario, internet has proved to be an avenue for educated Dalits. Internet has enormous power to bring social equality to the people neglected in the society. Internet has been widely used by the people living on the margin of the society as an alternative to the mainstream media. It analyses in detail about how internet platform such as Dalit websites, social media such as blogs are an alternative media to verbalize the issues of Dalits in India. It has outlined the new opportunities for Dalits in the cyber space- online networks which accommodates the voice of the subaltern people and also maps the approaches of main stream media towards the issues of Dalits. The conceptual discussion on the issues has clearly exemplified the deplorable state of affairs of the coverage of Dalit issues by the mainstream media.

Big media houses which own the major publications gave opportunity to Dalit (ex-untouchable) writers, and provoked the Dalit writers who write in English. The elitist writers want to write the feel-good stuff, India Shining myths, and that’s the work that gets into print. So, I wanted to tap the power and enormous outreach of the dalits through media: how anyone can write and be read/ heard in the virtual space. With media helping the dalits they started writing because they were commissioned by the upper ones but with the mainstream media they didn’t have to follow other people’s diktats and could speak their own mind. Google and tagging ensured them that they could get heard without having their own column in any newspaper. Sometimes it helped them bring some happenings to light—such as the recent inside story of Dalit students being beaten up at a law university in Chennai.

Kanshi Ram, the founder of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) encouraged for a voice for Dalits in the media (Ninan, 2007). Ever since the evolution of mass communication be it print or audio-visual media, Dalits tried to run their own media on a par with the rest of the media industry. But, due to many factors they could not live to tell the tale. The Hindu, a daily English newspaper, celebrated its 125th anniversary on September 2003. Parayan, a Dalit magazine, which was started by the Dalit scholar Rettaimalai Srinivasan in the same as that of The Hindu does not find its subsistence today. Similarly many magazines were started by Dalit activists, but they eventually ousted as they could not withstand the caste politics (Ravikumar, 2007).

Furthermore, economic conditions and caste supremacy did not allow them to sustain in the competitive media market. Hugo Gorringe a senior lecturer in Sociology, University of Edinburgh and author of ‘Untouchable Citizens: The Dalit Panthers and Democratisation of Tamilnadu’ writes about the role of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media: It is quite common to see an article circulated through Facebook, on blog and websites together with an analysis that highlights the bias within that piece or offers an alternate reading. In that sense Dalit blogs and sites act as a sort of counter-public.

With proliferation of new media technologies and the increasing embourgeoisment of newly educated Dalit beneficiaries of post-independence affirmative action policies of successive government - Dalit activism is now increasingly web-based regularly updated websites such as www.ambedkar.org and others keep the world informed of the success and vicissitudes of the many Dalit battles against entrenched upper-caste hegemony in south Asia (Ganguly, 2005).

Among a number of Dalit websites, www.roundtableindia.co.in is a news and information portal championing for Dalits.

Bathran Ravichandran, a doctoral student of English at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad is the man behind who conceived the idea of filming the plights of Dalits in India. Hailing from Tamil Nadu, he was the first from his caste in his district to receive higher education. It is noteworthy to mention that he comes from the “manual scavenging” caste, those who remove human excrement with their bare hands. He says that the mainstream media did not give any exposure to the Dalit movements and atrocities, so with the help of Dalit camera he decided to “give them a voice on the internet”. Currently, the channel is run by 23-member team equipped with four video cameras with about 1,400 subscribers. Some of the videos of Dalit Camera have been viewed more than 50,000 times. (ibid)

In the past, Dalits women have been neglected and discriminated by the mainstream media. "Many [Dalit women] experience some of the worst forms of discrimination," said Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women in a written statement. "The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalization, which perpetuates their subordinate position in society and increases their vulnerability, throughout generations." But now, the scenario is gradually changing with more and more educated Dalits entering into the media industry. Though, Dalits entry into the mainstream media can be viewed positively, the kind of position they occupy in the media industry is not applaudable. There are also many instances where the persons are asked to divulge their caste identity. If the person is found from the low caste, then the discrimination follows again in the media too. Dalits are mostly perched in the lower hierarchy position in the newspapers and television channels. Only in recent days, the plights of Dalits have been noticed by the international media and also by the Indian media. Besides, the evolution of internet in India has become a great boon to Dalit women, particularly to educate them. With enormous potentials, internet has paved way for them to have their own media to articulate and discuss the issues regarding Dalit community freely and openly.
Though the mainstream media gives coverage to Dalit issues now and then, they are miniscule in number. There are mammoth problems unnoticed and uncared by the mainstream media. In this scenario, Dalit women are making use of this new medium to speak for themselves. Due to the negligence of the mainstream media in representing Dalit issues, Dalit women have taken shelter under the alternative media like websites, online forums, blogs, Facebook, etc. Majority of the Dalit activists agree to the fact that internet like websites, online groups, forums and social networking sites as blogs and Facebook play the role of alternative media. Several studies have cited that Dalit activists view internet as the media, enabling and facilitating access and participation by the members of the community and the channel of communication for the stigmatized community. Further, an alternative media is considered as the media which can stand on par with the mainstream media and can offer a counter–hegemonic representation of Dalits. Thus, media has become a tool for the marginalized Dalit women to utilize it as an alternative media. Studies have provided evidence of the contribution of internet in educating, empowering and strengthening Dalit community they serve. Internet is acting as focal point for the members of the Dalit community to inform others about the day to day issues on Dalit women and to get connected with each other.

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