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വൈത്യകം  
ത്രൈമാസിക ലക്കം: 46

# Ishal Paithrkam

Online issue 31

print issue 46

June 2026



**Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar**

**Mappila Kala Akademi**

Department of Cultural Affairs

Government of Kerala-India

June 2026

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പകർപ്പാവകാശം: പ്രസാധകർക്ക്

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**പ്രസാധകർ**

മഹാകവി മോയിൻകുട്ടി വൈദ്യർ

മാപ്പിള കലാ അക്കാദമി

കൊണ്ടോട്ടി: 673 638

ഫോൺ: 0483 2711432

**Ishal Paithrkam**

**E-ISSN: 2582-550X**

Peer-Reviewed

Two issue per year

Bilingual

Issue: 46

Online issue: 31

June: 2026

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**Editor**

Dr. Shamshad hussain. KT

**Publisher**

The Secretary, Mahakavi

Moyinkutty Vaidyar mappila

Kala Academy, Department of

Cultural affairs, Government

of Kerala, Kondotty Post

Pin: 673638

India

Ph: +91 483 2711432

**Printed at**

Kerala state C APT

Kozhikode

[www.mappilakalaacademy.org](http://www.mappilakalaacademy.org)

[www.ishalpaithrkam.info](http://www.ishalpaithrkam.info)

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## **A Deliberative Democracy Framework for Analysing the Role of Social Media in Represent- ing Dalits Voices: Some Critical Reflections**

**Dr. Suresh. K**

Freedom of expression and the willingness to tolerate diverse viewpoints are indispensable foundations of any democratic system. This freedom ensures broader public engagement, which is possible only if people are adequately informed about the functioning of institutions and the decisions that shape their lives. For such engagement to be meaningful, information must be transparent, reliable, accessible, and rooted in democratic principles. At this juncture, the media—both traditional and digital—plays an indispensable role. By fostering dialogue and enabling deliberation, the media strengthens the democratic process, ensuring that it remains transparent, representative, and inclusive. In India, the media has historically served as a catalyst for social transformation, acting as a guardian of constitutional values and democratic ideals. However, this noble role has increasingly been compromised by commercial interests and the influence of deep-rooted social factors such as caste and communal biases. These challenges have distorted the ethical responsibilities of journalism and weakened its credibility. Particularly concerning is the exclusion of marginalized communities, especially Dalits, who remain underrepresented within media institutions. Their voices and concerns are often neglected or

misrepresented, leaving a significant democratic deficit. Even though new digital and social media platforms promise alternative spaces for expression, Dalits still encounter barriers in using these platforms effectively to highlight their genuine issues. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to critically analyze the role of social media as a deliberative democratic space and to explore its capacity to amplify and represent the legitimate concerns of marginalized groups, with special attention to Dalit communities.

**Keywords:** Dalit, identity, media, deliberative democracy, participatory democracy

Media, popularly known as the fourth pillar of a government, occupies an important place in a democracy. The media not only entertains but also informs and teaches. It is essential for developing, expressing, and disseminating public opinion. It is, or ought to be, a protector of the public interest, a trustworthy eyewitness to events, and a device for holding the government responsible. Thus, media link people and the government by encouraging dialogue for developing and implementing state policies in keeping with popular preferences. Additionally, it is an effective tool for raising transparency and accountability across the board (Ansari, 2019).

India has a robust media presence, both in quantity and quality. Recently, Indian media has been criticised for disregarding their obligation to social responsibility (Gupta and Agnihotri, 2022). Dangerous business practices in media such as sensationalizing news with communal slants and violence, political maneuvering, social fragmentation and emergence of media conglomerates have affected the fabric of Indian democracy. Post-liberalisation changes, the emergence of transnational media organisations with global interests, and the corporatisation of media and media ethics have ultimately threatened pluralistic viewpoints. All these things happened at the cost of a media which was initially thought to be an agent of ushering social change through championing developmental programs directed at the non-privileged and marginalised sections of society. Though the media has sometimes successfully played the role of a watchdog of the government functionaries and has also aided in participatory communication, a lot

still needs to be done. However, in India, the question of deliberative democracy using social media is under severe constraints. Due to the widening digital gap and institutionalised conservatism, deliberations have been confined to authorised elites, primarily the educated middle class. Dalits, who neither have their media organisation nor are represented in media rooms, are adversely affected in this deliberation process.

### **Deliberative Democracy and Media**

The process of deliberative democracy will enable the individuals to pursue agenda setting and problem solving through deliberative decision mechanisms rather than through the conventional method of aggregating interest through voting or hierarchical command based upon political or bureaucratic authority. Media plays a significant role in this deliberative process, particularly in a representative democracy like India. There are four ways that deliberations can instill the spirit of democracy: by increasing the role of the public in policy-making through the development of trust in democratic institutions and government agencies; by encouraging deeper forms of dialogue and decision-making that lead to effective and shared decision-making; by producing better policy outcomes because it delivers significant public judgment rather than impromptu public opinion; and by giving deliberators a legitimate voice in the process (Keutgen, 2021).

### **Deliberative Democracy and India**

The parliamentary system of government followed by India has two aspects: representation and participation. Although both are the two sides of the same coin, the representation part became more practical, undermining the role of participation in the political system. The meaning of political participation was reduced to the right to vote. Elections were conducted at particular intervals, and subsequent changes were brought into the political structure without substantive changes in people's share in the decision-making process (Sachdeva and Sharma, 2015; Oldenburg, 2007; Singh, 2023). Once elected the political parties and their representatives, regardless of flag and shade, often shift their focus away from the every day challenges experienced by the common populace. The commoner increasingly realised

that they had nothing to do with this political game. This realisation resulted in a widespread trust deficit and estrangement of various sections from active political engagement.

The apparent decline in the effectiveness of democratic institutions of governance, increasing corruption and deterioration of moral standards in public life, the increasing gap between the ideology and praxis of political parties, and the gap between the expectation of the people and the ability of the political system to fulfil those aspirations have led widespread apathy among the people towards politics. Besides, deregulation, privatisation, reduction of social services and reduction in government spending have become the watchword of government rather than participation, greater responsiveness, transparency and accountability. This can be illustrated by the fact that only 65.7% voter casted their vote in 2024 general election compared to 66.4 % in 2014 (Election Commission, 2024). The 2014 general election is unique as it was the first instance since independence the voting turn out crossed more than 65%. The commission has also revealed that less than 40 per cent of voters under the age of 19 have registered to vote. Among this a sizeable number belong to urban and educated youth (Vinod, 2024). These estranged sections, comprising of the Dalits, began to evolve into up-political activities as a measure to engage in politics. In this context, social media has come forward to champion the Dalits' interests from the state and society. However, they are facing so many constraints in using social media as an effective instrument for championing their interests.

### **Dalits and Media**

Communication in India is a complex and obscuring process due to caste based social stratification. Casteism, the most complex and discriminatory social system practised worldwide, vehemently denied the legitimate right of Dalits to have an education. Thus, Dalits were deliberately denied letters and literature for about three millennia. Things began to change with the positive intervention of the Christian missionaries, who introduced printing and publishing in India (Hindu, 2007). They wanted to spread Christianity and, for that matter, translated Bible into several regional languages. They also started schools

and published news magazines, newspapers, books and pamphlets with the support of local dominant caste people who worked as their assistants. Still, the marginalised sections were not represented even at the periphery of the educational system.

Even though the colonial masters' attempt to reform education was not sincere, it was a blessing in disguise for the Dalits in India. As the missionaries focused on the disadvantaged populations for mission work or for conversion, access to education were open to all including Dalits. It enabled them to use colonial power to overpower the dominance of caste power. This positive change resulted from the emergence of several eminent writers and scholars among the Dalits in the third or fourth generation. However, the casteist Indian media presented several obstacles as Dalit writers became powerful and began to exert their position. They are often labelled "Dalit writers" who produce "Dalit literature." The suppression of the growth of Dalit writing as a rebellion against India's casteist social structure has induced the employment of tokenism in the realm of literature. Thus, the issues and concerns of marginalised sections, particularly Dalits, have got undermined in this new deliberative process. Some of the issues faced by Dalits in media are;

#### 1. Representation of Dalits in Media

In India, the majority of communication has been monopolised by the upper caste, in terms of its ownership and top-level management positions. Since the development of the modern communication system, Dalits have attempted to operate their media on par with the rest of the media houses (Venkateswarlu & Rao, 2017). However, for various reasons, they were unable to survive. For instance, the Dalit Magazine, *Parayan*, started by a Dalit scholar Rettaimalai Srinivasan, could not find its existence when *The Hindu*, the daily English newspaper, started on the same day to commemorate its 125th anniversary in September 2003. Similarly, Dalit activists from different parts of the country launched several periodicals but were eventually locked down because they could not endure caste politics (Ravikumar, 2007). Thus, economic conditions and caste supremacy did not allow them to sustain themselves in the competitive media market.

The Indian media has become number one in practicing caste segregation in its organisational structure. Chandrabhan Prasad called this Media ‘Varna Media’ (Prasad, 2006). The untouchability towards Dalits in Indian media is evident because there were almost no Dalits and almost none today in the newsrooms of India's media organisations (Jeffrey, 2012). Consequently, stories from the margins of the society, which constitute about 25% of the Indian population, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are unlikely to be known or much less broadcasted or written. Even if they are represented, they are perched at the lower rungs of the hierarchy in newspapers and TV outlets. There are no Dalits or Adivasis in senior positions in Indian print, television, or internet media, with upper caste groups occupying about 90% of these positions. A substantial portion of prime-time debate programmes on news channels tend to feature panelists from the upper castes background. Dalits and Adivasis write less than 5% of all articles in English newspapers (The Oxfam India, 2022). At the lower levels of media organisations, Dalits are experiencing harassment; deliberate targeting manifested through denial of recognition, promotions and increments, and snide remarks and name-calling, particularly their caste or community names. Due to this discriminatory treatment, most of the Dalits in the media argued that they would leave the media if they got better employment prospects (Ashraf, 2013). This pattern of systematic exclusion has been further reinforced by the introduction of neo-liberal policies and the growing prominence of corporate ownership within media sector. In other words, the new economic policies and the corporate culture helped the existing Brahminical ideologies and forces to exert their influence in the mass media.

## 2. Agenda setting by media

The news media not only provides readers and viewers with factual information about public events but also teaches them how much significance to give an issue based on how much attention it receives in the news (Mahapatra & Suresh, 2015). The term ‘Agenda Setting’ was coined by McCombs and Shaw to describe a phenomenon which had long been observed and studied in the context of election engineering. They discovered that, as opposed to persuasion or

attitudinal transformation, the major impact of the news media was agenda setting, or telling people what to think about rather than what not to consider (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to agenda-setting studies, there is a connection between what the media prioritise and public awareness of it. The core idea of the term implies that the news media inform the public about the major concerns of the day, and this information influences what the public believes to be significant issues. While Indian media sets the agenda of the day, it 'normally' tends to avoid the issues faced by Dalits and discreetly support the status quo of the casteist Indian social matrix. Using tokenism for Dalit writers and thinkers, these print and visual media are trying to put them into boxes. Tokenism also helps to neutralise the emergence of Dalit consciousness and the genuine questions raised by them. Being the most disadvantaged group in Indian society, Dalits were to be treated with the utmost sympathy and compassion. The actual need is to portray Dalits' needs and struggles without bias. However, unfortunately, Indian print and visual media miserably fail to meet this ethical aspect of journalism.

### 3. Characterisation of Dalits in Media

The indolent approach of Indian mass media towards Dalits issues is evident due to the amount and calibre of the news broadcast. Media often portrays Dalits in a distorted way. They are depicted as weak, incompetent, oppressed, downtrodden, victims of caste-based discrimination, low performers and greedy for reservation and politics (Ojha, 2017). This portrayal often focuses on their poverty, lack of education, access to basic amenities, and the social stigma attached to their caste. They are also depicted as marginalised and excluded from mainstream society, living on the fringes and struggling to survive. Media also tends to stereotype Dalits- often with a negative connotation. For instance, if a Dalit makes a mistake in public life, the impression goes that 'they are like that'. The whole community gets stigmatised and targeted. However, when a Dalit outshines in public life, the general impression is that "he/she is an exceptional Dalit" (Sunny Kapikkad, personal communication, December 5, 2022).

There was also deliberate move against the emerging Dalit consciousness. The emergence of various Dalit movements, inspired by the ideology and praxis of Dr. B.R Ambedkar, and their constant interface with the Dalit issues have also contributed to this consciousness. But these resentments were often dubbed by the caste- based media as mere caste politics. This can also be considered as a deliberate ploy against Dalits consciousness about the existing socio-political realities. One such example is the reported death of Ilavarasan in Tamil Nadu. This row of events occurred due to the inter-caste marriage between the couples belonging to Dalit and Vanniyar communities, which ultimately ended up in their separation and eventually the death of the husband, Ilavarasan, who was a Dalit (Arivanantham, 2013). Instead of reacting to this issue as caste-based oppression of Dalits and the violent invasion of the right to live, mass media portrayed it as a clash between two caste groups. The discussion on inter-caste marriage, which could be used to overcome caste-based discrimination, was not initiated by mass media and thus revealed its casteist face.

Those who work in the mass media argue that they are giving what the public wants. The visual media is more interested in ratings, and the issues related to the Dalits, Tribals, Adivasis and other vulnerable people are not helpful, according to their assessment. Even though the media in India covers the people's struggles, they often rallied behind the government and brushed the severe concerns about ordinary people's safety under the carpet. However, one positive change in recent years is the resurgence of Dalit movements and active interventions of Dalit writers and activists, which compelled Indian mass media to give space, even though as tokenism, most of the time in the media.

#### 4. Change in the character of media.

The characteristics of media have also undergone dramatic changes in recent years. From a serious affair of bringing news to the masses, it has been changed into entertaining people even with the news. There is no more news, but only 'news stories'. Media has become an industry, and it is managed like any other business enterprise. The media is a corporate endeavour wherein editorial principles

come second to financial sustainability. The marketing department, which sells space, has become a powerful department in the news industry. Many journalists today receive instructions on what to write and what not to write. Sometimes their news stories are edited to align with the media's policies. Therefore, the unavailability of the people's basic needs from the margins and the sufferings of the vulnerable communities are not at all news, or they are overshadowed by the news about celebrities, entertainment, party politics and even sexuality. Information also becomes infotainment (Kaur, 2020; CSDS, 2022). These characteristics are actually against the interests and needs of the marginalised communities in India. Space in the print media and time in the visual media are sparingly kept apart from the Dalit issues. That is why Telugu journalist Mallepalli Laxmaiah thought that the media coverage is governed by the 5 five Cs- controversies, crime, cinema, cricket, and corporate. Physical violence against Dalits comes under crime and is consequently covered. All other aspects of their life do not make for the story (Ashraf, 2013).

### **Dalits and Alternative Media**

The ineffectiveness and inability of mainstream media to address the genuine concerns of Dalits and other marginalised sections compelled them to explore new participatory, democratic and alternative platforms such as community radio, citizen journalism, social media platforms and other forms of grassroots communication networks. This new alternative method emphasised a decentralised media network with a more 'receiver-centric' and participatory approach (Patil, 2019). It enables them to express their anguish; question the existing caste based social injustice and gaining greater public acceptability.

Among these alternative platforms, community radio is an effective instrument giving Dalits an opportunity to express their concerns, aspirations, and challenges. It seeks to instill capabilities among them through equitable inclusion not merely as participants but as active producers, partners and managers. This will ultimately boost community dialogues and deliberations around local issues and helps to redefine their community identity and protect their local culture, language, and traditions related to the various aspects of their social life (Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 2024). Dalit radio pro-

grams have not only emphasised on issues such as caste-violence, untouchability, social exclusion and discriminatory practices, but also instigated progressive measures for addressing these issues.

In 2016, India has 152 community radio stations (CRS), broadcasting to nearly one lakh people per station (Kini, 2016). It reached 495 operational CRS across the country in 2024. This stride can be attributed to the Central Government Scheme named “Supporting Community Radio Movement in India” in 2012. Even though the Scheme period was up to 2021, it was extended for a period from 2021-22 to 2025-26 with an outlay of 50 Crores (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2025). Sangham Radio, Radio Raghukul, and Radio Bundelkhand are classical community radio stations representing Dalit voices. Sangam Radio, the first community radio established in 2008 in Telengana, is completely owned, managed and operated by women from the lowest group in the Indian social hierarchy particularly Dalits (Patil, 2014). It enabled Dalit women in Pastapur to shape their own narratives instead of depending on others to tell their stories (Pradhan, 2025). By augmenting the voices of the marginalised and highlighting their resistance, Sangham Radio provides wider public attention to the marginalised women through their stories and experiences. Radio Raghukul, through the Ambedkar Samaj program, provides platform for Dalit voices in Punjab. Highlighting the work of Dr. B.R Ambedkar and his political philosophy, the station gives more emphasis on programmes that gives due attention to Dalit politics and their social empowerment strategies. It also carries various educational and social reforms programmes to equip the dalits to actively participate in social reform process. Through the community-driven programmes, Radio Bundelkhand has also become an essential platform for Dalit communities to discuss issues related to social justice and inequality.

Alternative print and digital publications have played a crucial role in highlighting Dalit issues. Independent news outlets, such as Round Table India and The Dalit Voice, offer platforms for Dalit writers and journalists to challenge the dominant narratives in mainstream media. These publications provide in-depth analyses of Dalit issues, from caste-based violence and discrimination to the failure of legal

protections and social services. Despite the role of all these communication networks, new social media has offered a new and alternative space for Dalits to alleviate their grievances.

### **Social Media: An Alternative Platform for Dalits**

The Internet, a relatively new entrant in mass media, has proved more democratic than conventional media like newspapers and television (Coronel, 2003). It has allowed citizens to actively represent their voices in the political process and express their views and opinions independently through deliberation without explicit or implicit compulsions. Thus, it has brought about substantive changes in the role of citizens in the social and political process from a mere recipient to active participants in opinion-building and decision-making. Social media has reduced traditional media's monopoly in information collection, processing, and distribution (Mahapatra & Suresh, 2015). The significance of social media lies in the fact that one party's messages, opinions, and links are readily available, and a feedback mechanism can be easily generated. Thus, social media has gone beyond traditional media by incorporating adequate deliberations as the essence of democracy and as a means for achieving outstanding citizen engagement with politics.

Since social networking is free and open for all, unlike print and visual media, Dalits find it a viable and valuable platform for championing their interests. It is nearly impossible for Dalits to start and run a media firm, but they can quickly log in to any social media site and freely express his/her thoughts. This quality of information technology and the Internet, in particular, has provided the marginalised community of India to take part in the national discourse of civil society and to have discourse among themselves (Thirumal & Tartakov, 2011). Several blogging websites, YouTube Channels, Twitter Accounts, and Facebook pages have also been created to raise Dalit issues.

Social networking has enabled Dalits to find their peer groups and new relations and friends from India and abroad. Dr. Satheesh Kumar, the former President of Kerala Dalit Panthers (KDP) illustrated the use of social networking sites by the Kerala Dalit Panthers and the Black Panther Movements in South Africa to share common

concerns and pose theoretical, philosophical, and sociological queries about caste discrimination and oppression faced by both communities in their respective countries (P.K Satheesh Kumar, personal communication, September 15, 2024). He also examined the role of these online platforms as an instrument for off-line engagements. It is significant to note that Dalit arguments frequently use Ambedkar's ideas to support their claims. Ambedkarism has created a shared awareness among the Dalits today more than in previous decades due to the development of information technology. Social networking sites provide the ideal platform for activists, writers, and critics of the Dalit community to present their cases, offer compelling counterarguments, and reshape the conversation in their favour. This use of social media is especially true given the many Dalit students who succeed in their fields of study (Venkateswarlu & Rao, 2017). Thus, Dalits now have the advantage of utilising democratic opportunities that can overcome caste and ritualistic obstacles and share interests and understandings with people who were previously out of their reach (P.K Satheesh Kumar, personal communication, September 15, 2024).

Although social media strategy and engagement are not significantly changing the attitudes of caste Hindus towards caste discrimination, it gives them an unheard-of chance to forge a new identity as empowered Dalits and unite them in the fight against pervasive caste-based discrimination (Singh, 2019). Dalits have been widely using social networking sites to generate debates about casteism and its associated issues. There is already the emergence of subaltern cyberspace with exciting and significant consequences for the Dalits and political culture in the age of digital media. A Dalit, Sam Pitroda, initiated this paradigm shift to the cyber age. He was the Prime Minister's adviser on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations. He called this transformation of digital activism as the democratisation of information (Pitroda, 2015).

One of the positive changes of Dalit online activism is its impact on visual and print media which ultimately began to give space to the issues faced by Dalits. The accessibility of social networking, even on mobile phones, makes things more accessible and more viable for the young Dalits to express their anguish related to caste and caste

oppression. As a result, the silence imposed by the caste system on India's roughly 165 million Dalits has been broken by an extensive ecosystem of blogs, websites, internet forums, and social media groups. Thus, social media platforms are establishing new discursive platforms for debate and action mobilisation that might be crucial in assisting Dalits to reassert and recover their identity (DeLuca et.al, 2012).

### **Dalits and Social Media Activism: Some Constraints**

In India, the question of deliberative democracy using social media is under severe constraints. Today discussions have been confined only to authorised elites, particularly the educated middle class, due to the growing digital divide and institutionalised conservatism. Under deliberative norms, the best proposal is not the one that receives the most votes or political power but rather the one that most closely aligns with the group's shared interests. Since the introduction of the Internet in India up till the present, the percentage of users in rural India has consistently been low. The data on rural and urban internet use shows that India still has a wide digital gap. Dalits, who live primarily in rural areas, are victims of the digital divide (Kumari & Subramani, 2014).

Dalits cannot use the Internet because they lack access to fundamental amenities, including housing, subsistence, a basic education, a job, and a lack of English language skills. Only a tiny portion of this sizable, socially excluded urban and rural group is active in the public realm. They are primarily made up of males with college degrees who work for the government. Most Dalits only speak their native tongue, which is impossible for online communication. The low level of higher education among the Dalits in India and the situation of living in the remotest villages keep most of the Dalits away from being in tune with the new advancements in information and communication technology. Print media is still mostly restricted to metropolitan areas. Despite some progress, the rural regions still lack adequate power (Ojha, 2017). Encouraging more Dalit students to be competent enough to utilise modern technologies for a better assertion is the need of the hour. The government's and citizens' collective responsibility is to fill the 'digital divide', which is still prevalent in casteist Indian society.

The Dalits who engage in new media discussions are looked down upon with casteist comments. They are accused of creating identity politics and dividing society while discussing casteist discrimination's complex realities. They are continuously told that they speak about casteism because of their 'inferiority complex'. Sunny Kapikkad, one of the Kerala's renowned Dalit activists called this as Inferiority Complex Theory, advanced by the upper caste to systematically stigmatise the emerging caste consciousness among dalits (Sunny Kapikkad, personal communication, December 5, 2022). He said that this tactic is not a new phenomenon, but an ideology systematized and employed over centuries. Social networking sites are often flooded with casteist outbursts against the reservation system. The casteist people advise the Dalits to 'work hard' instead of 'crying' for reservation. While these criticisms are raised, Dalit thinkers and activists make prompt and befitting counterarguments. They profusely use historical and ideological materials to substantiate their viewpoints.

Deliberate and collective attack on social networking sites against Dalit affirmation is not rare case. Dalit activists like Manushyaputhiran, Meena Kandasamy and Kavinmalar were vehemently attacked on social networking sites on their stand in the death of Ilavarasan in Tamil Nadu. According to a recent study, 13% of Facebook postings in India are caste-based hate speech, including caste-based insults, disparaging references to caste-based vocations like manual scavenging, and anti-Ambedkar remarks' (Soundararajan, Et.al, 2019). Further, it has been noted that "Indian casteist hate speech" is part of an ecosystem of violence designed to shame, intimidate, and keep oppressed caste communities from asserting their rights. If this internet hate speech is not immediately addressed, Dalits may suffer significant psychological harm (Sajlan, 2021). Currently, casteist bigots have a free hand in using social media to humiliate Dalits. For instance, the founder of the online anti-caste platform 'Ambedkar's Caravan' is regularly attacked by keyboard warriors through caste-based slurs (Attri, 2019). Hate activists leave no stone uncovered when posting comments on social media, sometimes anonymously or under colourful online identities (Kolappans, 2013). Though the criticisms are unfair and go to any extent to tarnish Dalits and undermine their

arguments, Dalits in the social networking realm are capable enough to continue their theoretical and sociological arguments.

### **Democratising Social Media**

All the above issues highlight the imperative of reforming social media into a democratic platform where the voice of Dalits is given due attention. The following are some proactive measures aimed at addressing the situation.

- Increasing digital access and infrastructure through affordable internet access, subsidised gadgets, and community digital hubs.
- Empowerment through digital literacy and skilling, such as dalit-centric digital literacy programmes, funding and fellowships, curriculum integration, and mentorship programmes.
- Combating online caste discrimination through stringent regulations against caste hate speeches, algorithmic bias, and reporting mechanisms.
- Encouraging civil society organisations to promote inclusive digital campaigns, public awareness programmes, and community-driven monitoring.
- Strengthen the legal and policy framework, such as the IT Rules, the SC/ST Act, and the regular publication of data on online harassment and abuses.
- To counter double marginalisation of Dalit women, gender sensitive programmes such as targeted training and skilling are required. They should be provided with legal aid and psychological support services for online abuses.

### **Conclusion**

The Seventy-five years of India's democratic experience show that the country has dramatically changed the social and political structures from economy to education, health to defence and justice to civic issues. However, the dividends have yet to reach the least advantageous sections of society. With all its manifestations, the deep-rooted caste system still perpetuates violence against the marginalised sections, particularly Dalits. However, now they are working for empowerment before the trickle-down effect promised by the govern-

ment or its agencies. In the case of media, despite the limitations inflicted by the traditional media, Dalits carved out a space for themselves through social media when they realised that the mainstream media had deliberately negated their concerns. Dalits skillfully utilise social media as a deliberative platform to assert their identity and counter casteist attacks. They are now using it to reach out to each other, pool their stories and experiences and exercise power and pressure as a block to prevent discrimination. All these measures have created a parallel means of information for Dalits, challenging the monopoly of traditional media and its agenda-setting process. However, caste and caste-based segregation continue to haunt Dalits while dealing with online activism. Any attempt by Dalits to increase their condition in society can be meaningful only when people, who believe in equality and justice, must give unwavering support for their interventions on social networking sites. Thus the study concludes that despite having its constraints, Dalits have been successfully using multiple social media platforms and asserting themselves to be self-confident, realistic, optimistic, and belligerent in fighting against the age-old social injustice.

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