



Media *and* Marginality

*Inclusion, Exclusion and
Representation*

PETER LANG

Edited by
Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo and V. Vijay Kumar

Foreword by
Stephen D. McDowell

This book delves into the complex relationship between media and marginality, by critically examining the evolving discourse on inclusion, exclusion, and representation of marginalized communities. It explores the issues concerning women, gender, Dalits, Muslims, Tribals, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and communities such as the Khasi, Bifran, and other ethnic and religious minorities from a marginal perspective, enriching media scholarship with an interdisciplinary approach. Drawing insights from political science, economics, sociology, cultural studies, social psychology, women's studies, history, and anthropology, the chapters engage with contemporary literature and debates. It features contributions from eminent academicians and scholars to help bridge theoretical frameworks with real-world media practices. The book will serve as a valuable resource for undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, and postdoctoral research. It also aligns with modern curricula in media and cultural studies making it essential for students, researchers, and scholars seeking a deeper understanding of media's role in shaping marginalized narratives.

Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo is an Assistant Professor at the School of Communications, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. With over sixteen years of experience in teaching, research, and industry, he has made notable contributions to media and communication studies. In addition to co-editing this text, he is the co-editor of the book *Media and Marginalized Voices: Women & LGBTQIA+ Community* (2025) and has published 18 research articles in International journals, covering various aspects of the field. Additionally, he has actively engaged in academic discourse by presenting more than 26 research papers at prestigious conferences in India and abroad.

V. Vijay Kumar is an Associate Professor and the Dean of the School of Communications at XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. A seasoned mass communication professional and media educator, he brings over two decades of experience spanning academia and industry. With sixteen years of industry expertise in audio-visual content development, supervision, and management, he has honed his skills in media production. As an active researcher, he has an extensive publication record in reputed academic journals and has made significant scholarly contributions to media, communication, and leisure studies. His recent editorial work includes the volume *Media and Marginalized Voices: Women and LGBTQIA+ Community* (2025), which highlights critical perspectives on inclusivity and representation.

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To all marginalized communities across the globe.

Declaration

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Foreword



The questions raised in the investigations assembled for this book address not just media and marginality but also tackle core and larger issues about the role of the media in society.

The media is sometimes portrayed as a mirror of society. If so, what are we reflecting upon in our societies? A quote from Stuart Hall pushes this further and in a different direction, ‘The media do not simply mirror society, they help shape it.’ How are the media treatments of marginal groups shaping societies?

In examining media and marginality, the chapters here tap into some very significant ongoing debates. They also advance this area of research by contributing unique insights, both in the cases and questions considered here, and the ways in which these cases are treated.

‘Marginality’ is shown to be social and political conditions that are multi-dimensional, with different forms and processes of exclusion layered on each other. There is much more to be said here, but these chapters highlight some important insights about marginality. Exclusion in most cases is not just an oversight because a specific social group is small. Marginality also arises from a set of processes in which these conditions are reinforced. As the focus of chapters here shows, the experience of marginality is generated not only by different social, political, economic, and cultural practices but also by media practices.

The collection here raises questions about both exclusion and representation. If non-majority groups are covered in the media, what is the type of coverage or representation? De and Thakur examine such processes in

Northeast India, while Khan examines media and the Khasi community in Bangladesh. Oparaugo looks at media portrayals of Biafra in Nigerian media in a parallel vein. Aydemir examines how Turkish comedy portrayals create 'other' representations.

The focus on media and marginality highlights an important set of questions. These are questions and people that are often overlooked in social and political analysis that focus on the centre of society and key actors, institutions and decision processes.

In multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries that are examined here, the number of marginal groups starts to add up. The 'centre' that claims the national agenda and national culture is sometimes smaller than it claims to be or is perceived to be.

The chapters here help us to recognize a series of core challenges to creating a media sphere more reflective of a diverse range of voices and perspectives in society. This is not a simple nut to crack.

Examining the media relationships with marginal groups in society raises a core challenge of constitutional democracy in large societies. Majority rule sets as a standard 50 percent plus one for decision-making in some cases, whereas in other cases, it refers to the group with the largest plurality or group of votes. Constitutional democracies combine majority decision-making with institutions upholding the rule of law for all citizens so that, ideally, individual rights and small group rights remain protected. Kumar discusses models of media and society as well as normative claims.

While media creators and outlets can, in theory, construct and relay stories about any group or individual, in practice the choices about coverage and the composition of the media agenda may reflect the perspectives of larger and dominant groups and related audiences. Part of these dynamics may relate to who participates in producing news media. For instance, Abbas examines gender differences in media portrayals and gender divides in media occupations as instances of these types of dynamics.

Alongside political understandings shared among dominant groups lie economic imperatives and incentives. Private sector news media organizations may be funded by advertising and subscription revenues. It is a challenge for media producers to get past 'effective demand', services that people want and also have the capacity to pay for. Firms may create media services for cultural segments where there are a sufficiently large number

of audience members to provide a revenue stream through advertising or subscriptions. Audience size and wealth may provide constraints on the resources available for media creation and distribution.

Alternative media uses have been and can be part of the steps to address marginality. The ideal roles of news media and creative media expressions should offer pathways to bring light to injustice, to hold the powerful to account, to make processes of exclusion more transparent and to treat all fairly.

There are also stories of agency and action here as well. The steps to create news, cultural and entertainment expressions are not just driven by economic goals. Active and engaged persons of many groups want to tell their stories to members of their communities and to those who are part of broader national and international communities. Saha and Rodrigues provide examples of Dalit media, and Shaw examines indigenous media. Mondal, Bhattacharjee, Mukherjee, and Roy examine the media role in providing more positive portrayals of LGBTQIA+ community. Azeem also discusses the representation and examines the exclusion, self-categorization, social identity of religious and ethnic minorities in media across globe.

There are numerous possible roles of media, sometimes reinforcing social, economic, political and religious assumptions, power structures, and hierarchies, and sometimes telling more complete and balanced stories and challenging widely shared perceptions.

These chapters address numerous cases and relationships. They can help build a conversation and hopefully a debate on these important issues. The collection offers a comprehensive approach to research on these topics. The chapters also raise questions about what the role of the media should be in light of these challenges.

I have learned a lot in reading these chapters. Thank you to Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo and Vijay Kumar for bringing this together. They point to areas that deserve further attention, research and debate.

Stephen D. McDowell

Assistant Provost

John H. Phipps Professor of Communication
College of Communication and Information
Florida State University, United States of America.

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Like many other media and communication academics, we first encountered the issues and concerns of *media and marginality* during our post-graduation days, followed by doctoral studies and, subsequently, in our professional career as well. The exploration, learning and discussions during those times have helped us to frame most of our work since then. It is a genuine honour to be involved in this book project dealing with issues of *marginalized* communities.

This book would not have been possible without a group of academics and their contributions. We have incurred a huge debt of gratitude to the chapter contributors of this book spread across the globe, whose diligence, competence, and professionalism have made what is undoubtedly a challenging project an exciting and learning experience. We wish to thank all the authors of this edited volume: Abdur Razzaque Khan, Ali Saha, Amit Kumar, Anita A. Azeem, Bhaswati Roy, Chibuike Nnamdi Oparaugo, Kajal Shaw, Mustafa Aydemir, Niloy Kumar Bhattacharjee, Priyam Basu Thakur, Sandip Mukherjee, Sangita De, Shirin Abbas, Somashri Mondal, and Usha Manchanda Rodrigues for their willingness to participate in this project. The chapters in this edited volume are unique in that they touch on many areas of *media and marginality*. The authors' unique contributions have made it possible to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the interdisciplinary arena.

This book has been long in the making due to a robust review process, and we are also indebted to several people and institutions individually in so many ways for this project. More specially, we express our sincere gratitude to Dr Stephen Mc Dowell for his *Foreword*. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr Daya Kishan Thussu, Dr Biswajit Das, Dr Sundeep R. Muppidi, Dr S. Arulchelvan, Dr Athikho Kaisii and Dr Sugata Roy for their intellectual support while we were planning this edited volume. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewers and referees of Peter Lang, who provided constructive feedback that helped us to shape our thoughts. We acknowledge

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Jyoti Ranjan Sahoo & V. Vijay Kumar

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Contents

JYOTI RANJAN SAHOO & V. VIJAY KUMAR	
Chapter 1	Media, Margin and Marginality: An Introduction 1
PART I Media, Marginalized and Representation 29	
SANGITA DE & PRIYAM BASU THAKUR	
Chapter 2	Media, Representation and Marginality of Northeast India 31
ALI SAHA & USHA MANCHANDA RODRIGUES	
Chapter 3	Alternative Media Representations of Dalit Voices 53
ABDUR RAZZAQUE KHAN	
Chapter 4	Media, Politics and Marginalization of the Khasi Community in Bangladesh 77
SHIRIN ABBAS	
Chapter 5	Media, Women and Marginalization: A Perspective on Gender Parity and Representation 105
CHIBUIKE NNAMDI OPARAUGO	
Chapter 6	(Mis)Representation of Biafra in the Media 127

PART II Media, Marginalized and Exclusion	147
AMIT KUMAR	
Chapter 7 Commercial Norms and Social Exclusion of Media in India	149
SOMASHRI MONDAL, NILOY KUMAR BHATTACHARJEE, SANDIP MUKHERJEE & BHASWATI ROY	
Chapter 8 Role of Media in Transforming the Workplace and Promoting LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Industry in India	173
KAJAL SHAW	
Chapter 9 From the Margins to Centre: The Rise of Indigenous Media in India	203
MUSTAFA AYDEMIR	
Chapter 10 Gender and the Discriminatory Construction of the Male Figure in Turkish Comedy Films	229
ANITA A. AZEEM	
Chapter 11 Media and Minorities: An Analysis of Exclusion, Self-Categorization and Social Identity	253
Notes on Contributors	275
Index	289

Chapter 1 Media, Margin and Marginality: An Introduction

Human society is diverse and integrated with multi-culture, language, race, class, religion, colour and ethnicity. It cannot be assumed that ethnic, religious, linguistic, speech communities and sexual minorities enjoy equality in various spectrums of life. These communities are on the verge of marginalization due to their unequal status and positions (Louis, 2000; Cox & Roy, 2001). Discrimination, deprivation and exclusion are prevalent among marginalized communities since these communities dwell in the marginal space or periphery of the society. Various literatures suggest that they are not only historically, structurally and culturally deprived but also unable to access the resources and opportunities made available by the nation, state and society (Xaxa, 2008; Mishra, 2010). To understand the complexities of the experience of marginalized communities regarding their process of inclusion and exclusion, one may look at different socio-cultural, economic and cultural perspectives. They are not only deprived of access to equal opportunities but also unequally treated as compared to other diverse communities of society. In the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, the consumption of communication and culture varies from person to person and group to group. Thus, the process of social change among different clusters depends upon the nature of media consumption (Ravindran, 2021). Therefore, some groups live in a highly mediated environment, while others live in a traditional mediated environment (Suyadi, 2005). So, media has affected every part of the world, irrespective of social groups and their habitats. However, the digital divide perpetuates marginal communities and makes them further marginalized. This introductory chapter explores the possibility

and the embedded relation between media and marginalized communities; this may offer the necessary background and explanation of how contemporary media makes religious, linguistic, ethnic minorities and speech communities further disadvantaged, deprived and marginalized.

Margin and Marginality

Social scientists broadly define *margin* and *marginal* as those who experience deprived conditions due to social, historical, environmental, economic and cultural factors (Pearlman, 2002; Turner & Young, 2007). It is assumed that a group of people remained in the margin due to their geographical conditions, historical reasons and structural factors. Other scholars argued that origin, habitations, religion, caste and ethnicity are critical factors for a community experiencing marginalization (Raj, 2016; Kharshiing, 2020). The Indian society eke out an existence with diverse communities. Each community continues to be culturally heterogeneous and distinct from each other. These communities relatively hold varied cultures or ways of life. India is the seventh largest country by area and the most populous country in the world, where various marginalized communities live in hill stations, slums and undeveloped areas. They experience different forms of marginality. Those communities tend to be in border areas to face their potential dwellings and poor socio-economic conditions (Nevell, 1999; Hooks, 2000). Different communities in India struggle to access equal resources and opportunities in the health, environment and education sectors. Therefore, the *margin* is defined based on their history, upbringings, occupations, caste, habitats, dwellings, peripheral locations and conditions.

The community at the centre is considered to be advantaged, but those dwelling at the periphery are more and less likely to be economically and socially marginalized. People at the margin of society are at greater risk of marginalization as they are less likely to participate in governance, politics and public discourses (Horning, 2004). Not only do they often fail to participate, but socio-economic conditions also compel them to remain

beyond all spheres of their daily life. Communities dwelling at the periphery are marginal due to their geographical boundaries, and historical and structural reasons. During pre-historic, historical and post-colonial periods, scientists identified the disadvantaged communities generally fallen with three broader areas of their life, for example ecological, economic and socio-political (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987). Mehretu et al. (2000) mention that the ecological margin is a geographical place in which the community finds difficulty in accessing opportunities and surviving in complex situations. Social margin is a process by which society creates the socio-economic conditions and disadvantages. Collateral margin is where individuals or communities are considered marginalized based on their geographic locations and proximity to other individuals or communities in which they live. Economic margin has often been experienced relative to the lack of financial resources of the individuals. It is commonly assumed that economic conditions may not be sustained.

Marginality is an intricate situation of detriment that causes individuals and communities to go through the process of vulnerability. Various factors contribute to the vulnerabilities as they face disadvantages such as environmental, ethnic, cultural, social, political and economic (Mehretu et al., 2000). The social systems of individuals and communities are historically linked with their context of marginality. Marginal communities have less control over the resources. This results in making them handicapped in delving contribution to society. Various forms of marginality are also prevalent in society. Goetze (1976) defines marginality in terms of power and social relations. The existence of marginal communities seems to depend on their peripheral positions, which are uncontrolled as part of social systems. The unchecked power structures in the social system led to the marginalization of the community.

Generally, people are deprived of socio-political participation when their behaviour falls beyond society's rules or norms (Shields, 1991, cited in Mehretu et al., 2000). Scholars and social scientists have commonly identified marginal groups based on specific indicators. Socio-economic roles play a more significant role in empowering marginal communities. They tend to become marginal since they do not fulfil their responsibilities due to social pressure (Welbourn, 1981). Marginality also can be seen in terms

of gender differentiation. Even in relatively small societies, social relations can create gender inequality regarding geography and social roles. Among others, the leading author's view on gender marginality is:

The work of men is seen as more valuable than that of women. Men clear trees, fence land and plant certain crops. Which they see as creating improvements and capital. Meanwhile, women undertake repetitive tasks with little social prestige: raising pigs, making and breaking down compost mounds, weeding and harvesting. In this case, a large part of the population is marginalized because of the socially defined value of its contribution, even though it provides the basis of the economy. (Allen & Crittenden, 1987)

Regarding the production of knowledge, some eminent social scientists discuss the concept of marginality since it remains one of the most complicated relationships between the margin and the centre. One of the scholars further explains:

Marginality is much more than a site of deprivation. It is also a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. Understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited and colonized people. (Hooks, 1990)

Similarly, Minh-hai (1991) calls *marginality* – one of the tools of resistance. In this context, the author defines it as the *irreducibility of the margin*. This majorly indicates the relationship between the margin and the centre. Individuals and groups experience marginality throughout the life due to economic and political oppressions. To contextualize marginality, the author argues that a person whose identities, associations, experiences and associations are peripheralized. Thus, margins can be understood as the proverbial centre of an experience from its periphery. Marginality is also defined as one whose primary assumption is experienced and it exists at many different levels of society, such as caste, class and occupation (Dickie-Clark, 1966). The fact is that indigenous women get further marginalized due to colonial and historical aboriginal representations. They faced double marginalization, being from a margin within the margin.

Similarly, most of India's tribal population is concentrated in the Northeastern and central regions of the country, which are geographically and culturally backward and dwelling in marginal spaces (Kaisii,

2014). Regarding social and economic development, their problems are different from region to region and within groups. Thus, they have been subjected to societal exploitation and deprivation. Marginality is an embodied experience affecting many people across the globe. The process and forms of marginality seem diverse and exist across countries, nations, societies, regions, religion, caste, ethnicity and gender. Particularly in India, Dalits [untouchables or scheduled caste], Adivasis [tribals or scheduled tribe], women, Muslim minorities, Christians, sexual minorities, people with disabilities, etc., are considered to be most vulnerable and suffering from various forms of marginality not only from early periods but contemporary times as well.

There are various forms of marginality in society. Perlman (2002) described that social marginal is determined based on the lack of accessibility and exposure to mass media, lack of access to urban resources, internal disorganizations, lack of internal social organization, and lack of cohesion. Cultural marginality is defined in terms of cultural traditionalism, such as an enclave of rural parochialism, empathy, fatalism and deference to authority. A culture of poverty is understood as reaction, perpetuation and adaptation of deprivation. Economic marginality considers economic deprivation in terms of lack of access to resources, such as employment, income, consumption, infrastructure work, ethic education, job, training, entrepreneurial values and many more. Similarly, political marginality is defined as political apathy not integrated into political life, such as internal political structures, political interest, saliency, information electoral participation, direct political action and use of administrative channels. Another type of political marginality is political radicalism, which indicates alienation, demand for structural changes, class consciousness and nationalism due to frustration and social disorganization that is prone to leftist radicalism (Perlman, 2002).

Cultural marginality need not necessarily give rise to frustration, as is so commonly supposed. The marginal society may develop a new culture providing norms, behaviour patterns and goals. It offers them an adequate measure of security. But, two sets of values conflict, where significant aspects of the impinging culture as elite accepts. They are defined as incompatible with the indigenous culture; thereby, frustration leads to cultural

marginality. In terms of language, it symbolizes values, the environment, culture and identity. Society, at large, conceives and practices diverse languages. Communities that only have unitary language may suffer in accessing opportunities due to a lack of knowledge in various languages. It is well to note that symbolization of this kind is mainly due to conscious valuation or assessment on the part of users of languages. A community's identity depends on its language, but its non-recognition may lead to experience marginalization.

Marginalization

An individual or a group within the larger society experiences marginalization through social systems and processes (Mullaly, 2007). The function of individuals is excluded from the prevalent systems, thereby limiting the opportunities for survival in society. In other words, an individual who experiences marginalization is excluded from a meaningful participation in society. In the case of community marginalization, individuals or groups are denied or excluded from availing the benefits or welfare schemes accessible to them. Not only they are refrained from welfare benefits and public participation but they also access limited opportunities. In fact, the individuals' and communities' fundamental rights are denied. According to sociologists, marginalization comes from the lack of participation and historical, structural and cultural deprivation (Mullaly, 2007; Xaxa, 2008). Communities continue to suffer in accessing equal opportunities and availability of resources, and their identity is being further questioned. The majority of the social groups in India continue to remain culturally and socially marginalized.

The aboriginal communities lost their land and were displaced due to the influence of colonialism in the past. They are even excluded from participation in the labour market. As a result, they even lost their basic rights and values. Various communities continued to be marginalized as they experience societal inequalities and exploitations (Yee, 2005). Women are marginalized despite their higher positions in the public and private

sectors. Feminists argue that men and women should equally participate in the labour force. Post-liberalization, privatization and structural forces aggravate poverty and keep individuals at the margins of society. Sewpaul (2006) argues that local cultures and traditions are being eradicated due to the migration and displacement of the locals. Globalization and capitalism keep the community distanced from equal participation and development. Further, it brings them to the edge of society.

Mullaly (2007) argues that the social problems of individuals are deeply connected with the larger social structure in society, causing various forms of oppression and resulting in marginalization. The dominant group, holds higher positions, is unable to understand the subjective experience i. e. cultural, social and historical roots of the oppressed group. These structural factors contribute to further oppression and marginalization (Mullaly, 2007). Marginalization can be neither quantified nor even defined; rather, it signifies a situation in which a section of the population is pushed to the margins (Cox & Roy, 2001).

There are many groups, individuals and communities get marginalized in most parts of the world, not only due to their social strata but also the lower status and positions of ethnic, linguistic and religious minority communities. In developing countries like India, women, children and other weaker sections like Dalits, Tribals and minority communities also tend to be marginalized both physically and mentally. Women face discrimination at every stage of their lives, whether it is an issue of female infanticide, widow remarriage, illiteracy, inequality in their status, role and decision-making, and so on so forth. Similarly, various castes and communities experience marginalization on various grounds such as corruption, environmental sustainability, disparities, discrimination, injustice and exploitation. For every stage of a disadvantaged group, the hierarchy of inequality, disparities and discrimination exists within the group and between the groups, contributing to the degree of marginalization.

In India, the LGBTQIA+ community has struggled over a long period to get justice as far as identity and affirmative measures are concerned. They lack equal opportunities compared to others. The plight of Dalits is also not much improved due to discrimination, untouchability and other issues like depression and suppression in a caste-hierarchical society like

India. The lack of equal opportunity has further marginalized Muslims, Christians and other deprived communities. Discrimination, deprivation and exclusion are also different forms of marginalization that are broadly prevalent in society. The process of deprivation and exclusion is also an experience and it persists in the culture and social structure of the marginalized community. The varieties of social exclusion in terms of new poverty, democratic legal and political exclusion, non-material disadvantage and exclusion from the *minimally acceptable way of life* are seen as a form of marginalization. One of the scholars describes:

Marginalization is a cultural exclusion in terms of exclusion from family and the community, exclusion from the welfare state, poverty, lack of participation in politics, economic life and state of deprivation, detachment from work relations and exclusion from the labour market. (Peace, 2001)

The other minority groups coming from ethnic, linguistic and religious communities like drug addicts, HIV/AIDS patients and people with disabilities are socially excluded from accessing their opportunities, and their minority status is claimed as a form of marginalization. Women are marginalized because of the structural and systemic societal perception and gender discrimination. Women are also marginalized due to three recognized factors: economic situation, social position and political power. Inequalities are inherent and persist even in traditional social structures based on caste, community, religion and class since these influence women's status (Desai & Thakker, 2001). Women were subjugated for centuries, which creates gender disparities and exclusion; thus, they experience marginalization (Dasgupta et al., 2012). This is a global phenomenon where gender inequality prevails in a patriarchal society where males are considered to be superior. Women within the lower caste and communities are double marginalized as they are socially deprived and unequally treated in comparison to men in society irrespective of their region, religion, caste, community, language, ethnicity, etc. Similarly, in connection with society at large, Hooks (2000) describes that the varied experience of leading women creates exclusionary social bonding among women, which can be seen as *common oppression*. Thus, the internalized oppression among

women of colour and intolerance for women's right to make choices about their sexuality are considered as deprived or underprivileged. Women of different castes, creeds and colours are kept alienated from participating in the feminist movement and being discriminated against on these social grounds. Women's suppression and oppression have become a global phenomenon since experiencing racial discrimination and colonialism (Ghosh, 2004). It has further created gender discrimination, inequality and exploitation that has led to marginalization.

Similarly, minority communities, especially Muslims, are not far behind other marginalized communities. They are also marginalized due to suffering from religious indifferences, exploitation, deprivation and poverty (Robinson, 2007). Muslim minorities are backward in terms of their vulnerability and discrimination, irrespective of rural and urban regions. Evidence suggests that the prolonged religious violence in India played a significant role in causing social and economic vulnerability among minorities (Mishra & Singh, 2002; Razzack & Gumber, 2002). Discrimination, violence and social exclusion have further depressed Muslim aspirations and pushed them to the margins. It indicates that Muslims in India are on the margins of the economic, social and political structures. Similarly, Muslim women are disadvantaged not by religion alone but by a complex of forces, including class and gender. In India, communal conflicts and riots involving Hindus and Muslims have a long history. The term 'communalism' essentially carries a negative connotation of how communalism was socio-politically constructed in colonial North India, thereby creating marginalization among both communities in India.

Marginalization can also be seen as a form of caste discrimination in which Dalits in India face social discrimination (Anand, 1970). Dalits are different from the other castes in India due to their education and geographical, cultural and social existence. The marginalization of Dalits remains in all spheres of their life, violating their fundamental rights (Kumar, 2011). Dalits are oppressed by socio-economic and political disability. India is a society in which a substantial section of the population was discriminated against by Brahminical Hinduism and subjected to humiliation, even treated as untouchables. Protesting this, the communities have rearticulated their identity as Dalits (literally, the oppressed). An essential aspect of hierarchy

associated with caste, apart from discrimination and oppression, is humiliation. Within an interdisciplinary framework, Guru (2000) mentions that through humiliation, the state also discriminates against Dalit Christians, as they are excluded from the privileges of protective discrimination that are extended to the scheduled castes. However, in some states of India like Andhra Pradesh (a southern state in India), they are included under the OBC (Other Backward Classes). This community also are traditionally discriminated against and suppressed by entrenched dominant communities as a way out of discrimination and suppression (Subham, 2022).

Unlike scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes are also suffering from diverse cultural issues like ethnicity, language and identity. They are considered to be socially and economically disadvantaged due to their peripheral habitation and lack of access to and participation in mainstream development. For ages, tribal societies have had their own cultural and religious belief system (Louis, 2000). But modern, globalized and technological society find their religion as *animistic* and *derogative*. Before the *others*, tribal religious life was looked down upon, and this made them further inherently marginalized. Their history, as closely integrated with the colonial system, has created and brought tribal communities into the fold of exploitation, subjugation and marginalization. Tribals are not only marginalized due to external forces, rather internal, structural and cultural factors also deprive them. Thus, they continue to remain marginalized over a period of time. Tribals, in general, are shunted away from the possession of land during pre-colonial periods. In fact, their identity, culture and religion have been dispossessed during pre-colonial and post-colonial periods as well. There were long debates on the issues of tribal identity in terms of their traditional occupations, lifestyle and indigenous culture over a period of time (Xaxa, 2008). They are still considered to be marginalized due to the non-identification of official language, non-recognition of cultural traditions and lack of tribal identity.

Marginalization inhibits a person, a group, a section or a community from enjoying rights, privileges, opportunities and resources commonly available to society members. Tribal communities in India have been alienated from the development processes and their own dwellings due to various historical and developmental factors. Hence, they are pushed to the margin

of society. As historically marginalized, the recent development processes tend to create social spaces of inequality, tribal communities face marginalization virtually in every sphere of social life. Similarly, tribal communities, which experienced isolation from mainstream Hinduism, were converted to Christianity by the missionaries. However, Robinson and Kujur (2010) found that the Dalit and tribal Christian communities are not only marginalized but also negatively represented. They argue:

Dalits and tribal Christians are characterized more by their deficiencies in relation to the dominant framework, which is elite and brahminical. Interestingly, these independent expressions of faith are not only adequately treated in the literature, but also marginalized by mainstream Christianity, regardless of the denomination.

Tribal communities converted to Christianity have been constrained and opposed by majoritarians, as it seems that Christians face double marginalization. The expression of sub-nationalism in Northeast India is different in that tribal ethnicity is an intractable issue there and insurgency has been a perennial problem for Northeastern states of India (Kikhi & Gautam, 2023). Nag (2002) views ethnicity and insurgency in the region as a reaction of communities to the experience of marginality. In other words, the tribes in this region also differ from their counterparts in other parts of India in different ways. Due to more or less Hindu influence and adoption of English education in the recent past, tribals are more advanced in terms of literacy rate and absorption of the modern economy compared to other counterparts elsewhere in India (Kaisii, 2014).

Marginalization strongly prevails in society and has been experienced by various communities such as tribals, Dalits, Muslims, women, LGBTQIA+ and other minority groups. Discrimination and disparities have prevailed and have been entrenched in society since ancient history. The perpetuation of Dalit's plight has increased manifold due to discrimination and untouchability. Muslims also face double marginalization such as religious discrimination, inequality, indifferences and territorial issues. Various literature suggest that marginal communities, irrespective of their states and social condition, have been experiencing a hierarchy of inequality, disparities, discrimination and differences that further contribute to the degree of marginalization.

Media, Margin and Marginalization

Media plays an important role in modern democratic society in educating, entertaining and generating awareness among the common people. More often, it plays a balanced role and is considered to be a vehicle for opinion formation. In the globalized and technocratic society, media plays an important role in portraying images generally accepted by individuals and groups. However, very few individuals evaluate mediated information carefully and critically. Many of them also neglect the messages being a common reader, listener or viewer.

Various media scholars, such as Sikandar (1994) and Trajanoski (2011), argue that there is a symbiotic relationship between media and marginalized communities from varied perspectives. Marxist scholars argue that media is an institution concerned with the distribution of power in society. Few theories become a part of the domination of specific interests over others. Therefore, the media are invariably seen as a significant player in the ideological struggle. The media perpetuates dominant ideologies. Most communication theories are concerned with mass media primarily because of their role in disseminating dominant ideologies and their potential for expressing alternative and oppositional ideas. But, according to other critical scholars, media are part of the culture industry since they create symbols and images where ideology leads to oppress marginalized groups. The relationship between media and margin was drawn and examined broadly from a theoretical perspective. Marxism theory critically examines the relations between mass media and society (McQuail, 1983). Marxist scholars insist that mass media play a crucial role in maintaining or reproducing class and position in a capitalist society. Capitalist society is characterized by class domination. Mass media functions as a social tool that aims to fight the conflicting views of various classes within society. However, the media is highly influenced by the interests of the dominant class. It is believed that the class that owns the means of production also has dominant control over the production of culture as well. Though media exercises a certain level of autonomy in a society characterized by a capitalist economy, the theorists recognize that

the media professionals who produce the news are highly socialized into the dominant culture. Their views reflect the bias in favour of the dominant culture rather than producing democratic views. Media reflection of society is gradually diminishing since it lacks diverse participation, representation and alternative viewpoints in society. In this case, media fails to serve as a promoter of social change and instead acts as a tool for reproducing the status quo. Thus, it can be said that media is highly influenced by the owners of the means of production and society, as the capitalist economy characterizes it.

Similarly, feminist media theory deals with the relationship between media and marginalization from a marginal perspective. However, media systems have often been criticized by feminist scholars for perpetuating gender inequalities, reinforcing stereotypes and marginalizing women's voices (Zoonen, 1994). This theory examines how media constructs, propagates and reinforces gender norms and power dynamics. This also tends to criticize the underlying biases, sexist ideologies and stereotypes in media representations. It not only identifies the power relations within the media systems but also scrutinizes the representation of women in media content. Media content is thought to be an active constructor of femininity (Itzin, 1986). The women's stereotypical representation in media reflects the reality of women's lives and reinforces marginalization. Besides, feminist theory analyses the ownership and control of media institutions that may lead to the reinforcement of biased exclusionary practices. Diversifying ownership and decision-making positions in the media will ensure a diverse range of voices. The unequal power and gender positions in media create and dominate marginalized voices (Krijnen, 2017). For instance, biased editorial decisions and story selection often marginalize women's perspectives and emphasize male voices. Media consumption shapes and reinforces gendered ideologies. This helps to resist the media's gender biases that contribute to breaking existing power structures and promote the visibility and representation of diverse women's experiences (Steiner, 2014). Marginalized voices, such as those of women of colour and LGBTQIA+, are amplified and represented with diverse perspectives. This theory dramatically contributes to and encourages a shift in societal attitudes, norms and values towards a greater perspective.

In post-independence India, there was a massive turn in print industries. After the period of liberalization, there was tremendous growth in electronic media like TV, cross-media and transnational media. The flow of new and digital media came to the limelight and the onslaught of globalization failed to visualize the socio-cultural problems rooted in culture, language, identity, etc. However, community radio and media created new forums for local cultural identity (Suryadi, 2005). The expansion of news and information took a massive turn as it was accessible to the city and village. Undoubtedly, media has expanded its reach and availability as it has gone beyond the limits of the boundary. However, it has failed to provide diverse information and news to ensure equity, equality and social justice (Kaisii, 2014). The media has shunted away communities at the margin or marginal space. This is not only the question of access, but the media has limited coverage for marginalized communities. Media has little coverage of the culture, status and identity of tribals, Dalits, women and minorities as it is believed to be due to vested political interest and profit motives (Kaisii, 2014). Media covers the issues of marginalized communities when problems are intended to be covered. The media rarely takes initiative in the support of marginalized communities in India. The lack of portrayal and representation of marginalized communities in media makes them further deprived.

To understand the process of social inclusion and exclusion of tribal communities and its relation with media, it is observed that the media has hardly played a role in providing more comprehensive coverage of the development of tribal communities. Their socio-cultural and religious life are also less represented (Sahoo, 2017). In case of any distortions, incidents, violence or conflicts in the tribal region, the media covers the issues. Mass media has little attention in covering news debates to generate new public opinion and highlight developmental features for tribal communities. It is also reported that everyday life and common issues of interest are less likely to be covered by regional and mainstream media. In case of rapes, crimes, violence or any socio-political and cultural incidents, particularly in the tribal region, the media has covered them despite having negative consequences in the society. The extensive coverage of media on tribal, their culture and heritage, language, ethnicity and everyday life can help them empower and feel them to be part of mainstream society (Subramanyam & Rammohan, 2006). Isolated and marginalized groups like Santhals, one

of the largest Santali-speaking tribal communities in India, face constraints in accessing information and communication. They have a limited voice in participation in the public sphere and decision-making processes; thus, they belong to the culture of silence (Saik, 2000).

Contextualizing the relationship between media and marginalization among marginalized communities like Muslim minorities, Dalits, LGBTQIA+ community, racial and ethnic minority groups, and newspapers take pains to write about and for the marginalized communities (Trajanoski, 2011). The vernacular language press pays little attention compared to the mainstream language media. These newspapers are controlled by higher classes/sections of the society. It is less likely to capture and often displays crude prejudice in reporting about minorities and other marginalized communities. And, there is yet another category, mouthpieces of communal activities like *Samna*, which deliberately project distorted images of minorities (Sikandar, 1994). The misrepresentation of various marginalized communities such as Dalits, OBC communities, tribes and Muslims in the media consciously fails to maintain diversity and plurality. Lack of diverse representation of marginalized communities¹ in the newsroom is noticeable. One of the scholars argues that there are minor voices visible in newspapers, especially among lower castes (Cooper, 1996).² Many violent incidents against Dalits had taken place in post-independent India. For instance, the *Keelavenmani* incident³ and *Rohit Vermulas* suicide case have

- 1 Report on ownership pattern of print media, a study conducted by CSDS, New Delhi (2006) found that out of the 315 key decision makers surveyed from thirty-seven Delhi-based (Hindi and English) publications and television channels, almost ninety per cent of decision makers in the English language print media and seventy-nine per cent in television were from the upper caste.
- 2 Another study on Cooper, an African American and the then New Delhi bureau chief of *The Washington Post*, noted in the mid-1990s, found that lower caste in terms of caste, colour, creed and race have less representation in the media and were discriminated in terms of lack of promotion.
- 3 Moreover, fourty-two Dalit people burnt alive by the caste Hindus in 1968 were reported in the *Dinamani* with the heading of *Clashes between Farmers*. This issue was seen by the media as a class issue, but after many years it was redefined by the Dalit parties as caste oppression. The media failed to see the violence against Dalits from the perspective of untouchability or human rights.

proved the media's bias against the Dalit community. Even after the 1990s, some critical Dalit issues⁴ have been negatively reported. News reporting masked caste realities,⁵ and less representation of Dalits in Indian media results in exclusion, further marginalizing them (Kumar, 2009). Similarly, in the case of Dalits' inclusion in the media industry, it is less visible in media content and leadership positions (Jeffrey, 2001; Balsubhramanium, 2011). It can be argued that the underrepresentation of Dalits in Indian media leads to Dalit's exclusion, and the media is losing its social responsibilities in a democratic society.

The issues of minority communities like Muslims⁶ and Christians are hardly shown and covered by the mass media. The voices of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs get marginalized as neither their voices are heard through the press nor their issues are presented. Muslims are also less visible in the media and hardly own or hold the top positions in the mainstream Indian media. Henceforth, it has created and silenced social groups that can firmly counter its communal, class and caste prejudices (Sikandar, 1994; Engineer, 1999) if, at all, minorities are in the news for the wrong reasons. Sometimes, biased reporting of minority communities with overemphasis on the problems rather than as legitimate citizens whose grievances are to be addressed by the secular, democratic state puts minorities at a huge disadvantage (Saeed, 2013). There is rising concern over the role of media in creating anti-Muslim rhetoric. Farouqui (2008), in his critique of *Muslim and Media Images-News versus Views*, questions that Muslims have been

- 4 As Gorringe (2006) said, in the Tirunelveli massacre (seventeen Dalits were brutally murdered in a police attack on 23 July 1999), the media tried to convince the people to believe that the victims of the incident died by drowning in the river and not by the attack of police.
- 5 The Khairlanji massacre also shows the ugly face of the media towards the Dalit issues, in which DNA was the first newspaper to carry the news but that was already a good eight days after the atrocity. Some Hindi language newspapers published the police version of *moral justice* without any comment on it.
- 6 Taking an example of Khalistan movement, Shah Banu movement, Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy, etc. were hardly seen by the media.

subjected to negative portrayal by the Indian media as well as Western media. The scholar found that Muslims are subjected to a negative image creation in the non-Muslim media.

Besides, various studies investigated the themes of *migration*, *terrorism* and *war* in the context of Muslims. Moreover, the meta-study shows that Muslims tend to be negatively framed, while Islam is dominantly portrayed as a violent religion (Ahmad & Matthes, 2016). In Western media, Muslims are represented as an *other alien* on a global level. After 11 September, Muslims and Islam were recognized as backward and violent traditions and faiths (Suryandari & Arifin, 2021). The Western representation of Muslims and Arabs is not a recent fabrication, but it has been operational and deep-rooted in Western conceptualization (Nazini & Kumar, 2020), ever since the first contact with Arabs and Muslims. One of the eminent scholars, Ridouani, argued that Muslims and fundamentalism are stripped of their literal meaning and granted a derogatory one, connoting mainly extremism and terrorism. The main concern focused on the analysis of the distorted images and fabricated views typically characterize the Western representation of Muslims concerning some specific incidents like the Gulf War, the bombing of Oklahoma and the bombardment of Twin Towers (Ridouani, 2011). Nurullah (2010) argues the television serial *24* portrays stereotypical images of Arabs and Muslims and aggravates the *othering process*. Besides Muslims, all other marginalized communities, such as women, Dalits, tribals, backward castes, peasants and workers experience the same and get less attention in the media (Sikandar, 1994; Engineer, 1999). Ethnic minorities were seen to be exposed to intensive exploitation due to consumer markets. There may be an enviable advantage, segregated from commercial influence, creating marginalization (Sinclair, 2009).

Mass media has not portrayed much about the positive aspects of these groups other than the negative ones in media content (Gross, 2001). The four largest racial minority groups in the United States of America – native Americans, blacks, Latinos and Asian peoples – were not extensively covered in the mass media in terms of their issues and concerns (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). Similarly, gender inequality has remained a serious concern across the globe. However, the literature suggests that there is a lack of attention to the coverage of women in mass media, whereas males receive

huge attention. This raises a critical question about the gender construction of the media and its process (Joseph & Sharma, 1994). The participation and representation of women in the public sphere have received less attention and popularity. Indian electronic media, to some extent, has given more emphasis on gender identity for both men and women. Sometimes, the media is blamed for portraying the lower status of women in the social, political, economic and legal public sphere. Media often presents the story to the public, which suppresses women in society.

Fazal (2011) argues that the media has continued to portray the traditional images of women, where the male is portrayed as individuals with specific expertise and professional skills. However, females are supposed to do household work, traditionally considered a woman's domain compared to males (Kumar & Sahoo, 2025). The commercial interests of the media have consistently diminished the female voice, further weakening and marginalizing the community (Hui & Min, 2010). The mass media, therefore, hardly provides opportunities for women to win equality with men and give full play to their potential to create a unique female brand image and realize the power of equality discourse. Similarly, popular culture, like music, has less visibility and participation among women (Barney, 2007).⁷

Various research studies on Indian popular culture highlight that women are stereotypically represented, objectively shown and unequally treated (Prasad, 2005; Roy, 2012). Even if women in soap operas are quite popular due to overrepresentation, their images are under the dominance of male characters. Mankekear (1999) examines how TV in India shaped women's place in the family, community and nation. Women played a crucial role in the realignment of class, caste, religion and politics. Her ethnographic analysis found the texture of these women's daily lives, social relationships and everyday practices have become dominant over male protagonists. Munshi (2021) argues that the era was ushered by the kind of soaps mentioned here in a positive way and comments on notions of gender and identity propagated through this means of popular culture.

7 The issue of marginalization has been taken in terms of their representation in media. Torres Strait Islander women are at the margin in terms of their less representation in music industry.

Focusing on the complex constructions of family, tradition and gender, she analyses the structure of soaps in the context of their fractured and never-ending frames and plot outlines. She argues that women are the central protagonists and become dominant over males in all these soaps; men are not necessarily always dominant in soap operas. Thus, this genre carries *feminine connotations* heavily in contemporary culture. Asian women are represented as the *other* in the communicative forms and visual communications. They have portrayed the image as erotic icons and oriental fantasy objects for visual consumption for gazing pleasure (Chen, 2013). Jaggi (2011) highlights that the female audience indulges in soaps have a *liberating experience*. Women's empowerment is thus reflected even in popular shows. Further, it is observed that women's agency has been curtailed by the media, market and patriarchal society. The private media channels and films have further exacerbated the regional, class and gender discrimination in India (Kamble & Biswal, 2023).

The mainstream media had less focus on the overall representation of the marginalized community. The social problems of these marginalized communities are hardly discussed. The disadvantaged communities and minority communities are less visible, and their voices are minimally covered in the mass media. It not only creates silence among the social groups but firmly perpetuates communal, class and caste prejudices. The question of marginalization lies at the very heart of the economic, socio-cultural and political systems of a society. It is central to relations of power and media since it is concerned with the well-being of people living in society and covers a fundamental dimension of social change, freedom and justice. The critical discussion of the marginalized communities, such as tribals, Dalits, Muslims, women, LGBTQIA+ community, other ethnic and religious minorities, and their relationship with media proves that these communities are backward, uncivilized, socially deprived and suppressed. The marginalized and minority or backward community has been further reinstated, endorsed, reinforced and regressed by contemporary mass media. It is evident that mass media not only perpetuates but further marginalizes marginalized communities.

We argue that media has a social-cultural tie in contemporary society where there is a nexus between media and the country's political systems.

The media has a close relationship with the socio-cultural and political systems of our society. Thus, media and its relationship with corporations pose potential societal threats, such as inequality, exclusion and marginalization. In contemporary society, marginalized communities seem to remain distanced due to the positive and embedded relation. To explore the fundamental aspects of social change, equity and justice among marginalized communities as a whole, it is central to understand the relations of media, power and communication from a marginal perspective.

In this context, this edited book volume examines the state and role of media and its relation with marginalized communities in countries like India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the United States of America and Turkey. Contemporary media developments, such as those mentioned previously, demonstrate that we live in an increasingly media-saturated world. The chapters included here represent theoretical and empirical studies highlighting the meaning of margin, marginality, marginalization and its relation with media in recent times. The trajectory of people's move to new and social media is a global phenomenon affecting people's daily lives worldwide. This book, titled *Media and Marginality: Inclusion, Exclusion and Representation* would like to seek an answer and find the complex relationship between the media and marginalized communities, especially from theoretical and empirical lenses and varied perspectives across globe. The primary focus of the work has remained on the marginalized voices and (mis)representations in the media scholarship in society.

The book is divided into two parts that explore various aspects of marginality among the marginalized community and its relation with different forms of media: Part I – Media, Marginalized and Representation (Chapters 2 through 6); Part II – Media, Marginalized and Social Exclusion (Chapter 7 through 11).

In Chapter 2, Sangita De and Priyam Basu Thakur highlight the media, representation and marginality of Northeast India. The authors cover that news media, being a watchdog, plays a significant role in the recognition, representation and formation of the identity of individuals and social groups. It is a long-proclaimed mundane notion that the country's mainstream news media widely neglects the coverage of the country's Northeast region. The chapter reveals that mass media mainly propagate stereotypical

images of the Northeastern region as a hostile and trouble-torn terrain considering diverse ethnic clashes. At the same time, the cultural richness and root causes of deep conflict, such as underdevelopment and lack of inclusive growth, are ignored by the mainstream media.

In Chapter 3, Ali Saha and Usha Manchandra Rodrigues examine alternative media representations of Dalit voices in India. They argue in the chapter how community media has provided an alternative space and a hub for community dialogues, social-political actions and intersections among community members aimed at alienating casteist practices and Dalit oppression. The stellar examples of community radio, such as Sangham Radio and social media hashtags like #DalitLivesMatters, demonstrate Dalit communities' resistance to the mainstream media's upper-caste hegemony. This chapter considers recent case studies of Rohith Verma from 2012 and the Hathras incident in 2020 to analyse Dalit's engagement and use of alternative media platforms.

In Chapter 4, Abdur Razzaque Khan describes the role of media, marginalization and politics in Bangladesh. It also refers to how they are interconnected as far as media coverage of the Khasi community is concerned. This chapter broadly examines the political economy of media transformation in the context of media coverage of the Khasi community of the Magurchhara incident in Bangladesh. This chapter also discusses the roles of national media, including other actors like the state and the corporation (Occidental), in Bangladesh's specific political-economic context. The chapter highlights the role of corporate journalism and the state and its relation with the marginalization of the Khasi community.

In Chapter 5, Shirin Abbas critically examines the relationship between media and gender. She makes a statistical representation of women in various media streams and their positions as compared to their male counterparts, how newsrooms bring more stories of women and the participation of women in the news making process. Besides, how media in various forms, such as news coverage by print media, broadcast media and new media, highlights gender issues. She argues that technology and its most recent innovations show that there is an ingrained gender prejudice, necessitating a more inclusive discourse. The media must take action to elevate the perspectives of underrepresented genders who work in this

field to the same level as men. This chapter tries to illuminate the concept of *the fourth power*, relating it to the contemporary representation, marginalization and role of women in the media. The critical analysis is drawn from various studies and focuses attention on the status and role of women in the media.

In Chapter 6, Chibuikwe Nnamdi Oparaugo discusses the representation of minorities in the media, focusing on the depiction and misrepresentation of Biafra in the Nigerian press. Biafra, predominantly an Igbo tribe in South Eastern Nigeria, has been widely portrayed as the country's problem, as author Chibuikwe Oparaugo highlights in this chapter. He also expresses that the region's political leaders support the media narrative due to their vested interests. The chapter describes how Biafrans have been marginalized politically and socio-economically, as well as due to media interventions and misrepresentations.

In Chapter 7, Amit Kumar questions how commercial norms define social exclusion in media. He examines the mainstream media's absence of representation of marginalized communities from a theoretical perspective. He argues that the deprived communities are less visible, and their voices are rarely heard in the mass media. Why is that so? In this context, the chapter critically evaluates six normative theories (authoritarian, soviet-union, social responsibility, libertarian, democratic participant and developmental) and attempts to locate media structure and performance in the environment in which they operate in the contemporary socio-political-economic circumstances owning the ever-evolving media landscape.

In Chapter 8, Niloy Kumar Bhattacharjee, Sandip Mukherjee, Bhaswati Roy and Somashri Mondal look at transforming the workplace and promoting the LGBTQIA+ inclusive industry in India and the role of media in bringing suitable legislation. This chapter examines both qualitatively and quantitatively the most anticipated media attention gathered by web-scraping, manual information collection and periodic upgradation from Google News India, YouTube, IMDb and social media platforms. As such, basic policy analysis is appended to the said end. Among other things, the exegesis is expected to provide the necessary impetus to the lawmakers of India to bring forth suitable legislation to promote

the inclusiveness of the LGBTQIA+ community in Indian industries in terms of employment generation and facilitation programmes as a part of workplace transformation.

In Chapter 9, Kajal Shaw documents media use among tribal communities in India. She highlights the role of community media as it takes the initiative to establish the community's existence and raise its issues. Community representation, from print media to social media and community media, has attempted to serve its community. Right from print and radio to YouTube videos, blogs, books and documentaries, tribal people themselves highlighted their issues and struggles, talking about education, agriculture and employment, among other issues. The digitally divided community has made remarkable progress in portraying its own culture through its community communicative space. In this context, the author critically examines the role of mainstream media in the development of tribal communities and how the media neglects to portray these communities, making them further marginalized.

In Chapter 10, Mustafa Aydemir looks at the gender and the discriminatory construction of the male figure in Turkish comedy films. This chapter describes the concept, issues of gender and discriminated discourses through the films of Cem Yilmaz to show how they are *othered* in comedy films. Within the study's scope, eight selected movies' content analysis was carried out on the scenes, reflecting the elements of *othering*, *exclusion* and *marginalization*.

In Chapter 11, Anita Azeem questions whether changing the media representation of ethnic minorities may decrease the levels of prejudice and discrimination that these outgroups experience. This chapter aims to understand the media consumption process and how this impacts our understanding of group dynamics and exclusion. She claims that the media represents certain segments of society in a specific manner. Further, recent research also explains how such representations impact the audience. The common patterns in the media's representation of ingroups and outgroups have been explored. Previous literatures were examined using the integrative review method to find published research on three minority group clusters, that is, people of colour, immigrants/refugees and Muslims.

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PART I

Media, Marginalized and Representation

Chapter 2 Media, Representation and Marginality of Northeast India

ABSTRACT:

The Northeastern region of India consists of eight states known for their acute geographical, ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic diversity. There are around 220 ethnic communities with almost equal numbers of dialects. While around eight per cent of the total geographical area and around four per cent of the country's total population, it is one of India's top security zones for its strategic position of sharing a 5,182 km prolonged international border with five neighbouring countries. This region has been largely considered by the respective authorities as a conflict zone and to be secured from any foreign activities ensuing a threat to the security of the state. Being a multi-ethnic region, these states have simultaneous conflicts over various issues. Since independence, acquiring individual identities, conflicts for the rights of different ethnic groups and claims of secession from India remain the central point of discussion in the Northeastern socio-political scenario. Eventually, social exclusion over the years prompted the formation of various extremist organizations and subsequent insurgent activities. As a watchdog, news media plays a significant role in the recognition, representation and formation of the identity of individuals and social groups. It is a long-proclaimed mundane notion that the country's mainstream news media widely marginalizes the Northeastern region of the country. According to the literature, the mainstream media has projected a stereotypical image of the region. Indian media largely focuses on separatism and conflict to a great extent, the detailed coverage of insurgency activities. On the other hand, developmental and socio-cultural aspects of the land have obtained a negligible presence in mainstream media space. In this context, we have conducted a meta-analysis of the concerned research papers built on conceptual and empirical evidence to determine specific tenets of representation and marginality of Northeast India in the Indian media scenario.

Keywords: Media representation, Marginalization, Stereotypes, Conflict, Insurgency, and Ethnicity

Introduction

The concept of marginalization was initially derived from the *Human Migration and the Marginal Man*, authored by Robert Park in 1928 (Dunne, 2005). The research on marginalization gained momentum in the decade of the 1960s and 1970s, mainly concerning the debate on the effects of urbanization and modernization in Latin America (Déry et al., 2012). Several significant indicators of marginality are depicted by Pelc (2017) as ‘physical remoteness (low accessibility to services and working places), ecological fragility, low population density, ethnic structure, having an underdeveloped economy, the unavailability of resources or inability to use them and isolation from political influence’. In the sociological school of thought, marginalization is closely interwoven with identity as well as social exclusion (Dennis, 2005). Sociologists define structural marginality as ‘the political, social economic powerlessness of certain disenfranchised and/or disadvantaged segments within societies’ which is a definite and inevitable ramification of the certain socio-economic structure (Billson, 2005).

Shils (1975), in his seminal book *Centre and Periphery*, explained the discourse of social distance in creating the gap between the societal centre and its margin. In the realm of the relationship between centre and margin, the socio-political and cultural exclusion of the Northeastern states of India became very pertinent in academia. In India, the Northeastern zone consists of eight states such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, which shares a vast international border with Bangladesh, Myanmar, China-occupied Tibet and Bhutan. The entire Northeast part is connected with the rest of the country only through the narrow Siliguri corridor of West Bengal (a state in Eastern India). The inhabitants of this remote forest and hilly land are mainly diverse ethnic tribals and that added a distinct cultural and lingual identity to Northeast India. The socio-cultural mosaic and historical framework intensified the separatist ideology and ethnic clashes relating to the issues of identity politics over the years. The way media, the fourth estate⁸

8 The term *fourth estate* referring to fourth pillar is often attributed to eighteenth-century British politician Edmund Burke.

of the state, represents issues of Northeast India and how it deals with the notion of otherness, alienation and identity crisis pertains to the vital point of discussion in this meta-analysis. Media here include mainstream news media with reach and access at the national, regional and local levels. Gene Glass coined the term 'meta-analysis' in the decade of the 1970s to indicate a systematic approach of research synthesis to review, interpret and compare variables out of the sets of existing literature. In recent times, it was rapidly used in the field of qualitative research, though the method was originally developed for quantitative investigation. The chapter elucidates existing literature based on conceptual and empirical research on media representation of the extraordinary *state of exception*⁹ (Agamben, 1942) after a brief explanation of the root of Northeast India in the backdrop of regional disparity.

Marginality and Northeast India: Pre and Post-independence Scenario

In ancient texts, the Northeast was illustrated as the *land of Eastern light*. The civilization of Bramhaputra valley was mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Abu'l Fazl in the sixteenth century (Bahumik, 1998). According to F. S. Downs, in the pre-colonial era, even during the period of the mighty Mughal empire, the Northeastern part was not associated with any major Indian political power (as cited in Chakraborty, 2021). In the colonial era, the first Anglo-Burma war between the East India Company and Burma was concluded by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, which protected the Ahom kingdom of Bramhaputra Valley¹⁰

- 9 A state of exception is a concept introduced in the 1920s by the German philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt based in ability of a sovereign state to go beyond the rule of law in pretext of the public good.
- 10 The Ahom Kingdom was a late medieval kingdom established in 1228 in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. It consisted of multi-ethnic communities and retained its sovereignty for 600 years fighting for its independence.

from the repeated Burmese invasion.¹¹ As a result, company rule set foot in Northeast India. By 1840, Assam and Manipur had become a part of direct British administrative control (Guha, 1977).

In 1836, Bengali was adopted as the official language in Assam by the colonial ruler. The decision to impose Bengali invoked a strong reaction among the Assamese middle class, which ushered a renaissance in Assam in the form of a literary movement. Eminent professor Maheswar Neog opined that the Christian missionaries highly patronized the literary movement among the Assamese middle-class intelligentsia. Publications such as Assamese grammar, newspapers, dictionaries, and school-books – books on science and literature – have immensely contributed to the growth of the Assamese language and literature (as cited in Mahanta, 2013). Afterwards, British rulers recognized Assamese as the official language in 1873. On the other hand, all the adjacent territories like Jaintia, Cachar, Khasi Hills, Karbi Anglong, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills, etc., were annexed with Assam. The greater Assam appeared as a separate province in 1874, excluding Manipur and Tripura (Sarmah, 2017). Before 1874, Assam was a part of Bengal province. Hence, after the separation, a Chief Commissioner was appointed in Assam under the control of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. According to Inoue (2005), the Inner Line System was enforced in 1893 ‘on the pretext of protecting minority indigenous groups in the hill areas of Assam by restricting outsider’s entry, business activities, land transactions and settlement’, which further reinforced the notion of otherization¹² in Northeast. The colonial policy rooted the seed of alienation in Northeast India. According to Mahanta, after the end of the First World War, a sense of national consciousness was penetrated by the political parties of Assam in light of the anti-British freedom struggle. However, this was mainly concentrated on ‘Asomiya Swaraj’ rather than ‘Bharatiya

11 Three Burmese invasions of Assam occurred between 1817 and 1826.

12 The concept of otherness originates from the pioneering work of the second-wave French feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Otherness seeks to inspect how majority and minority identities are constructed.

Swaraj' (Mahanta, 2013). Following the Simon Commission's¹³ (1930) recommendation, *Excluded Areas* consisted of the Northeast Frontier Tract, Naga Hills District, Lushai Hills District and North Cachar Hills District, and the Garo Hills, Mikir Hills and Khasi-Jaintia Hills were included as *Partially Excluded Areas* (Bhaumik, 2009).

Guha (1977), a historian, noted that the infiltration of immigrants, mostly landless Muslims from East Bengal, in the 1920s instigated an identity crisis among the native inhabitants. As an aftermath of the partition, Assam witnessed a refugee influx due to the massive migration of Bengali Hindus from East Pakistan that, depending on the communal situation, created an exodus (Hussain, 1995). In this ambivalence, the fear of losing their unique style of tribal life and the anti-immigration sentiment was infused among the native inhabitants.

At the time of Indian independence in 1947, the Northeastern part finally merged with India despite the effort of the Cabinet Mission Plan¹⁴, a tussle between APCC¹⁵ and AICC's¹⁶ demand for autonomy in Assam and Nagaland and the Muslim League's¹⁷ repeated claim to include the region into Pakistan. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India changed the colonial construction of excluded and partially excluded areas and ensured the rights of the tribal communities regarding their land and the preservation of tribal culture (Barua, 2020). However, veteran professor

13 Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) consisting of a group of seven Members of Parliament under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon arrived in British India in 1928 to study constitutional reforms in Britain's largest colony.

14 The Cabinet Mission Plan was a declaration initiated by the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, on 16 May 1946. It was a statement of proposals on the constitutional future of India in the wake of Indian political parties and representatives not coming to an agreement.

15 Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) was formed in June 1921. It is an associate political organization of the Indian National Congress.

16 The All India Congress Committee (AICC) is the central decision-making body of the Indian National Congress. It is composed of members elected from state-level Pradesh Congress Committees.

17 The Muslim League was founded in 1906 with a political ideology of forming a separate Muslim nation at the time of the partition of British India to safeguard the rights of Indian Muslims.

Udayan Misra (2014) said that, after the independence, due to the demand for autonomy and the traumatic experience of partition, the central government implemented a strong quasi-federal system in the Northeast, intensifying the sense of alienation rooted in British rule. *India's North East is a British imperial construct subsequently accepted by the post-colonial nation-state* (Bhaumik, 2009).

Nag (2013) commented that 'the forties of the last century was a period of awakening and resurgence in the hill areas of Northeast India'. In the post-colonial era, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya separated from greater Assam. From 1946 onwards, the Naga National Council (NNC)¹⁸ began to howl for an independent Nagalim. In the initial years of independence, instead of a political dispute, the Central government treated the Naga insurgency as a law and order issue. After the Indo-China War of 1962, Nagaland's status was changed from a union territory to a separate state. On the other hand, the Bongal Kheda Movement¹⁹ (ousting the Bengalis) took a violent turn in Assam after the independence. The emergence of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA)²⁰ was first inclined towards the anti-immigration movement and then transformed into a movement for free Assam. Correspondingly, in Lushai Hill, during the devastating impact of the Mautam famine (1958–59) and the lack of adequate assistance from the Government of India, the state government and the Assam government Mizo Famine Front (MFF) was established. The organization was later transformed into Mizo National Front (MNF) and commenced a guerrilla war for free land, separated from so-called

18 Naga National Council (NNC) was reorganized form of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council which was established by the deputy commissioner of the Naga Hill Districts as a forum for the various Naga groups in the district. The main objective of this council was to negotiate the terms of the relationship with the Government of India after the British withdrawal from India.

19 The Bongal Kheda Movement was the agitation against the non-Assamese in Assam organized by the job-seekers which intensified in the decade of 1960s. It was mainly directed at ousting Bengali-speaking population of the state.

20 The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is a separatist organization operating in the state of Assam since 1990 with the objective of forming an independent sovereign nation-state of Assam for the indigenous Assamese people.

'mainland' India (Hazarika, 1994). After an extensive separatist movement, the Lushai Hill region, dominated by Mizo ethnic tribes²¹ formed a distinct identity as a separate state, Mizoram.

After independence, two princely states, Manipur and Tripura, decided to merge with India. Before gaining separate statehood, these two regions were also acknowledged as the Union Territories of India. Tripura witnessed a huge flow of migration of Bengali refugees from east Pakistan over the years. It converted the tribal region into a Bengali Hindu-dominated state. The issue of the son of the soil, especially the native population's apprehension and violence against the Bengalis – became a major concern in Tripura. In another princely state Manipur, to protect the ethnic identity of the Manipuri tribals, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was formed in 1970s following the Maoist principle of revolution in Manipur. The extreme radical movement against the Indian Army added one more gruesome chapter on the history of Northeast India. Meanwhile, Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills constituted a distinct state of Meghalaya in the 1970s relatively peaceful, and subsequently, the Northeast Frontier Agency was renamed Arunachal Pradesh in the 1980s (Hazarika, 1994). Sikkim was also unified with India in the 1970s, and more recently, in 2002, it became a part of Northeast India. Separatist leaders of the Northeast, like Phizo, Laldenga, Biseswar, Aurobindo Rajkhowa and others, tried many times to attain support for their movement from foreign countries. Due to the strategic position of the Northeast, these phenomena increased the security threat and vulnerability in the borderland.

Media and Marginality in Northeast India

The media is generally assumed to be an unprejudiced agency in shaping public opinion and social construction of reality through the process of

21 Mizo ethnic tribes are anthropologically identified as members of the Tibeto-Burman ethnicity.

unfolding diverse angles of a singular incident with relevant contextualization. The widely acclaimed theory of media research, Agenda Setting, developed by McCombs and Shaw in the decade of 1970s, deals with the binary process of selection and rejection of particular news – certain information only to be framed as news – with the decision to provide premiere placement to certain news over others news stories. It automatically diminishes the notion of definitive objectivity.²² According to many researchers, framing in the news does not occur organically or haphazardly, but it is very subtly constructed and disseminated to gratify social and institutional interests, often political (Reese & Lewis, 2009; Scheufele, 1999, as cited in Chakraborty, Borah & Hazarika, 2015). Thus, the media immensely legitimizes or marginalizes a political movement behind a socio-political cause (Song, 2007; Benford, 1997, as cited in Chakraborty, Borah & Hazarika, 2015). The Northeastern region of India is a geographically remote section, and the nuances of media representation in this region have become a relevant area of study for understanding its multi-layered socio-political and ethno-cultural narratives. The following Table 1 was added to present a clear picture of the media coverage concerning issues of Northeastern states on a comparative account.

Conflict and Violence

Pou (2018) argued that the Northeast is an *imagined* territory of India where media presence is only found in separatism, ethnic conflicts, smuggling, drug abuses, underdevelopment and remoteness with negative connotations. Raj (2016) also stressed the same point that in the case of the Northeast, *the violence-related stories are often highlighted whereas other important stories from this region are downplayed*. The nature of the continuous conflicts in the Northeastern region of the country has been

22 The modern notion of objectivity in Journalism largely originates from the work of Walter Lippmann, an American author.

Table 1: Media Coverage of Northeast India by National and Regional Media

Sl. No.	Issues Covered	National Media	Regional Media
1	Conflict & Violence	Applied principles of objectivity Downplaying important stories other than violence Ignorance of humanitarian crises	Dramatization and sensitization Conflict-instigating rhetoric Emphasis on the humanitarian concerns of the common people
2	Identity Politics and Ethnic Nativism	Ignorance of recognition and preservation of ethnic lifestyle, identity cultural diversities Identity and ethnic issues are covered only in violent clashes. All the conflicts are represented as ethnic violence. Projecting an identical collective entity of the region	Disputes between the natives and the non-natives, i.e. outsiders mostly the migrants Regional media likely to be influenced by the local political dynamics Representing violence to distinguish people based on their race, ethnicity, religion
3	Peace Process	Neglecting peace process-related news Project the unilateral responsibility of separatist forces in the peace process.	Propaganda machines of political ideology Tendency of misreporting, partial information distortion of information
4	Stereotypical Representation	Avoiding root causes of separatist activities Stereotyped projection of the Northeast as an insurgent territory Cultural and racial stereotyping Selective, patterned insufficient information often leads to stereotyped representation.	In many cases, national and regional media tie-ups lead to the stereotyped generalization of the issues at the regional and local levels.
5	Constructing Border	'We vs. them' disorder repeatedly promotes the sense of 'otherization'.	'Reverse otherization' prompted by 'outsiders discourse'

Source: National and regional newspapers and media channels

multipronged. In the post-colonial period, a conscious attempt to assimilate the ethnic groups within the umbrella of composite pan-Indian nationalism led to a severe rift and consequent distrust among various ethnic communities. In the periphery, exclusion and further deprivation from the 'mainland' have given birth to insurgent activities. Pegu (2014) mentioned that socio-political turmoil over gaining territorial autonomy disrupted the process of development and the economic depression, which in turn stimulated the frequent conflicts in the region. Moreover, amidst the volatile situation, the implementation of AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958)²³ added fuel to the fire.

Conflict is considered one of the prime elements of newsworthiness. The conflict in the Northeast is also used to get mainstream media attention in India. However, the media hardly emphasizes conflict-sensitive journalism and respective conflict resolution (Chakraborty et al., 2015). Comparatively, the conflict frames used by the national newspapers mostly covered the news with certain principles of objectivity. However, regional newspapers mostly took the path of dramatization and sensitization. Previous studies revealed that media often play a key role in the intervention of structural factors in reducing conflict, whereas paradoxically, sometimes reinforce the factors resulting in violent conflicts (Terzis as cited in Deb & Charvak, 2015). A study on the media representation of the Chakma²⁴ refugee influx from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to Tripura in the year 2014 revealed that local media had highlighted the issue of security of the state while vastly denying the human rights of the refugees. In the same case, the media used conflict-instigating rhetoric like 'tension', 'Bangladeshi', 'porous border', 'thwart attempts of further influx', etc., which indirectly left an impact on the local people over the assimilation of the Chakmas within the local communities (Deb & Charvak,

23 Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was enacted in 1958 by the Indian Parliament. It grants special powers to the Indian Armed Forces for maintaining public order in the 'disturbed areas'. This Act presently is implemented in many regions of Northeast India.

24 Chakma ethnic tribes are known to originate from South East Asia. They acquire strong ethnic affinities to Tibeto-Burman groups in Northeast India.

2015). The news coverage of the region is mostly related to successive violence and the opinions of the state and non-state actors in insurgency and counter-insurgency while downplaying the humanitarian concerns of the common people of the land.

Identity Politics and Ethnic Nativism

Identity politics is mainly based on the politicization of ethnic nativism in Northeast India. Different extremist political parties of the Northeast such as the United Liberation Front of Assam, National Democratic Front of Bodoland, National Socialist Council of Nagalim, Kuki National Army, Garo Liberation Front, Bru National Liberation Front, National Liberation Front of Tripura, Hmar People's Convention (Democratic), Zomi Revolutionary Army, All Tripura Tigers Force, Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, National Liberation Army of Arunachal, United Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, Revolutionary Army of Arunachal Pradesh and so on are mainly followed by the principle of identity politics (Bijukumar, 2013). Ethnic identity as a form of collectivism is closely interrelated with a community and its homeland. Chakraborty et al. (2015) described that Northeast India violence is the manifestation of preserving the identity of the region against the governmental attempt to inculcate proto-nationalism. The identity crisis over the years led to the formation of two-dimensional movements, namely the demand for autonomy and the ousting of the foreigners of the 'mainland' – neighbouring states and neighbouring nations as well. All the conflicts and violence were framed in the media as disputes between the natives or the indigenous communities and the non-natives, mostly the migrants.

In present times, two major instances of conflicts over establishing a specific ethnic identity were the native Bodo vs. Muslim settlers in July–September 2012 and Bodo vs. Adivasi in December 2014, which led to a major humanitarian crisis. Apart from these instances, in the entire Northeastern region, the media has been largely entangled in ethnic politics over the ever-debatable 'questions of the dominance and hegemony'

of one ethnic community over another (Roluahpuia, 2016). Thus, local media, by default, has been largely influenced by local political dynamics. In mainstream media, the issues related to the recognition and preservation of ethnic lifestyle, identity, cultural diversities and prospects of development are being grossly ignored. Meanwhile, identity and ethnic issues are only being covered about violent clashes, leading to insecurities arising out of these clashes. Chakrabarty (2016), in her doctoral thesis, pointed out that all the conflicts in the region were being represented by the media as ethnic violence. Despite vast heterogeneity, national media project this part of the country as an identical collective entity in the name of the Northeast as a whole.

Assam was the first state to experience the implementation of the NRC (National Register of Citizens) in India. Therefore, the identification of illegal citizens through NRC made 1.9 million people stateless in Assam. Protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (now Act) instigated civil unrest in Assam in 2019. However, instead of focusing on humanitarian crises, national mainstream media prefer to remain silent. On the other hand, Saikia and Gogoi (2020) claimed that the language used by the regional media promoted the fear of xenophobia.

Peace Process

The significant role of media in the peace-making process through the factual representation of the incidents by engaging state and civil society is largely acknowledged in academics. The idea of peace journalism was first advocated by sociologist Johan Galtung in the 1970s. Kabi and Nayak (2019) elucidated that media can play a key role in conflict resolution by initiating dialogue and creating a bridge for negotiation between the government and separatist groups to resolve the violence. In a content analysis of national newspapers, Roy (2017) indicated that in print media, Northeast, centric news is mainly confined to politics, conflict and sports, neglecting the peace process. The government-built rhetoric of collective responsibility to be adopted by the insurgent groups to

continue the peace talks is broadly projected as the unilateral responsibility of separatist forces by the media coverage.

In the Northeast, media professionals have to face a unique situation demanding their loyalty towards the state and in reverse, their support for the cause of the antagonist groups by legitimizing their violent actions through media. The regional and local media have to face various pressure situations from both the insurgent groups and the government. All these entities often use media as their propaganda machines of political ideology²⁵ and vendetta (Hazarika as cited in Roy & Narula, 2015). In this way, the media faces challenges to objective coverage and promotes public opinion for the peace process between the state and non-state actors (Kabi & Nayak, 2019). Thakurata (2015) opined that situating the news on conflicts and violence in North East India within the context of economic deprivation and environmental degradation became the most challenging job for journalists. In this domain, several studies revealed that the media was accused of contradictory statements and also avoiding peace-building campaigns (Roy & Das as cited in Kabi & Nayak, 2019). Therefore, the tendency of misreporting and partial information distortion of information often leads to invigorating conflict situations instead of reconciliation (Pegu, as cited in Roy & Narula, 2015).

Stereotypical Representation

Mukhopadhyay (2015) enumerated that in the Northeastern states, there has been a tendency in media coverage to 'branding the people as militants' by robustly avoiding the root causes of separatist activities like economic backwardness, migration, poverty, refugee settlement,

25 The propaganda model is a conceptual model in political economy advanced by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in 1988 in their seminal book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* to explain how propaganda and systemic biases function in corporate mass media. Accordingly, the mass media largely operates as propaganda machines mostly for the state actors.

rehabilitation and so on. In most cases, the national media coverage is apathetic to the diverse cultural scenario, leading to the stereotyped projection of the Northeast as a wild insurgent terrain. In the coverage of the Northeast, cultural and racial stereotyping is instilled in the mainstream media agenda through the sensational alienation syndrome and binary dichotomy (Mukhopadhyay, 2015). Raj (2016) pointed out the level of racism by tagging the Northeastern as Chinki, Chinese, Nepali, mongoloid eyes foreigners are not very unfamiliar in pan-Indian media scenarios. Chongloi (2017) termed this misrepresentation and underrepresentation of the Northeast in national media as a 'representational suicide'. There is also a uniform trend among the media representing violence to distinguish people based on their race, ethnicity, religion, etc., to specifically frame some of them as responsible for the conflict and some as victims to sympathize (Chakrabarty, 2016). Many times, national and regional media tie-ups led to the stereotyped generalization of the issues of the Northeast at both the regional and national levels. Due to the remote geographical location of the region, it is very selective, patterned and insufficient information from the media's side, which often creates a stereotyped representation regarding the region being a perilous zone to sustain.

Constructing Border

Raj (2016) conducted a focus group-based study on Manipur and found that people of the Northeast considered national media as an instrument of alienation by constructing a border within a border. Respondents in this study claimed that mainstream media coverage never dealt AFSPA issue with sensitivity and empathy. In another survey-based study, Basnett (2011) showed that the people of the Northeast are not satisfied with the media coverage of the region. The disorder of *we vs. them* repeatedly promoted by the media strengthens the exclusion of margin from the 'mainland' by cultivating the sense of *otherization*.

The border dispute between Nagaland and Manipur is a major aspect of ethnic tension in the Northeast. Kharshiing (2020), in a critical discourse analysis of media content, has illustrated the alienation of non-tribal Nepali, Bengali, Marwari, Punjabi and other inhabitants of the state by the native Khasi tribals²⁶ of Meghalaya. From a pan-Indian perspective, the dominant majority of the state, the indigenous Khasi tribals are marginal. This marginality tends towards the 'reverse otherization' prompted by 'outsiders discourse' in Meghalaya. Since the emergence of statehood, the violent conflict between the Khasi and non-tribals has been prevalent in the state. Almost the same situation was also noticed in Assam, as the history of ethnic cleansing is as old as multi-lateral in this state. The Adivasi [Tribal or Scheduled Tribe] upsurge in 2007 and the violent conflict in Bodoland in 2012 are the recent exemplification of these phenomena. In the case of Tripura, the Bengali population occupied a dominant position over the native tribals. The retaliation of insurgent tribal groups often resulted in incidents like the Mandai massacre²⁷ in 1980, Operation Roukhala²⁸, in the late 1990s, etc. in Tripura. In Northeast India, for many instances, the re-structure of the border is outlined by the complex reverse marginalization.

Representation of Women

In the news, women are often projected as long-running stereotypes like the defenceless victim of violence who is not a part of the movement itself.

26 Khasi tribes are ethnic groups of the State Meghalaya of India. The Khasi language originated from the Austroasiatic language family. They are vastly migrated from the South-East Asian region.

27 A brutal attack on the Bengali immigrants in Mandai village in Tripura on 8 June 1980 was committed by a tribal separatist group. Officially, the total number of deaths is 255, whereas unofficially, the number is much higher.

28 Ethnic violence by the All-Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) against the Bengali Hindus in 1997.

They were broadly identified as belonging to their respective communities rather than individuals with abilities, power and control (Banerjee as cited in Chakrabarty, 2016). Apart from this, they were also being represented insensibly, diminishing their dignity in certain instances like revealing pictures of an Adivasi girl harassed in November 2007 in Beltola²⁹ of Assam. As a part of post-conflict resolution processes, the role of women as peace activists is barely projected by the mainstream media. According to research, there are very few instances when the media covers the angle of gender representation as one of the significant aspects that could have some effects on recurring conflicts and the peace-building processes (Kabi & Nayak, 2019). Massive protests against the Indian Army after the rape of Manorama Devi in 2004, Irom Sharmila's fast unto death³⁰ to counter the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), and the movement against the death of Nido Tania³¹ in Delhi in 2014 strongly demonstrated the role of women in mass mobilization. Thus, these issues were less focused on and addressed by the mainstream national media (Raj, 2016). Independent researcher and journalist Palchoudhury (2015) also accused the national media of underrepresenting the crusade of the 'Iron Lady' of Manipur, Irom Sharmila, against the AFSPA. Palchoudhury observed that Sharmila's prolonged fast received less attention from the national media compared to the focus and wide coverage of Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement³² in Delhi.

- 29 During a procession of Adivasi communities, an Adivasi girl named Laxmi Orung was stripped of her clothes and chased by some unruly men on the main road of Guwahati city in broad daylight on 24 November 2007.
- 30 Irom Chanu Sharmila is an Indian civil rights activist and political activist from the Indian state of Manipur who held a hunger strike for sixteen years in demanding the abolition of AFSPA.
- 31 Nido Tania, a 20-year-old student from Arunachal Pradesh, one of the Northeastern states of India, was murdered in the Lajpat Nagar area of Delhi in January 2014. This incident set off widespread protests from political parties and activists.
- 32 Anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare started a hunger strike at the Jantar Mantar monument in New Delhi intending to alleviate corruption in the Indian government through the introduction of the Jan Lokpal Bill. The movement gained impetus on 5 April 2011.

Discussion

A substantial amount of research based on the conceptual outline and statistical testing has already yielded the notion of a marginal representation of the Northeast in national mainstream media from different perspectives. There has been a wide gap between the news coverage orientations of the national, regional and local media of the Northeast. While the national media mostly neglected the issues concerning human rights violations in the region, the regional media shifted its attention broadly from the grave issues of underdevelopment to the urban city-centric news construction following the rules of commercialization.

The findings of the meta-analysis of previous literature are uniform. In this meta-analytical discussions and discourses, various conceptual outlines on the stereotyping and marginalization of Northeast India by media came into visibility. However, all the research works derived that in the case of covering the issues of the Northeast region, many cases of violence and human rights violations had not been either reported or under-reported. There are prevalent notions like the irrelevance of this region for the commercialized media driven by the free-market principles of capitalism. The media further marginalizes the entire Northeastern region of India. Previous studies elucidated that the representational pattern is carefully brewed, nurturing the binary between core and margin. Hence, the binary is constructed by the policy-makers in the political sphere to authorize supreme control over the public life of the region, sharing a debatable and strategic international border with neighbouring countries.

Conclusion

The chapter revealed that mass media mainly propagate stereotypical images of the Northeastern region as a hostile and trouble-torn terrain considering diverse ethnic clashes. Meanwhile, the mainstream media ignored the cultural richness and root causes of deep conflict, such as

underdevelopment and lack of inclusive growth. The Northeastern part of India is marginalized in the mainstream media sphere because of its representation as a single entity while diminishing its distinguished and enriched cultural traits. Therefore, the significance of the peace process in conflict-ridden and militant-infested states is immense in the background of socio-political volatility, economic fragility and cultural multiplicity. It is believed that peace journalism³³ can play a vital role in the process of peace-building and conflict resolution. There is also a counterpoint that its power-centric rather than people-centric salience often projects a distorted reality and can be futile in solving social and ethnic conflicts (Kabi & Nayak, 2019). Generally, media has been acclaimed as a source of information in uncertain situations like emergencies, conflicts and war. As Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur proposed, people's media dependency increases during tumultuous situations. From this perspective, balanced and objective media coverage of Northeast India could indoctrinate meaningful dialogue and peace-building initiatives. All stakeholders' opinions in the public sphere can be transformed into a uniform public opinion through the media. At the national and local levels, implementing stricter media regulations to restrain unethical journalistic practices of incitement to violence and promoting citizen journalism can shape a stable social situation in this region (Roy & Narula, 2015). Cultural solipsism, either in the form of state hegemony or by a dominant ethnic group, is detrimental to the base democratic and pluralistic character of the country as well as Northeastern states. Instead of only representing clashes and separatist activities through the prism of the conflict zone, the mainstream media should play a constructive role in the inclusive development of Northeast India by addressing the root cause and considering the cultural hybridity, intense community sentiment prolonged history of the exclusion.

33 The concept of peace journalism was proposed by Jake Lynch and Johan Galtung in 2010. They opined that the media (war reporting, in particular) primarily show biases towards violence and hold on to the conceptual belief that 'conflict' equals 'war'.

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Chapter 3 Alternative Media Representations of Dalit Voices

ABSTRACT:

The mass media are powerful social agents through which individuals from various communities learn about their ingroup and outgroup memberships and identities (Berry & Mitchell-Kernan, 1982). The media also has the capacity to shape civil society, its discourses and policies, and influence behaviours (Schiller, 2014). In the case of minorities, the media influences the construction of hegemonic power relations, social hierarchies and minority identity (Cotter, 2010). The Indian mainstream media, also known as *Brahmanic* or *Varna* media, has repeatedly represented Dalits in stereotypical and negative ways (Patil, 2011). In particular, the news media ignore Dalit grievances and casteist discriminatory practices in Indian society, trivializing their contributions, devaluing their identity and constructing them as ‘bad citizens’ (Teltumbde, 2005; Saha et al., 2022). As a result of the continued biased representation by the mainstream media, Dalits have often resorted to using alternative media to (i) voice themselves and their grievances, (ii) counter-hegemonic representations in the mainstream media and (iii) represent their identity in their own words. The 100-year-old legacy of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar’s Dalit newspaper, *Mooknayak* [leader of the voiceless], continues to inspire Dalits and challenge the mainstream media’s casteist narratives. The stellar examples of community radio, such as Sangham Radio and social media hashtags, such as #DalitLivesMatters, demonstrate Dalit communities’ resistance to the mainstream media’s upper caste hegemony. This chapter considers recent case studies of Rohith Verma from 2012 and the Hathras incident in 2020 to analyse Dalit’s engagement and use of alternative media platforms. In the chapter, we argue that alternative media have provided an alternative space and a hub for community dialogues, social-political action and intersections among community members aimed at alienating casteist practices and Dalit oppression.

Keywords: Dalits, Alternate media, Social movements, Representation and Caste system

Introduction

Dalits, also the *untouchables* in India and other South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and many others, are born into a lifetime of marginalization, oppression, exclusion and human rights violations. Based on their descent, they are considered the *polluted ones* and placed at the lowest stratum of society's classes. Despite the long-term presence of the various protective policies (spanning approximately seventy years), Dalit experiences of discrimination still lack a critical understanding in the mainstream society discourses. Rawat and Satyanarayana (2016) argue that Dalits are portrayed as transient populations in the government and media discourses. As a result, the Dalit's needs for equality in education and access to civic participation in society are often neglected. Violence against Dalits is a common phenomenon. According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB) (cited in Peoples Democracy, 2022), approximately 50,900 reported cases of violence, including rape, murder, attempt to murder, lynching, grievous hurt and similar actions, are recorded each year.

In a mediated society, the media plays a powerful role in constructing minority identities and structuring the citizens' behaviour towards the members of the suppressed communities (Hall, 1999). Irrespective of the relevance of the media uplifting Dalit identities, several researchers have noted a biased and casteist representation of Dalits in the media (Prasad, 2004; Saha et al., 2022). As a result, Dalits have increasingly used alternative media to articulate their views and grievances (Thakur, 2020; Rabindran, 2022). Such alternative spaces include newspapers, magazines, community radio, social media platforms and blogs. These alternative spaces are intended to reach out to those who share similar experiences of discrimination and challenge and resist biased and casteist narratives, thereby contributing to mobilization against caste-based discrimination (Thakur, 2020; Rabindran, 2022). This chapter examines how Dalits, through their use of alternative spaces, have been able to challenge the anti-Dalit narratives. We focus on some of the social media hashtags used by Dalits in relation to

Rohit Verma's case and the Hathras incident to bring forth Dalit issues and challenge the mainstream narratives in recent years.

Genesis of Alternative Voices: An Overview

The media plays an inevitable role in framing an understanding of the world and the people within. They structure our understanding by 'actively ruling in and ruling out certain realities, offering the maps and codes which mark out territories and assign problematic events and relations to explanatory contexts' (Hall, 1999). Althusser (2012) argues that media representations provide how the media users and audiences ordinarily *live* an imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence (i.e. selective experience). Previous research has repeatedly argued that the dominant definition of minorities in the media has majorly been stereotypical and negative (Hussain, 2000; Philo & Berry, 2004; Ratnamala & Govindaraju, 2012; Ratnamala, 2015, Saha et al., 2022). They are still portrayed as victims, problems and threats. They are associated with negative annotations of crime, conflict, violence, or as people/communities who fail to follow the conventional societal behavioural norms. While 'othering' them, the media fails to address the deeper economic, political, or social factors and other contextual aspects that inform the conflicts. In doing so, the media often bolsters the power of the dominant bodies: the ruling group, the religious majority, politicians and the police. The skewed media coverage is such that only dominant voices are sometimes represented while minority voices are excluded.

Historically, the Indian press has had an independent status as an institution (Balaswami, 2016). While it is believed to be one of the freest in the world, it has been criticized for being a monopoly press dominated by the upper class and caste interests and hence called *Brahmanic*. The Indian press is exploited by the ruling classes, the powerful class, for their political benefit and for perpetuating and boosting their political and feudal interests. In this procedure, minorities such as Dalits, Muslims and tribes

are misrepresented or underrepresented (Jeffrey, 2001; Balasubramaniam, 2011). Ratnamala (2015) and Balaswamy (2016) state that the absence of Dalits from print implies an indifference to minorities and their issues in a democratic country like India. Teltumbde (2005) accuses the mainstream media of misrepresenting and stereotyping Dalits as untouchables and polluted, which they argue to be responsible for the propagation of caste-based ideologies and continuing assertion of caste practices. The press, as an organ for the peer class, is not only dominating oppressed classes but also highlighting their grievances in the most comic manner and at times sensationalizing the representation of Dalits.

In the 1990s, Jeffrey (2001) investigated Dalits' representation in the leading Indian English newspapers: *The Times of India* and the *Indian Express*. Using quantitative analysis along with interviews with eminent journalists, Jeffrey not only confirmed the absence of Dalits from the newsrooms but also discovered their misrepresentation and underrepresentation in the media content. Similarly, Viswanath (2014) and Yadav's (2017) brief on the coverage of the Kilvenmani Massacre asserts that the mainstream media reports were misleading and inadequate. They argue that the media neither mentioned Dalits nor the outrage about the atrocities. Instead, the media reported it in isolation of its caste and class dimensions while ignoring the larger socio-economic aspects of it. Teltumbde (2005), an academic as well as a Dalit author, in his case study on Khairlanji Massacre, identifies a similar pattern of Dalit representation in other anti-Dalit incidents and argues that caste violence, even when viewed superficially, complicates reality because the producers and the majority consumers hold the same ideological views about Dalits. The social and media indifference towards Dalits remains camouflaged under cosmetic notions of a just and equal society (Kanagasabai, 2014).

Such representations were not just limited to national newspapers but also to regional ones. Kumar (2007, 2010) and Ratnamala (2015), in their study of Tamil and Telegu newspapers in the first decade of the twenty-first century, note the prevalence of media bias towards Dalits. Kumar (2009) notes: '[T]here is no special reporter to cover the news concerning the atrocities against Dalits in the media.' Ratnamala and Govindaraju (2012), in their study of the regional media's coverage of the 1999 Tirunelveli Massacre

in Tamil and English dailies, find a similar pattern of underreporting and misrepresentation of Dalits.

Scholars such as Gupta (1990), Jeffrey (2001), Prasad (2004), Teltumbde (2005), Ratnamala and Govindaraju (2012), Ratnamala (2012, 2015), Kumar (2010), Patil (2011), Gupta (2016) and many others concur with the Indian constitution author and Dalit leader, Dr Ambedkar's observation of persistent Dalit negligence and absence in the newsroom of the mainstream and regional newspapers. The reasons for Dalit negligence even in the current century, include: (i) upper caste dominance; (ii) pro-congress support and (iii) *Brahmanic* mindset of the media house. Jeffrey (2001) pointed out that 'newspapers were not interested in Dalit stories unless they involved spectacular violence or brushed against sensitivities about *positive discrimination – reservation* as it is known in India'.

Alternative Media for Dalits

The pre-independence era marked the period when the debate on the importance of the media to the formation of Dalit identity was validated and explained by Dalit pioneers such as Jyotirao Phule and Ambedkar. Phule's pedagogy was informed by an understanding of knowledge and power, where he considered acquisition of knowledge by the oppressed *Atishudras* [former Dalits], as the route to emancipation. Phule formed 'Satyashodhak Samaj' in 1873 to focus on the rights of women, Dalits and Shudras. The 'Satyashodhak Samaj' denounced the caste system, and the social reformist Phule opposed child marriage. *Deenbandhu*, a Marathi newspaper set up in 1877, provided a voice to the Samaj's social reform agenda (Bhadru, 2002). Phule believed the media to be an inevitable tool that can produce attitudinal changes among the general audience including Dalits and non-Dalits (Zelliot, 2005).

Later in the 1920s, Dr Ambedkar's newspapers – *Bahishkrut Bharat*, *Mooknayak*, *Prabuddha Bharat* and *Janata* – were argued to have a strong positive impact in raising awareness and mobilizing the public during the anti-caste movement. While these newspapers covered caste atrocities,

they also provided space for Dalit intellectuals like Ambedkar and Phule to communicate with society and help shape people's understanding and opinion about caste, Dalits and various other social issues. Such newspapers are classified as alternative media, through which Ambedkar aimed to juxtapose the popular hegemonic beliefs as myths created by Hindu scriptures and wrote independent historical narratives from Dalit points of view, discrediting the grand narratives of those in power (Ratnamala, 2015). After independence in 1947, Dalit leaders used radio, one of the most accessible media platforms, to give voice to their grievances and stories. *Radio Jagran* 93.6 FM was South Asia's first Dalit radio channel. 'Dalit Media Watch' is a digital space created by People's Media Advocacy and Resource Centre and operated by Dalits. Sangham Radio became the country's first community radio station owned and run by Dalit women.

In the current digital era, digital platforms have allowed Dalits alternative avenues of expression. These include social media pages, YouTube channels, blogs and pages such as 'Dalit Media Watch' and 'International Dalit Solidarity Network'. In contrast to the biased mainstream media, alternate media such as social media – Facebook, X (Formerly Twitter), Instagram and similar other platforms – allow for democratic communication and a unique opportunity for Dalits to freely share narratives of shared experiences of discrimination and participate in counter-hegemonic discourse (Venkateswarlu & Rao, 2017). *Dalit Camera* was one of the first news websites and a YouTube channel started by Raees Mohammed in 2011 to document Dalit-related stories – life in India from the perspective of Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujan people and other minorities (Mehta, 2014). Several YouTube channels have been launched in the past decade focused on Dalit-Bahujan issues. Some of these channels, such as National *Dastak*, *Bahujan TV* and *Awaaj India TV*, have over one million subscribers.

X hashtags as alternative spaces played an inevitable role in reaching out to the respective audiences and negotiating biased narratives and identities. One of the various examples is the #MrDalit campaign, which was initiated in 2017 after three lower-caste men were brutally beaten. #BoycottMotilalOswal trended in 2016 for protesting comments made against reservations for scheduled castes in the education sector. In 2019, the suspension of a journalist and a university professor due to caste-based

discrimination called for a X-wide explosion of caste assertion (Nandy & Sridhar, 2019). In recent times, hashtags such as #CasteistTwitter, #sayno-tocaste, #JaiBhim, #Dalitlivesmatter, #TwitterHatesSCSTOBCMuslims and others have been used to voice against discrimination. Similar hashtags are also being used on platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram reels, where Dalits, including Dalit men and women, participate in online conversations and create engaging content to put forth their cultural uniqueness and to assert their identity (Verma, 2009; Subramanian, 2021).

Alternative Media and Counter-Publics

Scholars such as Berenson (2018) argue that representation in news media is crucial to the visibility of social moments. Here, it is important to note that the news media are not a unified, monolithic institution. Instead, they could constitute mainstream and/or alternative media (Downing, 2001; Harcup, 2005; Holt, 2018). Mainstream media's characteristics are vastly distinct from alternative media. That is, mainstream media has the following characteristics: (i) it often belongs to a media group and is funded by corporate advertising; (ii) could follow an ideological stance and hence its advocative stance is often biased; (iii) largely conservative; (iv) supportive of the political status quo; (v) geared towards gaining more readership or viewership. As a result, these mainstream spaces often exclude the voices that either challenge the traditional power structures or lie at the lower ladder of the social dominance structure and portray the population as deviant, bad citizens or illegitimate (Saha, 2022). Hence, to advocate against the mainstream media's biased coverage, social movements use alternative media to gain audience's views and attention and mobilize supporters. In contrast to the mainstream, alternative media do not depend on dominant institutions, have an unbiased political stance, prefer advocacy often intended towards equality and give voice to the excluded and marginalized groups (Atton, 2001; 2002a; 2002b).

Alternative media are considered as an unresearched topic in social sciences, and this stands true, especially in the context of minorities and counter-publics. Hence, in this section, we discuss alternative media, followed by a brief on the counter-publics and then discuss how the counter-publics, that is Dalits in India, use alternative media platforms to challenge dominant narratives and discrimination. Previous research has defined alternative media in various ways. The community media researchers argue that the presence and participation of community members are central to the content creation in alternative spaces (Fuchs, 2010). Others define alternative media as a third voice between commercial and state media and a part of civil society (Fuchs, 2010). That is, alternative media are seen as small-scale, independent spaces with collective ownership and consensus decision-making in favour of the central advocacy subject by those who are a part of the organization. The alternative media aim to reflect on non-hierarchical and non-dominant discourse compared to the mainstream, which are often large organizations and often directed towards the dominant discourse that intensifies existing hierarchies such as social, political and economic (Gill & Adams, 1998). Unlike the mainstream media's dominant capitalist forms of media production, alternative media often opt for non-cost strategies, and if required, they rely on financial support such as donations and public funding. We can hence argue that alternative media are operated by *self-managed citizen journalists' who are involved in producing critical content* accessible to the members of the larger society (Benson, 2009; Fuchs, 2010). Negt and Kluge (1983) argue that alternative media constitute the control of intellectual means of content production independent of the bourgeoisie.

Like alternative media, counter-public spheres are critical and affirmative opponents of corporate media monopolies or the domination of hegemonic worldviews. According to Habermas (1964), the public sphere is an ideal realm available for all citizens to take control of and limit state power through criticism, elections and discussion. However, Habermas identified that in the long term, these public discourses constitute a climate of non-public opinion, which becomes manipulated by advertising and other commercial media (Rodrigues, 2010). The public sphere is compatible with the capitalist society, where we see the transformation of the political system

but not the relations of power and production. Hence, the public sphere constitutes uneven control of resources by certain classes, reinstating social hierarchies and inequalities (Habermas, 1964).

However, as discussed earlier, in the last few years, the world has undergone a major transition supported by the intensification of globalization, capitalism, neoliberalism, de-traditionalization and the rise of new social democracy and social movements. These changes deeply impact the nature and functioning of the public sphere. Hence, considering the already implicit gaps within Habermas's theory and the changes within society, Negt and Kluge in *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (1972,1983) propose a term, the counter-public sphere, which was both a socialist critique and a radicalization of the theory of public sphere. Negt and Kluge's (1988) counter-public sphere, unlike the public sphere, was radically different from the bourgeois public sphere. The counter-public sphere was geared towards supporting the working class and advocating the interests of the workers. The counter-public sphere was supposed to unify the collective experiences of the 'counter'. A translation of Habermas's public sphere by feminist theorists investigated counter-publics to create deliberative democracy where the laws could be made legitimate and transformed by public deliberation. According to Felski (1989), counter-publics refer to the existence of multiple publics that challenge the bourgeois and/or dominant public sphere. No place was provided for the oppressed to express their worldviews in the ideal bourgeois public sphere. This formation of other public or counter-public, which was formed under conditions of dominance and subordination, was called the subaltern counter-public (Benson, 2009). In the context of stratified societies, such as India, Fraser (1990, p. 67–70), called these publics subaltern counter-publics. She explained that counter-publics are meant to circulate counter-discourses that allow oppositional interpretations of identities, interests and needs of those subordinated in society.

In the Indian context, the definition of Dalits is in line with the understanding of counter-publics who often experience oppression because of their subordinated status and marginalization, and they resort to unique ways of resistance that have democratizing potential. Dalits as 'counter publics' engage in debate with wider publics to test ideas and perhaps

utilize traditional social movement tactics. This deliberately separates themselves from wider publics for reasons other than oppressive relations but are involved in wider public discourses from time to time (Squires, 2002). Considering that the use of alternative media platforms by Dalits are meant to portray the inequalities and challenge the already existing caste struggles that erupt from class divisions, it could thus be argued that these struggles align with the meaning of the counter-public sphere. As mentioned elsewhere, Dalits have repeatedly witnessed subjugation that limited or completely denied their access to material resources such as water, food, sanitation and knowledge. However, in recent times, because of modern democracy, combined with increased education, tangible and intangible resources, including access to media – especially the alternative media – provided the Dalits the strength to resist, like counter-publics. Conceptualizing Ambedkar's approach to publishing Dalit-specific newspapers along the lines of alternative media, it could be argued that the representations are meant to enable a subaltern consciousness. That is, a feeling of group identity that gives minorities, in this case, Dalits, the ability to take charge of their own stories, communicate their suffering and challenge the ideology of the upper caste. However, such an approach in the digital era is being primarily performed on digital media platforms such as social media and the internet, which allow for greater reach and interaction, not just among Dalits and subordinated populations within India but also across different populations and regions (Thakur, 2020). In the next section, we examine Rohith Vemula and the Hathras cases to demonstrate how Internet media made Dalit-led agitations possible, creating a counter-public space home to several narratives.

Rohith Vemula Case: A Catalyst for Social Media Discourse by Dalits

Following multiple upsetting instances of caste-based discrimination on campus, Rohith Vemula, a Dalit doctorate student at the University of

Hyderabad (UoH) in Telangana, southern India and an Ambedkarite in his political views, committed suicide on 17 January 2016. The suicide of Vermula on a reputable university campus in 2016 sparked a significant Dalit-led uprising. Vermula stated in a heartfelt letter that 'my birth is a fatal accident' before taking his own life (Indian Express, 2016). The letter was used as a mobilization tool and a moving way for Dalit students to communicate their real-life experiences. Under the name 'Joint Action Committee', student political associations and left-leaning liberal groups operate at prominent colleges like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, Allahabad University in Uttar Pradesh, Osmania University, English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad and Jadavpur University in West Bengal. Students mobilized grassroots agitation against the ongoing caste-based discrimination that drove Rohith Vermula to take his life (Thakur, 2020). Moreover, *social media journalists* used social media spaces to mobilize the youths across the country to speak against the tragic event and condemn suicide as an institutional murder (Kaushik, 2016).

The use of new media tactics and social media platforms to organize the many advocacy and protest-related activities set this protest apart from other social movements previously organized by marginalized groups (Omvedt, 2006). Inspired by the Vermula protests, the Telugu-language website Velivada [*ghetto*] created an online forum in 2017 to confront historical marginalization. In addition, the conference denounced the conservative posture of the mainstream media and exposed the exploitation of subaltern ideologues by powerful interests. Protesters used offline tactics like protests, hunger strike, demonstrations, non-violent marches, petition signings and internet resources like social media platforms. One tactic employed by the demonstrators was sending a physical postcard with the hashtags #PostcardToPresident, #Dalitlivesmatter and #JusticeforRohith to the President of India. As a result, the combination of offline and internet tactics helped to organize grassroots relationships and Rohith Vermula's picture developed into a crucial visual emblem for the marginalized and Dalit struggle. Many young users, from both the marginalized and non-marginalized populations, were able to harness the power of X feeds, Facebook posts and WhatsApp group messages to inspire others to join

the demonstration because of the social connection of convergence media. For instance, #DalitBlue in 2016 was born after students from two central universities – the UoH and JNU – faced resistance.

Inspired by the US Black Lives Matter movement (#Blacklivesmatter), Dalit millennials and progressive campus allies, like the UoH 'Joint Action Committee for Social Justice', created the #Dalitlivesmatter X hashtag as a vital tool for mobilizing young people and other support groups. Social media pages featured multiple footage of the grassroots activists' protest rallies. Tagging and interlinking with different digital forms boosted digital circulation and caused some hashtags to go viral. With the use of interconnected communication channels, the mainly unorganized demonstration expanded the agitation outside of Hyderabad, namely from the Telangana region into neighbouring states and ultimately turned it into a national movement. Another alternative media, Dalit Camera's YouTube channel, featured reports from the demonstration for wider circulation in India and abroad (Paul & Dowling, 2018).

#Dalitlivesmatter has emerged as a unifying sign for X-led internet agitations against the Dalit atrocities, starting with the Vemula protests. For example, Shinde (2016) contends that while Dalit youths in Una, Gujarat, India, were skinning dead cow carcasses as part of a customary profession, there was violence against them. Shinde says this sparked an agitation that gained traction due to the hashtag's widespread use online. Even though #JusticeforRohith was intended for the Vemula case, the widespread adoption of #Dalitlivesmatter on social media sparked a large-scale demonstration against the lynching of Dalit youth in Una. The Dalit youngsters who spearheaded the demonstrations and carried smartphones helped to create a feeling of community. Many community pages then appeared on social media sites on their own. #Dalitlivesmatter became one of the alternative spaces that continue to exist today, allowing the counter-public Dalits to revolt against hegemonic norms. On the one hand, where social media spaces have allowed for advocacy regarding Dalit rights, it has not been devoid of hate speech or obscene statements against the Dalits. For example, one of the X users who identifies themselves as 'unapologetic Hindu' writes *Robit Vemula was not a Dalit* and the reason he committed suicide was fear of being exposed (4 May 2024), whereas

another user writes *Brahman regiment sabse zaruri hai* [Brahman regiment is important] (9 June 2024). Interestingly, an X search with the #RohithVemula or #Dalits did not reflect many hate speeches against the Dalits. Nonetheless, as the above posts reflect, there seem to be subtle attacks by out group members on Dalit identity and casteism. According to Parekh et al. (2012), although these attacks could be difficult for casual observers to identify, these may have detrimental effects on how we identify certain communities and individuals, especially individuals from minority communities.

Hathras Case and Social Platform as a Protesting Site

In 2020, a 19-year-old Dalit girl was gang raped and brutally assaulted by upper caste men from the Thakur community in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. On 14 September 2020, she was found lying semi-conscious after being sexually exploited and brutally attacked. Later, on 29 September 2020, when she passed away in a hospital after fighting for her life for a fortnight, her body was forcibly cremated by the Uttar Pradesh police without the consent of her family (Saha, 2022). This forced cremation sparked protests across the entire state, igniting a national outcry against Dalit persecution and leaving a legacy of reform and unity in India's history of anti-caste agitation. Eventually, social media tools were combined with state-level protests to push for an anti-casteist Dalit agenda. Although, the upper-caste-dominated village refused to accept that she was raped, because of the nationwide outrage following the incident, four upper-caste Thakur men were later arrested (Mondal, 2021; Tripathi, 2022; Saha et al., 2022). Post Hathras incident, the Dalit protests were primarily conducted online, where hashtags such as #Dalitlivesmatter, #JusticeforHathras and many others were used to call for justice for the Hathras victims. Of the various hashtags, #Dalitlivesmatter was widely used on social media. #Dalitlivesmatter on X emerged after George Floyd's death in the USA in May 2020, which

paved the way for #Blacklivesmatter; however, it gained prominence only during the Hathras case.

Meanwhile, a study of the mainstream media by Saha et al. (2022) found that when politicians and non-Dalit Bollywood stars spoke out against the act, Hathra's issue gained additional attention. Additionally, the primary newspaper coverage survey indicates that following the death of the Hathras victim on 28 September 2020, the amount of coverage grew daily by twenty-five per cent. It is interesting to note that a qualitative review of news reports shows that the spike in articles was caused by politicians and Bollywood celebrities tweeting their sympathy for the Hathras victim rapidly. Between 28 September and 1 October, approximately fifteen per cent of the newspaper articles published about the Hathras case were referred in the tweets. However, the two dominant Indian newspapers *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* did not include tweets posted by Dalits. On the other hand, the #Dalitlivesmatter on X reflected a different representation. A X search with the hashtag #Dalitlivesmatter from 14 September to 21 September 2020 recorded approximately 120 posts published within five days. A similar search between 14 September and 30 September 2020 revealed that more than 200 posts were made within fifteen days. Statistica (2024) data suggests that Facebook and Instagram are more frequently used than X in India. Despite the low usage of X, a high number of usages reflects and increased Dalit involvement in anti-caste protests. The high number of posts was also surprising as they came despite the presence of a high rate of illiteracy, a lack of digital affordances among Dalits, paucity of understanding of Dalit matters among the other upper caste members and a low number of Dalit twitteraties compared to other social groups. Due to its decentralized nature, the hashtag moment – #DalitLivesMatter represents the antagonism against Dalit discrimination which has been used as a call to action.

The recent increase in online mobilization among Dalits – India's most economically and socially oppressed caste groups – highlights a noteworthy development in twenty-first-century media literacy, political participation and online activism. Due to the empowerment and experiences that social media platforms have given Dalits, the data also shows how non-Dalit masses have contributed to the spread of the #Dalitlivesmatter discourse.

It could thus be argued that #Dalitlivesmatter on alternative media spaces has been inevitable to raise awareness among the members of the society who were, in general, unaware of Dalit oppression and injustices inflicted on them. For example, in a post on 23 August, a media user wrote (anonymous to protect user's privacy): '#Coimbatore: School students belonging to SC/ST communities are unable to benefit from scholarships announced by the government as banks allegedly insist they maintain a minimum balance #DalitLivesMatter'. *Other X users wrote*: 'I don't know what my caste is' is not you being anti-casteist. It is you showcasing your privilege that gives you the liberty to forget your caste, while a significant number of people are reminded of it and oppressed for it every single day of their lives. #DalitLivesMatter' (20 October 2020) and 'If you deny the everyday horrors of #Casteism, it is likely that you are removed from the everyday realities of #Dalits. They are denied dignity and of course many of us are ok with it. #DalitLivesMatter' (29 October 2020).

Several well-known Dalit and non-Dalit X users shared their thoughts on the way Dalits' killings were covered. For example, a blogger tweeted on 2 October: 'UP police have completely sealed #Hathras. No any member of political party along with media is allowed to enter the village. The family are kept in house arrest, "their mobile phones have been taken away". This is the new UP model. #DalitLivesMatter.' Whereas another tweeter user added on 1 October: 'What makes me so angry as a citizen is why I, like most of us, did not even know about this incident until 2–3 days ago. Had the media covered the case earlier the way it is doing now, it would have prompted swifter actions & the girl would be alive today. #Hathras #DalitLivesMatter.' They frequently criticized the biased reporting by the mainstream media, which downplayed the forced cremation, rape and/or cruelty committed on the Dalit victims, as well as the historical foundations of caste that served as the catalyst for the act. Additionally, the X messages made the case that politicians, casteist policies and law enforcement agencies were consistently preferred in mainstream media narratives. Saha et al. (2022) argue that media agencies are often compelled to report a minority event only after it has been trending on social media spaces. And the reason behind such action is the increase in television ratings and gaining audience views. A similar pattern has been noted in the current study as well, where the analysis of the tweets

shows that the mainstream media reporters (often who belong to upper caste groups) or the media did not publish Dalit-related issues until the events became highly visible and/or discussed on the social media platforms. In keeping with the intersectional ethos that characterizes Dalit X discussions generally, commenters recognized the ways that the social marginalization of Blacks in the USA led to similar treatment by the different forms of media as that experienced by Dalits. The broader conclusion that the Indian media propagates Brahminic and upper casteist/classiest supremacy while the American media supports white supremacy was supported by these analogies. This cross-contextual link illustrates how alternative media, like X and other social media platforms, have functioned as a discursive arena for the development of racial media theory.

Discussion

The political act of using alternative and increasing online social platforms is also a socio-cultural movement against discrimination and silencing of diverse voices. Melucci (1995) says the new social movements are a struggle against existing culture/identity. Social media are used not only to express their own stories but also to contest the status quo. Social networking sites allow social movements such as #Dalitlivesmatters to communicate to different sections of public opinion, going beyond the local. The narrative structure of Dalit participation in newspapers, community radio, the internet and social media sites such as X, as an alternative media platform, reflects the presence of discourses against hegemonic ideologies and opens up a critical space by presenting a complex account of the Dalit's inhabitation of the world. Our comprehension of how Dalit men and women participate in alternative media and form a counter-public is due to this presentation of the self in the lived realities of daily life. The collective consciousness that arises from their shared experience of oppression as a community is further reflected in this engagement. Discourses on alternative media platforms provide examples of the strong subaltern

voice for change and resistance that is woven within their stories. Fraser (1990) argues that 'subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of colour and gays and lesbians have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics' which she calls *subaltern counter-publics*. She adds that 'they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs' (Fraser, 1990).

In this context, Dalit's subalternity constitutes counter-public in two-fold manners. Initially, the identification of oneself as a Dalit is closely linked to the feeling of being unique, facing discrimination as an untouchable and being perceived as an *outsider* who falls on the wrong side of the societal purity/pollution divide. Additionally, Dalit discourses, through their portrayals, reproduce themselves as those who are 'othered'. Here, the alternative spaces facilitate communication between digital and physical realms, which is then employed to break free from where the Dalits have been confined. This creates a discursive arena where the dominant public can contest itself. As a result, it is observed that casteist ideals and the struggle to transcend the seemingly unchangeable identity shaped by caste are constantly at odds, rendering Dalit participation a particularly delicate subaltern counter-public. Because the Dalit resistance had the potential to upend the current quo and undermine caste-based power relations, the #Dalitlivesmatter movement faced opposition and backlash, just like all other social movements, including #Blacklivesmatter and #Metoo. The #alllivesmatter hashtag served as a focal point for upper-caste pushback against the #Dalitlivesmatter movement. Through the hashtag #uppercastelivesmatter, the upper castes repeatedly asserted their standing. In contrast to the #Dalitlivesmatter movement, upper-caste opposition to Dalit liberation, however, seemed feeble, dispersed and constrained (Saha et al., 2022). In the two case studies – Vermula and Hathras – alternative media, in this case on online platforms (X and YouTube), acted as an essential tool for empowerment and renegotiation of identities in Indian society.

Conceptualizing the data along the lines of counter-publics, discourses of marginalization and social media as alternative spaces, this study reflects several vital points. First, we contend that Dalits can present themselves

in alternative media as *counter* not just to the conventional discourses of caste-based discrimination but also to the subversion of hierarchical systems based on race. Alternative media, X, for example, enables social justice conversations by facilitating direct communication and responses to casteist culture without the involvement of the website's management. This comprehension aligns with Rentschler's (2014) assertion that social media, as substitute media platforms, facilitate the restructuring and limitation of conventional power dynamics. Secondly, this study also shows that alternative spaces offer an important vehicle to bring out messages that seek accountability and justice in the public sphere. This is in line with Munro (2013), who claims these spaces to be inevitable for calling out the culture. Even if certain posts or comments are made to resist the Dalit 'counter-narratives', those comments could be called out and people could be held responsible for their anti-Dalit antagonisms. Such a finding is also in line with Rentschler (2014), who argues that alternative media spaces enable peer-to-peer discussion and contestation. Tran (2013) also argues these spaces rebuild communicative dynamics, unlike mainstream media. Lastly, these findings also resonate with Gavey et al. (2014), who also believe in these alternative spaces as a form of 'vigilante justice', especially for the counter public who help identify and expose perpetrators of violence and discrimination. Overall, this chapter illustrates that Dalit counter-publics use alternative media to progress against Dalit violence and discrimination while simultaneously engaging in community debates about race, caste and inclusion. It also illuminates that alternative media allow for Dalit discourses about historical tensions, marginalization and exclusion, and they equip these counter-publics with new ways to upend mainstream narratives about what should and should not constitute the public sphere.

Conclusion

A social movement or social change cannot be achieved by merely increasing the media coverage, but the social movement needs the media

to amplify and broaden its scope. Dalits have occupied an unenviable position of disempowerment and degradation in India for a long time in the mainstream discourse as well as in the media. This implies that even if atrocities against them occurred, the biased nature of the media either ignored or undermined the incidents and the activism movements. In this context, the use of alternative media to keep par with the mainstream media has become significant for Dalits. Diverse depiction of the oppressed in the Indian media is therefore crucial not only for the sake of diversity and representation but also because their presence feeds into several ongoing social movements that propel societal change. The upper caste-dominated mainstream media in India continues to struggle to provide a fair representation to Dalits, who are the largest group of citizens in the country. For more than 150 years, starting from Phule's social reformist agenda and later Dr Ambedkar's pioneering legacy to create an alternative medium for Dalit voices, Dalits have used alternative media as a counter-public space to highlight atrocities committed against them and articulate a distinctive identity. In contemporary times, the advent of the internet and access to social networking sites have facilitated Dalit communities' resistance to the mainstream media's upper caste hegemony.

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ABDUR RAZZAQUE KHAN

Chapter 4 Media, Politics and Marginalization of the Khasi Community in Bangladesh

ABSTRACT:

Marginalization is a social process one can experience at the individual, community and societal level. A few sections of communities remain excluded from mainstream society in terms of cultural, social and also unequal access to opportunities and uneven attention from the media. The marginalization persists due to economic, social and political circumstances; some groups are pushed to every margin of survival and can barely make a living. The Khasi community of Magurchhara in Bangladesh is one among them that faced a severe crisis in the glory of the past. The gas field explosion by the Occidental Company of the United States of America (USA) while drilling occurred more than twenty-five years ago and resulted in severe economic and environmental damage to the Khasis of Magurchhara in Bangladesh. After the explosion, none expressed any concern for the physical, mental and financial damage caused to the Khasi community. Looking at the process of social exclusion and marginalization of Khasi communities and its relation with media, it is believed that over a while, the media has hardly played a role in terms of providing wider coverage of the plights of the Khasi community. It is not only the coverage but also representing their socio-cultural and religious life. This chapter is based on a detailed content analysis of four major national dailies for six weeks to see how the four major national dailies treated an ethnic minority group named Khasi in Bangladesh. Thus, this chapter examines the roles of national media, including other actors like the state and the corporation (Occidental), in Bangladesh's specific political-economic context. This study revealed that corporate journalism and mainstream media of the country failed to address the reality of the subaltern Khasi community, an ethnic and indigenous minority group in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Media, Corporate Journalism, Magurchhara Calamity, Khasi Community, and Marginalization

Introduction

The post-Cold War era has significantly changed today's unipolar world system. Everything from politics to trade and, of course, the media world has undergone drastic changes. The only motto of this new world is to worship and adore *the capital, the power and the elite*. It is well established that media has a moral obligation to society. Media accommodates and acts as the voice of the voiceless and speaks for the subaltern (Khan, 2000; 2006a; 2006b). The media takes a stand in favour of society's ignored and neglected ones. But in this post-Cold War era, the media's role has been dramatically transformed worldwide, especially in developing countries. In most cases, the media fails to address, investigate and uphold the real societal issues that deserve special attention. Moreover, the media ignores highlighting critical national issues and people's interests; rather, it serves as the major tool of international capitalism. Solomon (1994) argues that the mainstream media tilts towards power. He continues to highlight:

Countless stories describe homelessness but not the real-estate manoeuvres connected to it; daily newspapers do not print photos of the profiteers next to the pictures of their victims. Even when journalists focus sharply on the effects of pollution, the extent of the profitable corporate arrogance involved rarely gets into the media frame.

In the corporate capitalist system, the media acts as *Manufacturing consent* for the societal elite and powerful section that uses media to protect their interest and capital. While doing this, the media acts as a *Propaganda tool* to give a logical framework for their anti-people actions and malpractices. Herman and Chomsky (1994) deal with the point:

But even more important in this context is the question of the attention given to a fact placement, tone and repetitions, the framework of analysis within which it is presented and the related facts that accompany it and give it meaning (or preclude understanding). A careful reader looking for a fact can sometimes find it with diligence and a sceptical eye tells us nothing about whether that fact received the attention and context it deserved, whether it was intelligible to the reader or effectively distorted or suppressed. What level of attention it deserved may be debatable, but there is no merit to the pretence that because certain facts may be found in the

media by a diligent and skeptical researcher, the absence of radical bias and de facto suppression is thereby demonstrated.

The press of Bangladesh has played a significant role in people's struggles and movements against oppressive mechanisms since 1947. The country's media declared solidarity with the people in their different struggles at different times. In contemporary times, media has been controlled and supported by capitalism in the world (Khan 2000; 2006a; 2006b). As a result, corporate investment has gained momentum in the media business. Today's media are not only part of the capitalist world but the politics as well. Ownership plays a significant role in the media, especially since it has a greater impact on news selection and coverage. Bangladesh media seemed to be affiliated with corporate giants and political parties. One such instance of the past in Bangladesh, i.e. Magurchhara³⁴ gas field explosion, where the press seemed to be controlled in terms of the media coverage of this explosion is concerned.

This explosion severely affected about 400 Khasis³⁵ of forty families in Magurchhara Khasi *Punji*³⁶ and left them in homeless and hapless conditions. The fire damaged Khasi *Pan*³⁷ and *Jhum*³⁸ on 500 acres of land, causing a huge loss to the property worth about 2.5 crore Taka. This explosion affected the fertility of the land and degraded its quality. After the gas field explosion, none of the stakeholders expressed

34 Situated in the Surma basin rich in liquid hydrocarbon, the Moulavibazar well-1 in block-14 blew up in the early hours on 15 June 1997, opening a gas reserve of approximately 700 m cubic feet.

35 An indigenous and ethnic minority group reside in Bangladesh's greater Sylhet region – Habiganj, Moulavibazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj districts. Around 30,000–40,000 Khasis live in eighty *Punjis* in the area.

36 *Punji* means a Khasi village. Magurchhara Khasi *Punji* is under Komalganj police station in Moulavibazar district and is one of the eighty *Punjis* of the greater Sylhet region. This is the worst and only affected habitation adjacent (250 yards) to the Magurchhara gas explosion site.

37 The Khasis cultivate betel leaf that is known as Khasi Pan. Therefore, their life depends on betel leaf production and selling, which is called the *betel leaf economy*.

38 'Jhums' means the traditional slash and burn system, which is applied in betel leaf cultivation and production by the Khasis.

grief over the physical, mental and financial damage caused by the Occidental³⁹ company of the USA. The Bangladesh railway was worried about its broken rail lines. The Bangladesh Tea Board expressed concern for damaged tea gardens, and the Environment and Forest Department was anxious about the destroyed forest. But no one voiced for the Khasis – the worst victim of this man-made calamity.

Capitalizing on this situation, the Occidental Company offered meagre lump sum compensation to the affected Khasis. The mainstream media failed to address the Magurchhara calamity (Khan 2000, 2006a; 2006b). During and after the gas explosion, the newspapers, radio and television channels reported on issues such as the size and shape of the gas flame explosion; damage caused to the forests, the tea gardens and railway lines; the suffering of the people due to the disruption of the rail link between Sylhet, Dhaka and Chittagong; Occidental Company for dousing gas-fire; and the reaction of the people who lived adjacent to the explosion site. It was noticed that there was no special report, feature, article, interview, editorial, post-editorial or even letter-to-the-editor column in the leading national newspapers depicting the pains and sufferings of the Khasi community.

An interview with one of the editors⁴⁰ of a leading English daily from Dhaka suggests that ‘I was not aware of the Khasi people in the Magurchhara area and their suffering due to the explosion. I would have focused and given priority on the issue if I had known about the incident.’

The editor termed this sort of failure as their limitation. All this implies that there is no room for the voiceless and unknown community in the Western capitalist media system. This is simply because media are nothing but a *manufacturing consent for the powerful*. As the Khasis are marginalized, powerless and not part of the mainstream Bengali population, the media did not give proper attention to their causes and sufferings. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina⁴¹ and the then leader of the

39 Occidental Petroleum Company is an American company engaged in hydrocarbon exploration in the United States and the Middle East, Canada, Chile and other various parts of the world.

40 Editor of *The Daily Star*, Mr Mahfuz Anam, expressed this view in an interview with the researcher at his office in Dhaka held on 8 April 2002.

41 Sheikh Hasina visited the Magurchhara gas field accident site on 17 June 1997.

opposition in parliament, Begum Khaleda Zia, visited the spot after the accident. Neither the prime minister nor the leader of the opposition visited the Magurchhara Khasi *Punji*, 250 yards off the gas-field accident site, nor spoke to them. Instead, they held meetings and talked to the Bengali people far from the spot, advised local people not to be afraid of the explosion and assured them of sufficient support to overcome the crisis. Unfortunately, the leading newspapers whose Dhaka-based staff were stationed there to cover the incident with their local correspondents could not point out this exciting lacuna in their news dispatches dateline Magurchhara. This indicates that the media provides some facts about an issue; however, it proves absolutely nothing about the adequacy or accuracy of that coverage. The mass media suppresses a great deal (Herman & Chomsky, 1994).

The media failed to play a positive and pro-people role in the Magurchhara calamity incident due to common interest and support for business conglomerates or large business groups. A few corporate or business groups wanted to invest in media like newspapers or private television channels (Khan 2000; 2006a; 2006b) for their interests. This trend has been noticed in today's Bangladesh media scenario since the 1990s. Most major newspapers and television channels are a part of large business conglomerates. Having found the media business as a solid weapon to protect their business interests and control the country's politics and power, most modern merchants and business tycoons have turned to the media world (Khan, 2000; 2006a; 2006b; 2020; Khan, M.A.R, 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2016). Unfortunately, this has given birth to a polluted media environment, which is pro-power and elite and can't protect the interest of the voiceless in our society. Talking about the media's nature and character, Islam (2002) argues:

Media in the hands of merchants or business tycoons can hardly become the voice of the grassroots. South Asian countries follow capitalist ideology, but capitalism is only crony capitalism here, where the disparity between the elite and the lower strata of society is widening. Media, in the hands of a few merchants, over and over again find themselves playing dualism. They maintain elite opinion but are complacent about their so-called normative role in society.

In such a context, can the media speak for the subaltern? Thus, in the past, the voice of the subaltern could hardly be noticed in the press coverage. The media cannot accommodate the subaltern due to the existing nature of media business. Prominent business people own media in Bangladesh, India and other South Asian countries. These media houses' works are so close to the political elites. As a result, the media has only become complacent to these forces and they reflect the dominant elite perceptions in South Asian society, polity and economy (Islam, 2002).

Media industries such as newspapers and television are not established only to preach the ideology. The business itself is a primary concern for the media industry. At the same time, these industries are not like other industries whose prime concern is profit. Media has a moral obligation towards society. Is today's media discharging that obligation to society and the people? Media industries receive a huge investment from corporates and other sectors to gain profits irrespective of questions of values, morals and ethics (Stevenson, 1999). Commercial intentions and gains replace media industries' values and moral obligations. Media has lost credibility to deal with the truth for the betterment of the teeming million; instead, the media works as the organ and mouthpiece of the existing power structure (Khan, 2000; 2006a; 2006b; 2020; Khan, M.A.R, 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2016).

This study assumes that media transformation during the post-cold war era in Bangladesh has given birth to the boom of media industries, especially newspapers and private television channels. However, this media boom has failed to become a boon for the grassroots people due to its pro-elite nature and power practice combination (Khan, 2000; 2006a; 2006b; 2020; Khan, M.A.R, 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2016). Taking the Magurchhara gas field explosion as a case, this study aims to look at the political economy and the media transformation that is taking place in Bangladesh. The attitude of the media to deal with the most ignored, neglected, marginalized ethnic minorities issues, how media served the interest of business tycoons. How do the media keep the masses alienated, particularly the Khasi community in Bangladesh, in this context?

Methodology

A multi-method approach⁴² has been followed for this study (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). In contemporary times, surveys, fieldwork, experiments, cases and unobtrusive studies are the main aspects of social research. Though these methods have limitations, they can also provide valid information on social phenomena.

This study followed analytical and descriptive methods, including literature review, surveys, content analysis of the four major leading dailies, interviews with the editors and the news editors of the selected dailies, other journalists and media scholars and experts. The four largest circulated national dailies – *The Daily Ittefaq* (number of circulations is 2, 90, 200), *The Daily Janakantha* (number of circulations is 2, 90, 200) and *The Daily Star*⁴³ (number of circulations is 4, 88, 114) and *The Bangladesh Observer*⁴⁴ (number of circulations is 35,040) were selected based on the highest number of circulations for the content analysis of Magurchhara gas field explosion reporting from 16 June to 31 July 1997.⁴⁵ The researcher collected the data and relevant information using various methods.

The content analysis⁴⁶ of the four major dailies is one of the main parts of the methodology to carry out the study. Content analysis allows the investigator to observe a communicator's public messages at times and places. The procedure also allows him to carry out his observation without fear that the attention will create a bias in the communicator (Budd et al.,

42 The multi-method approach is a strategy for overcoming each method's weakness and limitations by deliberately combining different types of methods within the same investigation.

43 The Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) Report, Department of Film and Publication (DFP, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 18 November 2021.

44 *The Bangladesh Observer* has been defuncted since 2006.

45 The Magurchhara Gas Field explosion occurred in early 15 June 1997. The media began covering the incident from 16 June 1997.

46 Content analysis is a systematic technique for analysing message content and message handling. It is a tool for observing and analysing the overt communication behaviour of selected communicators.

1967). The content analysis clearly shows the media's performance in dealing with the Magurchhara calamity. Content analysis is a research technique for the 'objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (Berelson, 1952).

For this study, the items covered under the dailies' content analysis include news, features and articles, interviews, editorials, post-editorials, letters to the editor and illustrations with the number of each item and their covered space in column cm measurement. Both the position and key theme of each item were scrutinized. Other items like advertisements, sports, stock exchange, regular weekly and special supplements are excluded from the content analysis.

Out of the selected newspapers, *The Bangladesh Observer*, *The Daily Star* and *The Daily Ittefaq* maintain eight-column grids on each page. However, *The Daily Janakantha* follows a six-column width on its front and back pages. The calculation of news space of *The Daily Janakantha* pages containing six columns was done based on an eight-column grid to maintain uniformity in measurement with the other pages of this newspaper. Other newspapers such as *The Daily Star*, *The Bangladesh Observer* and *The Daily Ittefaq* were selected for critical evaluation and analysis. Apart from this, eight-column widths in page make-up were measured across all selected newspapers to keep uniformity in column cm calculation.

Theoretical Framework

Contextualizing the media issue and its role in society, a few critical theories have been examined in this chapter. The critical theory works with an emancipatory approach to inequality, exploitation, hegemony and domination in any power relation structure. As Khan (2013) puts it:

The focus of the critical inquiry is on the power relationships in a given society and how hegemonic forces and injustice work within the society. How false consciousness contributes to oppression and manipulation of a larger section of the society who have no voice at all. The researchers try to discard the false consciousness by

making people understand how it takes place and they take effective action for a change in society.

The critical theory works for an emancipatory change in society. A critical theory describes the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry, which aim to decrease domination and increase freedom in all forms. The critical theory works holistically and explains the social phenomena in their totality. Bronner (2011) explains that 'critical theory was always concerned not merely with how things were but how they might be and should be'. 'Critical theorists learned to interpret the particular with an eye on the totality. The moment of freedom appeared in the demand for recognition by the enslaved and the exploited' (Bronner, 2011).

To be more specific, the *critical political economy of communication and media* has been conceptualized from a theoretical lens. The political economy of communication and media deals with social relations, mainly power relations in a given society. How are communication relations being constructed? Who holds power and how? How is power exercised in a communication situation? The political economy of communication and media addresses all these questions. As Mosco (2009) elaborates, 'political economy is the study of social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources, including communication resources'. He thinks that the political economy of communication is 'the study of control and survival in social life'. Here, Mosco explains that control is a *political power* and process that shapes the relationships among the people of a given society. *Survival* is related to *economic* power that compasses a society's production and reproduction system. Hardy (2014) explains:

How do media relate to power sources in society? Whose interests are represented? Who is represented in the Media? Who has access to communication resources – and what can they do with them? Political economy argues that to answer such questions, we need not only the analysis of texts or texts and readers but also the analysis of the forces and interests shaping media and the condition of production. How you judge political economy will depend on how you view the focus of the investigation – the questions it poses and tries to answer. It will also depend on whether you share perspectives that insist there are 'problems' in our media systems and whether you are persuaded it is important to examine these problems and consider how to try to put

them right. *The critical political economy of communications is a critical realist approach that investigates problems connected with communication resources.*

However, Hardy (2014) came up with a more concrete definition of the Critical Political Economy (CPE) of the media. He questions the mainstream media by asking: who holds power and how does she/he practice it? Who owns the media and the media represents whom and how? Whose interest does media serve and how? Who has access to media? The critical political economy of media emphasizes altruistic and pro-people press in a given society.

Media Performance of the Magurchhara Calamity

The Magurchhara gas field explosion⁴⁷ is one of the worst man-made calamities in the history of Bangladesh. However, it caused massive damage to the country's environment, wealth and property. Local tea gardens, the forest areas and the railway department were severely affected due to the explosion. This is one side of the story. On the other hand, an indigenous group of people – the Khasi community of the Magurchhara Khasi *Punji* – was the only human habitation in the locality affected by the gas field explosion. The fire, directly and indirectly, affected forty families of the Magurchhara Khasi *Punji* (Magurchhara Khasi village), 250 metres off the accident site. Their houses and belongings were burnt to ashes. Apart from this, betel leaf cultivation on fifty acres of land was damaged, causing a loss of 2.50 crore Taka in Bangladesh currency.

This chapter critically studies the media coverage of the Magurchhara gas field explosion over two months from the date of the explosion. The media coverage by four leading English dailies of Bangladesh – *The Bangladesh Observer*, *The Daily Star*, *The Daily Ittefaq* and *The Daily Janakantha* – were examined and mapped through quantitative content analysis in terms of a few stories (photographs, Figures, illustrations and

47 The incident took place in the early hours of 15 June 1997.

images) covered, types of stories covered and space of stories covered in post gas field explosion, especially coverage of the plight of the Khasi community.

The Bangladesh Observer

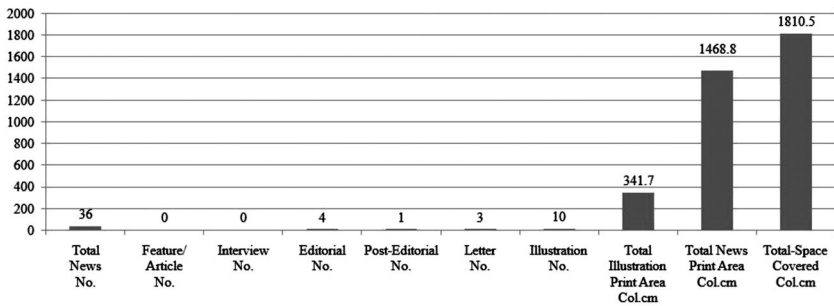
This English language daily was one of the country's most circulated and oldest newspapers. The well-known and prestigious daily came into being on 11 March 1949. Earlier, it was known as *The Pakistan Observer*. After the independence of Bangladesh, it got the name *The Bangladesh Observer*⁴⁸ in 1972. A total of thirty-six news stories related to the Magurchhara calamity with 1,810.5 column cm covered space appeared in *The Bangladesh Observer* from 16 June to 31 July 1997. Of the total stories, thirty were Front-Page (FP) and six were back and other-page stories. This includes seven First-Lead (FL) stories, two Second-Lead (SL) stories and the other twenty-seven other types of accounts. In addition, there were four editorials with 175.6 column cm covered space, one post-editorial with eighty column cm covered area, three letters to the editor with 46.8 column cm covered space and ten illustrations with 341.7 column cm covered space. Of the illustrations, six were on the Front-Page (FP) and four were on the back and other pages. There was no single article, feature or interview related to the explosion in the daily time frame of content analysis.

The content of the news and other items published in the daily mainly focused on the disaster and its control activities. The salient features of the newspaper on the Magurchhara in June and July 1997 highlighted the gas field explosion and its aftermath situation. There was no special story

48 This was a privately owned national daily published in Dhaka since its inception. The then foreign minister of the Pakistan government, Late Hamidul Haque Chowdhury, was its founder. Renowned journalists of international repute, like Abdus Salam, Obayedul Haque and S. M. Ali, edited the paper in different periods. The country's well-known and leading journalists were attached to this daily in various capacities. A total of 262 staff, including forty-four journalists, was attached to the daily, with a circulation number of 35,040. The regular daily issue contained sixteen pages with a total print area of 5,120 column cm.

or item on the affected Khasi people in the Daily for the whole of June. On the Front-Page (FP), a piece of double-column news with 1.1. column cm was devoted to the Khasis out of its 23.8 column cm covered space on 24 June 1997. The news story suggests that ‘the Occidental authorities would compensate the Khasi tribe affected by the fire due to the gas-filled explosion’. Again, on 25 June 1997, in a single-column story, it was reported that ‘Khasi people demand compensation’.

In July 1997, the news report on the Magurchhara accident covered issues like those of June 1997. However, in July 1997, there was no single line



Total Print Area = 5120 Col.cm
 Average Print Area Covered (45 Days) in percentage = 0.785 %
 The Bangladesh Observer

Figure 1: Number of Stories Covered on Magurchhara Incidents by *The Bangladesh Observer*

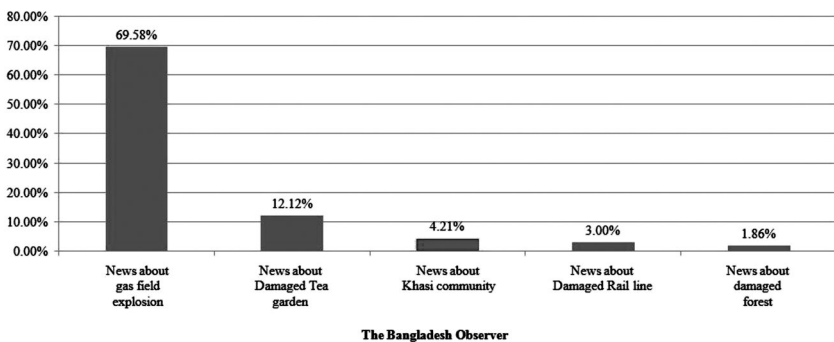


Figure 2: Types of News Stories on Magurchhara Incidents Published by *The Bangladesh Observer*

of news or other items on the affected Khasi people of the Magurchhara Khasi *Punji* [Village] as it is evident from Figure 1 and Figure 2. After the gas-fled explosion, like other dailies, *The Bangladesh Observer* came up with four editorials from 17 June to 8 July 1997. All the editorials dealt with gas field explosion, its aftermath and what could and should be done. However, no single news report has projected the sufferings and plight of the affected Khasis of Magurchhara Khasi *Punji*.

It was noticed that out of three *letters to the editor* about the explosion, none of the stories covered the plight of the Khasis of Magurchhara. This indicates that the readers were not concerned about the affected Khasis or didn't have enough information and knowledge about the Khasis of the Magurchhara *Punji*. If extensive reporting could be done about the Khasis and their plight, then it could be said that at least some daily readers would raise their voices for the Khasis through their writings.

The illustrations about the Magurchhara gas field explosion failed to project the Khasis and their miseries like the news. The key themes of all ten photoFigures were: the explosion in the Magurchhara gas field, firefighters extinguishing the fire, security forces at the site, fire and damaged rail track, a visit to the spot by the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina and the then leader of the opposition in the parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, and so on. Though there were few lines in the news devoted to the Khasis, there was not a single illustration of the Khasis. Figure 1 and Figure 2 depict a dismal picture of *The Daily Bangladesh Observer* while covering the Magurchhara gas field explosion. *The Daily Bangladesh Observer* failed to project Khasis' plight in its reports.

*The Daily Star*⁴⁹

This is another prestigious and one of the most circulated English dailies in the country. During the period of content analysis, i.e., from

49 *The Daily Star* is an associate organization of Transcom Group of Companies, a leading corporate group in the country. *The Daily Star* was established on 14 January 1991. Renowned journalist and editor of international repute, the late S. M. Ali, was its founder editor. About 200 staff members, including fifty journalists, are involved daily. *The Daily Star* is published from Dhaka and has a circulation number of 4, 48, 114. The regular and daily issue of *The Daily Star* contains sixteen pages with a total print area of 5, 028 column cm. This is a privately owned national daily.

16 June to 31 July 1997, forty-eight news items were reported in *The Daily Star* about the Magurchhara incident with 2, 116.8 column cm covered space. Of the total news items, forty-five were Front-Page (FP) and three were back and other-page stories. Of them, eight were First-Lead (FL) stories, four were Second-Lead (SL) stories and the remaining thirty-six were different types of stories. Apart from news, there were three editorials with 107.4 columns cm covered space, four letters to the editor with 70.5 columns cm covered space and one article/feature with 86.4 columns cm covered space about the gas explosion. There was no single interview or post-editorial on the issue during content analysis. Besides all these write-ups, seventeen illustrations with 482 column cm covered space on the Magurchhara gas explosion. Six pictures were on the Front-Page (FP) and the rest of the eleven were on the back and other pages.

The contents of the reported news in June 1997 included a gas field explosion and its damage, disruption of the rail link between Dhaka-Sylhet and Sylhet-Chittagong; visit to the spot by the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the then leader of the opposition in the parliament Begum Khaleda Zia and the then energy minister Nooruddin Ahmed; steps to control the fire though the local experts had opposite views to control the fire. Occidental termed most reports as 'fairy tales'. Additionally, financial losses were reported for twelve tea gardens, and the railway incurred a daily loss of 15 lakh Taka. The inquiry committee found contradictory statements of the contractors about the accident, and train service was yet to resume. No single line of news was devoted to the Khasis in *The Daily Star* in June 1997.

The salient features of the filed reports in *The Daily Star* in July 1997 were the same as in June. There was a Front-Page (FP) double-column report on 24 July 1997, with forty-four column cm covered space. Of the total news space, only 1.5 column cm was devoted to the Khasis by saying, 'Earlier, on Saturday, forty more Khasi families were evacuated from Magurchhara. They have been taken to Kamalganj for rehabilitation.'

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show how the affected Khasis were ignored and reported in *The Daily Star*. The coverage of the three editorials had less

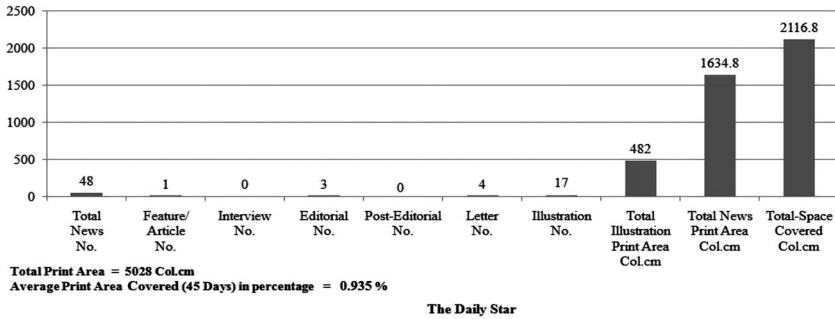


Figure 3: Number of Stories Covered on Magurchhara Incidents by *The Daily Star*

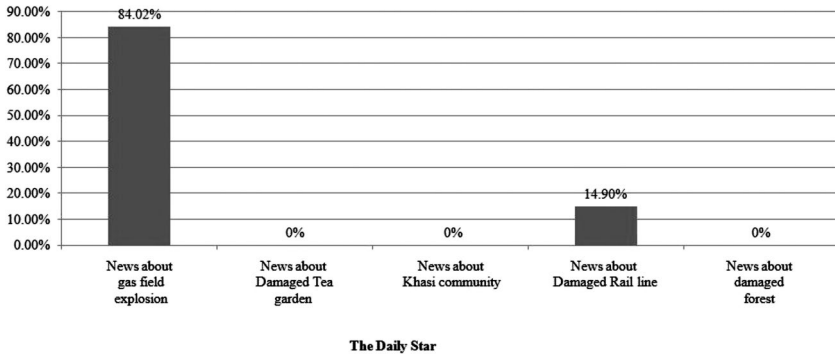


Figure 4: Types of News Stories on Magurchhara Incidents Published by *The Daily Star*

emphasis on the Khasis’ problems or plight. Instead, these focused on gas-field fire, its issues and drilling safety measures. There was no single letter from the readers to the editor regarding this issue, and this newspaper could not file reports about the Khasis of Magurchhara *Punji*. The editor expressed their failure to protect the Khasi community due to the lack of information about this incident.

Despite the weightage given when the prime minister or leader of the opposition visited the spot, there was no illustration of the plight of Khasis and their *Punji* at Margurchhara. The political coverage got mileage during that phase.

*The Daily Ittefaq*⁵⁰

This is one of Bangladesh's highest-circulated national dailies. It is one of the country's oldest and most popular Bengali dailies. It has got a glorious past. During the study period, i.e., from 16 June to 31 July 1997, forty-three news items on the Magurchhara field explosion were reported with a covered space of 1, 818.3 column cm. Of the total news, thirty were Front-Page (FP) news and thirteen were back and other page news. These include seven First-Lead (FL) stories, eight Second-Lead (SL) stories and twenty-eight other types of stories. Besides news, there were three editorials with 132 columns cm covered space, only one letter to the editor with seventeen columns cm covered space and eight illustrations with 224.8 columns cm covered space. Of the total illustrations, seven were on the front page and one was on the back page. There was not a single article/feature, interview or post-editorial about the gas field explosion.

The contents of reported news about the Magurchhara gas field explosion in June and July 1997 were: gas field explosion and its aftermath situation, a visit to the spot by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the leader of the opposition in the parliament Begum Khaleda Zia. Only one line was devoted to the Khasis in the news on 24 July 1997 saying, 'The Khasis have been evacuated from the *Punji* (village).' This was the overall news treatment for the Khasis in the daily.

50 It was established with a political mission to speak in favour of the Bengali people and work as a vanguard for the people in the Pakistani regime. A famous politician and journalist late Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mian was its founder editor. On 26 June 1952, *The Ittefaq* came into being as a weekly. One and a half years later, it became a daily newspaper on 24 December 1953. The daily is a part of Ittefaq Group of Publication Limited. The other sisters-concern of this group are: *The Daily New Nation*, *The Weekly Robbar* (Sunday) and *Zenith* (the largest packaging industry in the country). Now *The Daily Ittefaq* is the highest-paid daily. More than 600 staff members, including journalists, are attached to this prestigious daily. It is a privately owned daily published from Dhaka with a circulation number of 2, 90, 200. The regular daily issue of *The Ittefaq* contains sixteen pages with a total print area of 6872 column cm.

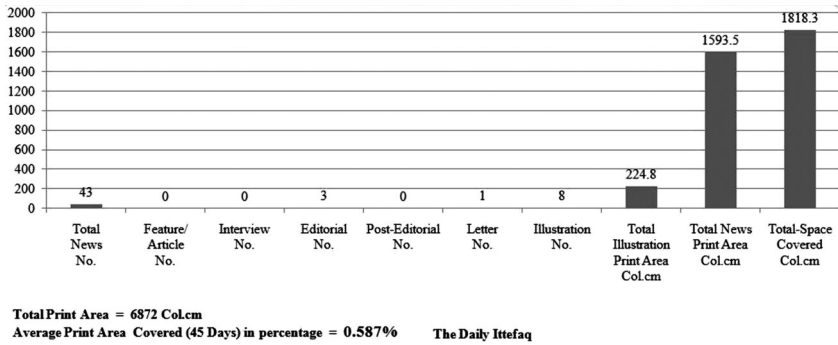


Figure 5: Number of Stories Covered on Magurchhara Incidents by *The Daily Ittefaq*

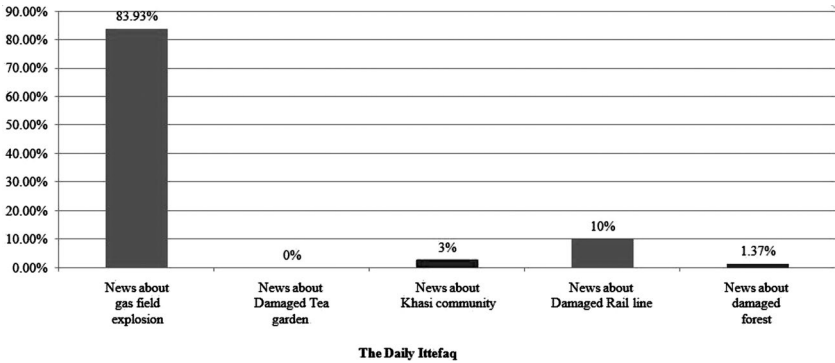


Figure 6: Types of News Stories on Magurchhara Incidents Published by *The Daily Ittefaq*

As it is evident from Figure 5 and Figure 6, *The Daily Ittefaq* produced three editorials during the content analysis period. Like other dailies, it mainly dealt with gas field explosions and the actions of the government and the Occidental Company. The 31 July 1997 editorial, entitled ‘Terrible Situation at Magurchhara’, emphasized proper investigation and compensation to forty Khasi families. There was only one ‘letter to the editor’ on 30 June 1997, with an appeal to restore the Magurchhara environment. The illustrations’ subjects were a visit to the explosion site by Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina, the instrument being lifted from cargo, flames coming down, attempts to make for fire dousing and train boogies at Sylhet railway station.

*The Daily Janakantha*⁵¹

This is another of the largest daily circulated in the country. Earlier, *The Daily Janakantha* was published in three major cities, Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna, and one district town, Bogra, with the same edition simultaneously. This created popularity and demand among the newspaper readers.

The most news, such as sixty stories related to the Magurchhara incident, were reported in *The Daily Janakantha* from 16 June to 31 July 1997, with a covered space of 3, 458.11 column cm. Of the total news, thirty-seven were Front-Page (FP) stories and the remaining twenty-three were back and other-page stories. These include eight First-Lead (FL) stories, five Second-Lead (SL) stories and forty-seven different types of accounts. Five editorials with 204.24 column cm covered space and three articles/features with 235.6 column cm dealt with the issue during the content analysis period. Like news, *The Daily Janakanth*' published the highest number of illustrations, twenty-five, about the gas field explosion during this time. Of the total images, twenty-one were on the (Front) and the remaining four were on the back and other pages. There was no post-editorial, letters to the editor or interview about the Magurchhara calamity in the daily.

The news reported in June and July in *The Daily Janakantha* covered issues like the gas field explosion and its aftermath, alleged irresponsibility against the Occidental Company; an attempt to douse the fire; the energy Minister's statement at the parliament about getting compensation, and the cabinet was informed; visit to the spot by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

51 *The Daily Janakantha* was established on 1 January 1992 and has been regularly published. But it came into the market on 21 February 1993. Around 500 staff members belong to the Daily, including twenty-five news people in its Dhaka office. This is a privately owned newspaper and a part of Globe-Janakantha Shilpa Paribar (GJSP). Now its circulation is 2, 90, 200. The regular and daily issue of *The Daily Janakanth* contains sixteen pages with a total print area of 6, 932 column cm.

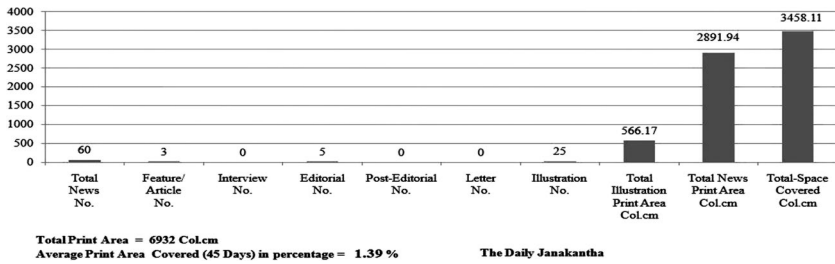


Figure 7: Number of Stories Covered on Magurchhara Incidents by *The Daily Janakantha*

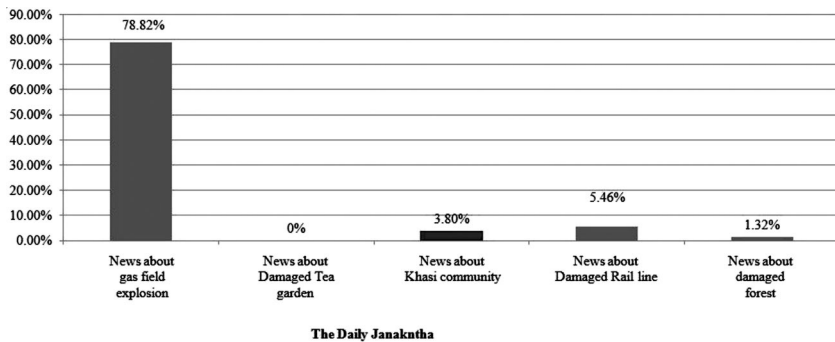


Figure 8: Types of News Stories on Magurchhara Incidents Published by *The Daily Janakantha*

and the leader of opposition in the parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, attempt to repair rail-link; repair work of rail-link and its restoration; attempt to show the gas field explosion as a mere accident by a quarter; submission of the inquiry committee report and effect on the environment due to gas field explosion. However, of the total news stories in June 1997, only one report about the local people’s attack on the Khasis of Magurchhara *Punji* was noticed on the daily front page on 17 June 1997.

In July 1997, four news items fully and partially depicted the Khasi people’s suffering and the situation of Magurchhara *Punji*. On 2 July 1997, money demand for compensation was reported on the front page, 2.5 crores for the affected Khasis of Magurchhara *Punji*; on 23 July 1997, a report

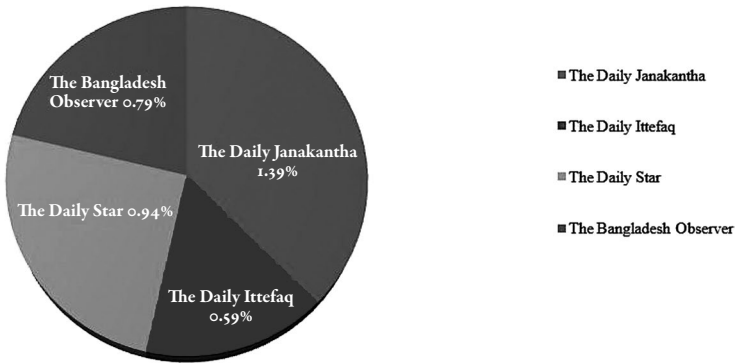
stated that Khasi people had been evacuated from Magurchhara *Punji*; on 25 July 1997, a report projected the miseries of the Khasis people; and on 27 July 1997, in the news with other development, it was reported that the Khasi Welfare Society (KWS) demanded compensation for the affected Khasis of Magurchhara *Punji*.

Figure 7 and Figure 8 give the same picture as projected by other dailies that are covered under this study. It was found that only five editorials were published about the Magurchhara gas field explosion from 18 June to 24 July 1997. On 19 June 1997, *The Daily Janakantha* dealt with the Khasis' problem and plight in its editorial, 'Vandalism at Khasia village in Magurchhara.' A grim picture of Khasis – how they have been affected by the fire and oppressed by the local people – gives a whole picture of the situation. All three features/articles were related to the overall gas field explosion situation. These articles said nothing about the Khasis, which appeared on 19 June 1997, 24 June 1997 and 26 June 1997.

All twenty-five illustrations depicted the issues such as the gas field explosion, its aftermath and Prime minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to the spot. Unfortunately, there was no post-editorial, letter to the editor by the common people and interview coverage regarding the explosion and Khasis issues covered by *The Daily Janakantha*.

Media Performance of Dailies: A Comparison

All the selected dailies under study took up the Magurchhara gas field explosion as a national issue and made the First-Lead (FL) and the Second-Lead (SL) stories for some consecutive days. Apart from covering the incident as the First- and Second-Lead stories, these four dailies also reported other types of stories. However, the focal point of Magurchhara's reporting was the gas field explosion and its aftermath. This includes damage and losses caused by the fire to the tea gardens, forest department and railway department, as well as the suffering of the local people. In addition, of course, the effect and impact of this accident on the environment was also highlighted. But there was no lead story (LS) or follow-up report about the affected and the problems of Khasis in the dailies.



Summary of the Content Analysis of Four Selected Newspapers Average Daily Covered Area (45 Days) in percentage

Figure 9: Summary of Average Number of News Coverage of Four Daily Newspaper

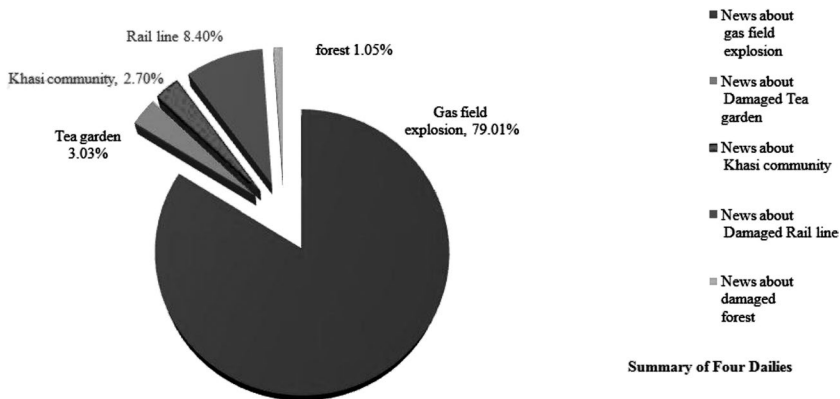


Figure 10: Summary of Average Types of News Coverage of Four Daily Newspapers

Of the dailies, (as shown in Figure 9), the highest amount of news about Magurchhara, that is sixty news items, were covered by *The Daily Janakantha* with a total covered space of 3, 458.11 column cm. It was followed by *The Daily Star*, covering forty-eight reports with 2, 116.8 column cm. Meanwhile, *The Daily Ittefaq* covered forty-three items with more covered space, i.e. 1, 818.3 column cm. *The Bangladesh Observer* filed thirty-six news stories with 1, 810.5 column cm. Again, *The Daily Janakantha* offered the highest number of editorials i.e. five on the Magurchhara issue. Apart

from dwelling on the different aspects of the Magurchhara gas field explosion, the daily mainly devoted one of its editorials to problems, sufferings and the plight of the Khasi people of the Magurchhara *Punji* titled 'Vandalism at Khasi village in Magurchhara' (the 19 June 1997 issue). Among its three editorials, as depicted in Figure 10, *The Daily Ittefaq* emphasized proper investigation and compensation to forty Khasi families in its 31 July 1997 editorial, 'Horrible Situation at Magurchhara.' Both *The Daily Star* (with three editorials) and *The Bangladesh Observer* (with four editorials) missed the Khasi people's problem in their editorials.

There was no post-editorial on the issue in *The Daily Janakantha*, *The Daily Ittefaq* and *The Daily Star* but in *The Bangladesh Observer*. However, *The Daily Janakantha* published the highest number of illustrations, i.e. twenty-five. *The Daily Star* with seventeen pictures, *The Bangladesh Observer* with ten and *The Daily Ittefaq* with eight followed this.

Political Economy of Communication: A Discussion

The results indicated that the overall media performance of the selected dailies in dealing with the Khasis issue regarding the Magurchhara calamity is not praiseworthy and satisfactory. It seems that the media have failed or ignored this Indigenous people group more or less simply because they are not part of the mainstream population of the country. A question arises as to why the newspapers fail to cover Khasis' plight and suffering from the Magurchhara gas explosion. Why was their issue ignored? While talking to this researcher, all the editors⁵² and news editors⁵³ of the

52 Editor Mahfuz Anam of *The Daily Star* talked to the researcher in an interview held on 8 April 2002 at his (editor) office in Dhaka. Editor of *The Bangladesh Observer*, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, had an interview with this researcher on 4 April 2005 at his (editor) office in Dhaka. Late Toab Khan, editor of *The Daily Janakantha*, talked to the researcher in an interview held at his (editor) office on 3 April 2002 in Dhaka.

53 Abdul Baten, News Editor of *The Daily Ittefaq*, talked to the researcher in an interview held at the daily's office on 4 April 2002 in Dhaka. Amit Habib, the then news editor of the *Daily Bhorer Kagoj* talked to the researcher in an interview held at Bhorer Kagoj office on 13 April 2002 in Dhaka.

selected dailies said that they didn't intend to avoid Khasis' issue in their dailies; rather, lack of information by the editors prompted them to overlook this incident. It can be said about the 'development for the majority at the cost of the minority', as experienced by the Khasis community of Magurchhara *Punji*.

The Bangladesh media, mainly the national dailies, covered the incident with utmost priority, making the event the First- or the Second-Lead story for their dailies. Most stories about the Magurchhara gas field explosion were front-page (FP) stories about the dailies. All this indicates that the accident attracted media coverage and continued for several days. Surprisingly, all the stories and items were on or about the Magurchhara gas field explosion. including how the gas field explosion occurred, who was affected and why, losses of the forest and railway departments and tea gardens, the local Bengali people's suffering, activities of dousing the fire, demand for compensation and so on. However, not a single daily gave top priority to the Khasis, who were affected by the gas field explosion. Sometimes, a few reports and other items get published in favour of the Khasis, but they do not get as much importance as they deserve. The content analysis of the selected four newspapers gives a dismal picture.

It's a fact that the newspapers had given less attention to covering Khasis' plight and suffering caused by the Margurchhara gas field explosion. All four dailies overlooked the issue due to mainstream journalism that cannot go beyond and even think of 'The Other' of 'We and They Discourse'. However, Van Dijk (2000) elaborates:

Minorities also have less access to the media because they do not control the many 'source discourses' on which daily news making is based: press conferences, press releases, briefings, information brochures, documentation, interviews and so on. Their opinions are less asked or found less credible or newsworthy, also because most journalists (and virtually all editors) are white.

As the Khasis do not control 'source discourse' and even though there is no Khasi among the journalist community, the mainstream journalism of our society cannot reflect the issue as expected. This is the major limitation of mainstream journalism. Khasis's issue would not have been overlooked or missed if the newspapers had tried investigative and interpretative

reports. The then news editor of the *Daily Bhorer Kagoj*, late Amit Habib on 13 April 2002 agreed with the point as he said, ‘We tried to uphold the truth and people’s interest. As a whole, the media could play a stronger role regarding Magurchhara.’

Corporate journalism has transformed the very nature of media in Bangladesh. The media in Bangladesh are owned and controlled by the political elites. Rahman and Riaz (2021) identified three factors in media ownership and concentration in Bangladesh. Big business groups owned most of the media outlets. The owners of these media houses are directly or indirectly close to the political elites and ruling party, and they have a political identity. The members of the same families control many businesses and media outlets. Andaleeb and Rahman (2015), Rahman et al. (2017) and Rahman (2020) analysed the relationship between media conglomerates and political elites, i.e. the *politico-media commercial nexus*.

One of the eminent scholars highlights:

This nexus is a complex relationship of mutually interdependent interests and interlocking networks between high-level political leaders, media owners, advertisers and top-tier industrial conglomerates. The nexus elucidates the fluid nature of political leadership and its internal meshing with commerce. The nexus transcends rigid ideological division among dominant political parties. (Rahman, 2020)

Deb (2020) finds that the Margurchhara gas field explosion exemplifies the nature of capitalist resource exploitation, in which both national and global institutions contribute to socio-ecological disruptions. Deb (2020) also observes that the authoritarian and undemocratic past made Bangladesh vulnerable to the free-market democracy, which contributed to the influx of foreign capital, intending to contribute to the economic development of the country.

Bangladesh allowed foreign corporations to invest in the country’s economy, as the state failed to compel the Occidental Company to compensate adequately. Deb (2020) paints the role of corporations, and the rule of law in Bangladesh goes hand in hand. Thus, the Occidental could easily manage the crisis after the gas field explosion. He was critical of corporate capitalism and the damage to the environment but failed to mention the Khasis affected by the Magurchhara gas field explosion.

Media scholar Chowdhury (2003) explains the nature and character of media in Bangladesh:

The media in Bangladesh was not fair in neutral reporting. This is a factual and not a value-loaded assessment. As it opened, the media saw that if it did not take a position very rigidly on the public side which was not keen to learn about all the sides but about the Iraqi side only and the embarrassments-military and political the US position, they might lose their readers. After years of arguing about occupying the neutral space, Western and Bangladeshi media became insistently partisan.

Today's Bangladesh press has been afflicted with partisanship. That is a dangerous tendency for a democratic environment in a given society. This is simply to create a public sphere in a civic, democratic society. The role of media is one of the central and major factors. Again, Chowdhury (2003) describes:

The media may make many of us feel emotionally better, but in the end, I feel that the media will be the worst casualty. It has lost what had taken almost a century of many sorts of movements within and outside to be achieved. But ultimately, the media was diminished by the dynamics of this war. The world has legitimized partisanship and this dreadful fact should make us feel very scared and apprehensive. If the media falls today, will the judiciary fall tomorrow?

Perhaps everything is falling in our society. The media and judiciary have failed due to partisanship in media and politics.

Conclusion

The Margurchhara gas field explosion is a vivid example, where the press fails to play its proper role in protecting the plights and pains of the minority groups, especially the ethnic ones, due to the inbuilt mechanism of the majority in a society like Bangladesh. Our journalism is very much concerned about its so-called 'Objectivity'. By keeping or maintaining objectivity, sometimes it cannot even think that they are far away from the reality that needs and demands their attention and projection. It

happened in the case of Khasi of Magurchhara *Punji*. The country's press did its best to report the incident. The journalists interviewed by this researcher emphasized that there was no motivation to ignore or neglect the Khasi community on the spot. Thus, the dominant press hardly thinks of minorities, especially the indigenous ones. That's why, they cannot feel or even believe that there might be some forest/hill people community around the explosion area and may be affected by the gas explosion. In today's Bangladesh, corporates seem to take control of journalism with their money, muscle and power. As a result, the issues of subaltern people are hardly addressed, making and pushing them further marginalized.

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SHIRIN ABBAS

Chapter 5 Media, Women and Marginalization: A Perspective on Gender Parity and Representation

ABSTRACT:

The marginalization of women continues to be a contentious issue even after two decades of the twenty-first century. The gender disparity remains an issue of concern. It also raises issues of economic disparity, lack of representation, oppression and exploitation of women who are no longer content to be regarded as the weaker sex. Along with these issues in general, the need for paid leaves during maternity and postpartum benefits, as well as leave during menstrual cycles, have raised concerns for women. The feeble representation and thus participation of the media in board rooms and in the media itself has led to a call for a more representative media that can raise stories of women and their needs and demands. From within, the media has raised voices that call for changes in skewed public policy and an end to gender inequality and other disparities. The various media that claim to be gender sensitive are hit hard by the malaise of underrepresentation of women within the echelons of power in the media. The chapter collates data from recent studies, giving a statistical representation of women in various media streams and their position compared to their male counterparts. It underscores the imminent need to make room in newsrooms for more stories and female participation.

Keywords: Gender, Media, Marginalization, Parity and Representation

Introduction

The second wave of feminism ushered in an area where women started demanding their rights of equal representation in workspaces. For equality and voting rights, women across Europe and the Western world demanded better representation in all spheres (Butler, 2004). In other

organized sectors, women's development programmes get implemented to improve skills and leadership capacities, in addition to ensuring gender parity in salary and removing the *glass ceiling*. The media has been unable to create equal space in its newsrooms so that males and females could be equally represented. To end this unfairness and deceit inside and outside the media industry, business policy may ensure women's participation, as this will encourage more inclusiveness from both sexes. These genres need to be more broadly accessible, especially to underrepresented genders, to minimize the gender gap (Brown & Lauder, 1991).

Several studies have spotted the lopsided gender representation of women in the media. Despite gender parity being little better in developed economies, the role and representation of women in media in India are grossly disproportionate to their presence in society (Carter & Weaver, 2003). From the feminist media theory perspective, women's representation is a significant issue to discuss. Women's images (re)presented, re(enforced) and reinforced in mass media and popular culture have underscored the racist and sexist stereotypes in businesses, labels and landscapes (Chambers et al., 2004), which, also according to Debra Merskin, is an exercise in power (Hassanzadeh et al., 2012).

Through the active, complex process of empowerment, women can fully realize who they are and their strength in all spheres of life. Five components make up women's empowerment: a strong sense of self-worth; the ability to make choices; access to opportunities and resources, the right to be in charge of their own lives, both inside and outside the home; and the ability to influence social change to create a more just social and economic system on a national and worldwide scale (Behal, 2011).

Literature Review

Women's role and presence in media have undoubtedly increased as it has developed and surpassed society, but much work remains to be explored. This is primarily because the media is a harsh, demanding workplace that presents many challenges for female journalists. The battle to carve out

their place has harmed societal attitudes and restricted the opportunities available to women who may like to work in the media but are faced with opposition from many fronts. Social inclusion and diversity are important for maintaining neutrality and balance in the media, both within and without. It thus becomes important to raise the issues and topics subverted in the media due to inadequate or misbalanced gender representation. Focusing on positive male agents who ushered these societal changes can remove bias and counter the exclusion of women-related issues in the media. The media can also play a role in denouncing both evident and concealed forms of gender discrimination. Emphasizing women, the media reinforces positive images and alters traditional stereotypes by portraying women as professionals, experts and competent resources in the fields of politics, government, security, health and education. By using investigative research, the media focuses on stories that throw light on the health hazards of domestic abuse on women and children, as well as the need to boost women's and girls' engagement in politics and education. As it is perceived that journalism is history in a daily dose, the media can chronicle, inform, educate and transform perceptions of women's role in societal progression (Bausinger, 1984).

The media, according to feminists, serves the interests of upper class elites and patriarchs, and women have no place in it (Bhavnani, 2001). Unusually, women's achievements and contributions to society receive the recognition they deserve. Women's concerns, like the rise in social violence against women due to dowries, prostitution, rape, trafficking and domestic abuse, receive substantial attention, in contrast to other women's issues, which are typically of lower intensity and issue-based with less in-depth study.

Several theoretical concepts can be applied to understand the context of disproportionate representation of women in media. The first is the Muted Group Theory propounded by Cheri Kramarae. According to Kramarae (1981), communication is a creation of men, allowing them to have an advantage over the female gender. Women must play *within the rules of the man's language*. They, therefore, cannot express their thoughts. Thus, equal rights are denied to people from different cultures and sub-cultures. This is because men who dominate the group have formulated

norms for its use. The exclusion of women from the productive space is not new; the full significance of this exclusion is only now coming within the scope of the gender lens.

When we perceive women and gender stereotyping in media from a 'structuration theory' point of view, it is found that those who dare to tread the road less travelled are often considered *exceptions to the rule* (Akalili & Olivia, 2021). They are ridiculed and considered unmanly by society. This view has prevented patriarchal societies from allowing women to work or continue their studies. This study also looks at gender stereotyping in the media using 'Giddens's Structuration Theory'. This article explains the underrepresentation of women in Indian media through qualitative descriptive research. The data sources and phenomena that are related to how women and gender stereotypes are portrayed in the media are described in this article. Anthony Giddens, a sociologist from England, is known as the *father of Structuration Theory*. According to the concept of *structural duality*, social structure either serves as the intent behind or is the outcome of regular, ongoing interaction. The *objectification* or *commodification* of women has long been a subject of feminist studies. In the context of behaviour, women are seen as *the oppressed*, the victimized, or, as Kramarae (1981) puts it, the muted group in a male-dominated society.

The inadequate representation and sidelining of women in the media is very often a direct output of patriarchal norms, and the dominance of stereotypes is the most significant influence on the overall image of Indian women. In terms of cultural and societal preconceptions, it is recognized that the media image distorts people's perspectives on the world. Women imploring themselves in these stereotypes end up doing the same as a 'habit'. This fact is consistent with structural theory and explains why viewing habit as a structure is possible.

As a result, women were subjected to the same-gender stereotypes in the media as existed in society. The press in India contributes significantly to the formation of social structure. However, Giddens claimed in Structuration Theory that women as agents have the right to oppose stereotype structure, the latter persists as a factor in controlling their behaviour. This still exists because of the presence of a sizeable number of

women who behave as per stereotypes. Gender roles persist and are kept alive as a result of these very stereotypes grown in society.

Statement of the Problem

The Indian Constitution has accorded a special and privileged status to women as a class and renounced practices derogatory to the dignity of women. The UN Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1996), included women in the media as one of its twelve essential areas of concern. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skill sets, knowledge and access to information technology (Baehr, 1980).

The media needs to inform and entertain the people. Media generates concepts, convey ideas and views, and forms opinions. It has the power to drastically change people's viewpoints on various subjects. Women's issues have received a lot of attention from the global media. Feminist scholars argue that the representation of women in the media is an essential subject since women are underrepresented in our patriarchal or male-dominated societies; giving them a platform to speak out against injustices and the gender gap they face is essential to their empowerment and development. In addition to prominent Western feminists like Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet and Bretty Friedman, a few Indian feminist writers, including Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin and Kiran Prasad, have also voiced criticism of the media's portrayal of women. A look at the various cultures across the world and the portrayal of women in the media is an adequate indication of the dismal role played by media. Although media representations of women and girls are constantly evolving, roles for girls in the media are often narrowly defined.

The digital media had an important role to liberate women, queers, people of colour, people with disabilities and the elderly from the expectations that come with an embodiment, but they failed to do so (Hermes, 1995; Noble, 2018). Though women's roles have grown exponentially in the media, when you view them through the lens of adequate representation,

one cannot but agree that the presence of women in media is intrinsically lacking.

The present decade has seen great strides towards gender/sex equality, but there is still a deep divide between perceptions and reality that remains and may be widening. According to a recent report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), gender inequality remains a nagging issue of concern. The gender gap persists in economic participation or opportunity of women and those concerning health and survival were getting worse globally. The most recent estimates by the WEF have thrown up an important poser; the overall global gender gap is not likely to be bridged for at least another hundred years or so. According to Demos and Kelly (2019), the current economic gender gap is unlikely to be bridged, not even for the next 217 years.

These findings and results were also revealed in gender social norms index, as depicted in Figure 11. The United Nations (UN) Women Report 2019–2020 suggests that only ten per cent of men and women did not claim to harbour some bias against females. In seventy-five different nations, the survey examined prejudices in various contexts, including the political and educational spheres. Nearly fifty per cent of men said they were more entitled to a job than women. A sizeable number, about one-third of the respondents, felt it was acceptable for men to hit their partners.

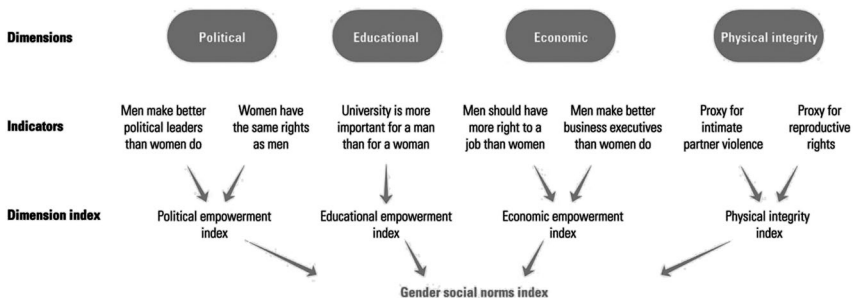


Figure 11: Arriving at Gender Social Norms Index

Source - Gender Social Norms Index, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

These reports, together with others, provide sufficient evidence of the pervasive gender prejudice and stereotypes. They also highlighted the glaring difference in access to basic amenities between men and women. Therefore, one can only speculate on the role of the media and the status of women within it in a developing nation like India, which has one of the lowest scores for women's safety in the world. The traditional patriarchal mindset of Indian society and unequal gender stereotypes have resulted in an adversely inclined situation against women in general and working women in particular. Even where people are open to accepting working women as partners, the attitudes towards women in a typical profession like the media are even more biased and unsupportive.

Methodology

This chapter includes eight research studies for critical evaluation on the theme 'role and representation of women within the media'. These studies were selected since they deal with the issues of women's representation and gender portrayal in media. How women in the media and of the media get marginalized. There were recent studies from reliable sources on gender representation in the media. All studies concluded that women are still marginalized despite their being marginally represented in the media. Digital media has the potential to liberate women, queers, people of colour, people with disabilities and the elderly from the expectations that come with an embodiment, but this hasn't affected as it is expected. Though women's roles have grown exponentially in the media, when you view them through the lens of adequate representation, the presence of women in media is intrinsically lacking. The content analysis of specific UN reports, i.e. UNDP and UN for women, was done to prove our assumptions. The titles of the reports were: firstly, the UN Women Report 2019 titled 'Gender Inequality in Indian Media' which has been a prime resource for this study and another UN report of 2020 titled 'Visualising the Data' which has provided insight into the skewed gender ratio within the media. Other than this, a critical study titled 'Portrayal of Women

in Media' by Sharma (2019) has been used as a referential text for the discussion.

Women's Portrayal in Media

While the media has been pointing accusatory fingers at organizations and questioning public policy on the grounds of gender inequality and other disparities, it is not untouched by the malaise of gender misrepresentation (Tuchman, 1978). Within the media, the situation is no different when it comes to gender equality and representation. '*Visualizing the Data*' a UN report was released in 2020. It focused on how women are portrayed, included and represented in the news media. Thirty-seven per cent of articles were reported and covered by women journalists in 2015. There is still a *glass ceiling* for female news reporters in newspaper bylines and newscast reporting (Visualizing the Data, 2020). Digital media ensures the democratization of media, and the situation is no different than other forms of media. Only about twenty-six per cent of stories in the digital media space are related to women. Roughly, four per cent of total coverage in traditional and internet news outlets questioned gender stereotypes. Stereotypes and the significant underrepresentation of women in the media signify that there is disrespect and aggressiveness towards women (Visualizing the Data, 2020).

Sharma (2019), in her paper, 'Women and Media: An Analysis of the Role of Women Journalists in Indian Media' examines the status and representation of women in the media and finds the rapid disorientation of gender roles in the media in India. According to her, women journalists are widely seen across all streams of the media, both in print and electronic media. From the very initial days when *Doordarshan* (national broadcaster) began its stint in India, women news readers made their space and are remembered even today. A few female journalists like Salma Sultan, Rini Simon, Gitanjali Aiyar, Meenu, Usha Albuquerque, Manjari Joshi, Sarla Maheshwari, Shobhna Jagdish and Neelam Sharma are still ripe in the memory of those

who have seen them establish their presence as newsreaders in English and Hindi on the *Doordarshan*. Several television debates noticed the participation of women panellists in contemporary issues. Various television studies which focused on the representation of women journalists in Indian media were few and far between. Sharma has tried to bridge this gap through her paper and find an accurate picture. She analysed how women are portrayed in Indian mainstream media, especially to understand their present condition. Sharma (2019) observed that female reporters cover a range of topics, such as sports, politics, crime, fashion, entertainment, etc. The findings are different and not representative when one considers the ratio and percentage of representation of female journalists in print and broadcast media. Her study on Indian media and the representation of women within it was undertaken to determine the representation of female journalists in the print and electronic media in India. This chapter looks at the representation of women journalists as Anchors and assesses gender neutrality in the matter of bylines, piece-to-camera (PTC) and voice-overs. In Sharma's study, the data were collected from five newspapers and selected television news channels, and the inferences pointing to the conclusion were drawn using content analysis methodology along with observation.

Some selected newspapers for this study were *The Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express*, *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhasker*. Several popular television news channels such as *Aaj-Tak*, *India TV*, *News18*, *ABP News*, *NDTV India* and *Zee News* were picked up for study. The information was gathered between January and March of 2019. The significant findings of the study were indeed an eye-opener. It was found that over eighty per cent of the stories in the print media were written by male journalists, and only about twenty per cent of the articles were written and authored by female journalists. While undertaking an analysis of the content in the print media, the study concluded that newspapers like *The Hindustan Times* and the Hindi paper *Dainik Jagran* featured the highest number of articles from women journalists.

In contrast, the electronic media was found to be more gender-representative, and there were more women news anchors than men on the channels. Electronic media Hindi news channel *ABP News* had the maximum number of female anchors (over fifty per cent) among the

selected channels for the study. In contrast, the electronic media news channel *News18* had the minimum number of female news anchors in selected news channels. Popular news channel *Aaj Tak* represented the maximum number of women journalists as far as PTC and voice-overs were concerned. The study also concluded that there was less than thirty per cent representation of women journalists in television news channels in PTC and voice sections. Contrasting to its earlier positive rating, *ABP News* had the minimum number of female journalists represented in PTCs and voice-overs.

It was ironic that debates and issues were commonly aired on various media platforms, but in reality, the representation of women journalists in the debates was grossly inadequate and the strengthening of the representation of women is a great concern in both Indian print and electronic media. The study found women inadequately represented in the media and called for a more balanced approach from media house management. Despite journalists like Barkha Dutt, covering some hard stories, most women journalists were seen covering soft news. A few seasoned women journalists had devoted themselves solely to political news coverage and issues of crime and conflicts.

A research study by the UN for Women titled ‘Gender Inequality in Media: A Preliminary Analysis, 2019’ and a content analysis-based investigation on ‘Representation of Women in Newsroom Leadership Positions in 2019’ were conducted before the pandemic. Even today, gender equality and parity in the media are still more of a mirage than a reality. A review of the data gathered by the study adequately emphasizes the enormous inequalities that need to be minimized before we even begin to tackle such issues.

The data from other reports are primarily used for the analysis of the current media landscape via the prism of gender. The gender inequality in Indian media report examined fifty-five media houses in the study, comprising five radio stations, eleven digital portals, thirteen newspapers, twelve magazines and fourteen television channels that were present in ten different cities. Print and digital media articles were categorized to ascertain the proportion of women’s representation. In broadcast media, most female panellists or anchors were noticed.

Gender Representation in English Newspapers

Six English newspapers were studied, and content analysis was done on over 3,000 writers whose articles appeared in these publications during the study period. It was found that only about a quarter of the write-ups centred on women. Only twenty per cent of the articles published were written by women, and this involvement virtually disappeared. At six per cent of the sports sections of these newspapers, bylines of women writers accounted for just 13.7 per cent of content on the sports pages.

After conducting a thorough scan of various issues, it was found that women received fewer credits on matters about politics, defence and national security, in addition to sports. *The Economic Times* had the highest per cent of articles written by women (32.7 per cent) among the periodicals, while *The Telegraph* had the lowest per cent (14.3 per cent). About twenty-five per cent of news writers, feature writers, opinion writers and analysts were women, while only 20.4 per cent of all articles had bylines featuring female writers. It was seen that gender issues amounted to only 2.6 per cent of all topics covered in the media, and of these, only 39.6 per cent were written by women journalists.

In the media and entertainment sector, where women contributed more than three per cent of the articles on topics about culture, entertainment, environment, energy and public life, societal prejudices that regard women as feckless, easy-going and humorous are mirrored. Just one-third of the papers on science and technology were written by women. Less than three per cent of publications, it was discovered, were concerned with gender-related subjects. Women authored more than half of the gender-related articles in fifty per cent of the papers that were analysed. Women authored less than twenty per cent of the pieces published in *The Hindu*, *The Telegraph* and *The Hindustan Times*.

Gender Representation in Hindi Newspapers

On average, the representation of women writers was even more dismal across Hindi newspapers. Only eleven per cent of the articles in the

Hindi language newspapers were written by women. The percentage of bylines of women writers was less than ten per cent in newspapers like the *Prabhat Khabar*, *Punjab Kesari* and *Rajasthan Patrika*.

It was noticed that tender issues were hardly mentioned in Hindi newspapers in India. Only three per cent of the stories get published in these newspapers. As far as bylines are concerned, what was even more alarming was the skewed representation of women in the top tier of writers. This was evident by the dismal representation of women obtaining bylines on the front page. Across seven publications, only five per cent of the articles were written by women on the front pages of the newspapers. The research study chose 2,084 writers across the selected seven Hindi newspapers between October 2018 and March 2019, and only about seventeen per cent of these were by women. The newspaper emphasizing the most bylines to women emerged as the *Amar Ujala*, with 18.9 per cent of the total write-ups going to women, but the most dismal statistic was that the *Rajasthan Patrika* did not feature even a single write-up of a women writer in the period under study. Articles focusing on subjects related to gender were only three per cent of all articles, and of these, 34.6 per cent had been written by women. It was seen that while all the newspapers carried articles related to gender issues, only five newspapers featured the same on their front pages. The articles dealing with gender issues were only approximately three per cent. In *Amar Ujala*, fifty-eight per cent of gender-related pieces were written by women journalists; however, this percentage fell to seventeen per cent in *Rajasthan Patrika* and only one per cent in *Punjab Kesari*.

Gender Representation in English Television News

Generally, women enjoy fair representation in the front-line section called *Anchoring*. The extent of women's underrepresentation in TV debates was visible for all to see in the all-male panel discussions. True to its credentials, *NDTV 24X7* showed up with the least number of all-males, with only 38.5 per cent of such panels showing up in their debates. Not surprisingly, like its inadequate representation of female politicians, *Rajya*

Sabha TV featured the highest number of all-male panels at a whopping eighty-two per cent. Women were shockingly underrepresented in committees that included representatives from think tanks, bureaucrats and financial specialists. Given the societal perception of women as good for soft news and entertainment sector coverage, women made up over twenty-five per cent of the panels talking about topics related to public life or culture and entertainment. However, when it came to topics of science and technology, women were absent from the conversation.

Only 7.5 per cent of the debates across the channels are related to gender and gender-related issues. Additionally, there was roughly equal gender representation, even though sixty-four per cent of the panellists on *NDTV 24X7* were women and seventy-one per cent on *India Today*. As an anomaly, *Mirror Now* was the only channel to invite panellists for a discussion on the Transgender Bill after it was tabled in the parliament who did not identify with any gender. Sadly, for the role of anchors mostly women were seen and heard. During the period under consideration, the seven channels had twenty male and twenty-eight female anchors which moderated nearly the same number of programmes.

Gender Representation in Hindi Television News

In total, 1,185 debates were broadcast on the seven Hindi news networks as they were examined for this analysis between October 2018 and March 2019. The number of people who took part in these debates was 1252; however, only twelve per cent of them were women. Female counterparts accounted for less than nine per cent of the total appearances. Men dominated arguments on most Hindi TV stations, with India TV and NDTV India having a nearly seventy-five per cent male dominance rate. It should be highlighted that no female official, financial or defence expert, or think tank representative appeared on television panels during the study period. Women political party spokespersons were invited to speak during deliberations on topics like national security and defence. Even when they did, they made up no more than nine per cent of the panels discussing these issues.

Even though the study's timeframe corresponded with #MeToo accusations and the movement against women entering Kerala's Sabarimala temple, surprisingly, only five channels aired debates on gender issues and even in these, women were underrepresented. For instance, one female panellist and four male panellists participated in a debate on 'Maternal Health and Challenges' on *Rajya Sabha TV*. Even more ridiculous was the invitation extended by *Rajya Sabha TV* to a male representative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to participate in a debate on *The Global Nutrition Report 2018*.

Women and men represented equally only in anchoring. Over the seven channels, there were twenty-one female anchors and nineteen male anchors.

Gender Representation in Digital Media

Online portals were fairer to women than other streams, giving them better representative opportunities. The survey included eleven digital media outlets published in English and two reported in Hindi. From October 2018 to March 2019, these publications published papers from 1,124 authors together. Women dominated internet media, at least in this instance, accounting for over forty per cent of all pieces and over a third of all writers. But in *Newslaundry* (Hindi), it dropped to 7.4 per cent. Other internet media outlets, like *Swarajya*, the women writer came down to 14.9 per cent; and in *Satyagraha*, it went down to 16.5 per cent. The number of articles published showed a significant variation in gender representation, with one piece showing heavily and another completely lacking in any mention of gender.

Women authored over half of the pieces on state and policy, public life, culture and entertainment, and crime and accidents; therefore, the topics were less skewed. They did not have bylines in nearly as many articles about technology, science, or sports. Women tended to contribute more articles on gender issues on internet platforms than men. Less than four per cent of the 21,000 papers that were thoroughly reviewed addressed gender issues. The fact that women made up the majority of the upper echelons of digital media, such as *The Print* and *The News Minute*, is encouraging.

Gender Representation in Magazines

Several studies indicated the misrepresentation of women in the media, especially in magazines. Readings from texts on the same illustrate that only a few women-specific magazines had a focus on women. In most other magazines, women and their issues were not adequately represented (Hermes, 1995). For the study, twelve magazines were examined during the period. They covered a wide range of topics, including politics, world affairs, sports and gender issues. Most of the content was dominated by men. *Femina* was the lone exception, as expected. However, during the time of the study, *Sarita*, a Hindi magazine with a female readership, had more male writers than female writers. Caravan and Femina were the two notable exceptions; in contrast, *Frontline*, *Organizer*, *Outlook* (Hindi) and *Sarita* were the others. All of the writers of the latter article were men, and all of the writers of the first two were women. Only three of the periodicals published pieces on sports, national security and defence authored by women. Only two of the twelve periodicals' pieces on international affairs included bylines from women, one of whom was a foreigner. There were no female authors of any science and technology-related articles.

During the study period, stories about gender were covered in just nine of the journals that were considered in the selection process. *Business Today*, *Sportstar* and even *Femina* did not have a cover page item on a gender issue. Although there were articles on gender in the *Frontline*, *Organizer* and *Outlook (Hindi)*, none of them were written by a woman. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the majority of the magazine pieces on gender issues were released between October and November 2018, when the #MeToo claims swept the media and entertainment sectors.

Gender Representation in Radio

The research examined five private radio networks and gathered information about their hosts in ten major cities. Except for *Radio Mirchi*, there were more male radio jockeys than female radio jockeys across the ten

stations in each network. In two out of the ten cities, more women than men worked as radio jockeys across stations. There was a notable bias in favour of female broadcasters in terms of gender ratio in Indian cities like Delhi, Chandigarh and Kolkata.

Discussions and Interpretation

The various factors contribute to the low representation of women in media organizations, such as the underrepresentation of women in managerial positions, abrupt media policies towards the sexual division of labour, the sensuality created by the military's overemphasis on violence, political disputes over issues affecting shadow women, etc. Other problems, such as inherent flaws in the socialization process, lead women to conceal domestic abuse and their private lives due to societal taboos, which prevents media coverage. Besides, a lack of stringent feedback and a lack of a critical mindset within media organizations result in poor representation of women in media organizations. Even though women have only been marginally acknowledged and only periodically visible, their presence in India's social and public life has been recognized for at least 150 years (Cohen & Young, 1973).

India's mainstream media hasn't done enough to talk about important issues affecting women and to get them ready to take on equal and legitimate roles in society. Stereotypes and prejudices are generally reinforced rather than lessened by the way women are portrayed in the media. Though circumstances have changed with time, earlier writers concentrated on the unfavourable representation of women in the media. People are inclined to associate with positive things. The media and advertising frequently feature well-groomed, family-oriented women who inspire other women to set and accomplish goals for themselves.

The media has reported that Indian women are the most respected individuals in the nation compared to those in any other. Their portrayal in contemporary television advertisements has evolved. Advertisers have successfully captured the audience's visual thinking and projected women

in the way that the public expected, all while maintaining the same basic goal of getting the audience to purchase their goods (Chatterjee & Ramu, 2024). Over time, women's representation in the media has evolved and become more positive. The majority of media commercials from the past several years have shown women as assertive, outgoing, powerful and driven instead of just stereotypically depicting them as homemakers.

The way that women are portrayed in the media has always been a contentious issue. Positive representations of women should now be a major focus in the media. Women ought to be portrayed in various roles and be shown as both product creators and users (Gunter, 1995). The public can benefit from receiving health-related information from the media in several ways, including good awareness-raising, education and illness prevention. The media is crucial to the growth of communities. The industrialized world is overrun with mass media. A few media outlets that provide ads, news, opinions, music and other types of mass communication every day are the television in the living room, the newspaper on the porch, the radio on the computer at work, the flyers in the mailbox and Facebook. With digital media penetrating almost every societal layer, it has become imperative that this domain also aims at gender neutrality and adequate gender representation, which is highlighted in 'Is it still a man's world? Social media news use and gender inequality in online political engagement' (Ahmed & Madrid-Marales, 2020).

It becomes apt to quote a finding from the study on 'Gender Representation' by Robos of Tech, Law and Policy, or r-TLP, an initiative that focuses on and writes about the interface of technology, law, policy and society. The study asserts:

Equality in gender representation is yet to find meaningful embodiment in all areas of society, it stated in its report. Technology and its most recent *innovations* show that there is an ingrained gender prejudice, necessitating a more inclusive discourse. The media must take action to elevate the perspectives of underrepresented genders who work in this field to the same level as men. (Krishna & Dixit, 2020)

It is necessary to comprehend the socio-economic structure of Indian society to comprehend the dominant trend of gender disparity in the media. The historical societal imbalance between men and other marginalized

genders is the result of patriarchal rules. There is currently no mechanism to support working mothers, even though more women are entering the job. Contrary to women, the majority of men play little or no part in household life. Even in demanding fields like the media, the majority of working women perform a *second shift* after hours at home, taking care of household chores and raising children. This societal mentality is a significant cause of the current divide.

All top management and editorial leaders must make a deliberate choice to expand the number of stories and the presence of women in their newsrooms. This is not a simple process because it would take the management's full support to turn this into a policy change. In the newsroom, it would also be necessary to make sure that women are employed at all levels, including senior roles. In addition to establishing gender parity in compensation and eliminating the glass ceiling, efforts should be made to improve leadership capabilities and skills through mentoring and development programmes (Tewathia et al., 2020).

Conclusion

To understand the prevalent tendency of gender imbalance in the media, one must first understand the socio-economic make-up of Indian culture. Patriarchal norms are largely to blame for the historical gender imbalance in society between men and other marginalized genders. There is still no mechanism in place to support working mothers, even though more women are entering the job. Contrary to women, most men have little or no involvement in home duties. The majority of working women work a *second shift* at home after hours, taking care of household duties and raising children, even in demanding sectors like the media. This societal mindset significantly contributes to the gap that is currently prevalent in society.

It is now necessary to eliminate this imbalance and misinformation within and outside the media sector. Women's engagement ought to be encouraged by company policy, which would lead to more equal participation from all genders (Gallagher, 2001). Making these genres more accessible,

especially to marginalized genders, is necessary to bridge this wide gender gap. By having such representative perspectives, we can avoid making the same mistakes that exclusionary frameworks did in the past, which resulted in problematic gender spaces that need to be fixed.

Media is an integral part of our everyday existence in the modern world. It shapes society and individuals with changing perceptions of attitude, perception and behaviour. In addition to giving their less fortunate counterparts a voice, adequate depiction of women in the media also sets the stage for the eradication of violence against women and the advancement of gender equality (Magor, 2002; Dines & Humez, 2003).

In addition to ensuring gender equity in compensation and eliminating the glass ceiling, initiatives such as mentoring and development programmes can be undertaken to enhance skills and leadership capacities (Gauntlett, 2002). The time has come to completely eradicate this inequality and deception both inside and outside the media sector. Women's engagement should be mandated by business policy, which will lead to more inclusive participation. To bridge the gender gap, these genres must be more widely available, especially to underrepresented genders. Having such representative voices will prevent a recurrence of the exclusionary framework errors that resulted in flawed gender spaces in the past.

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CHIBUIKE NNAMDI OPARAUGO

Chapter 6 (Mis)Representation of Biafra in the Media

ABSTRACT:

This chapter discusses the representation of minorities in the media, focusing on the depiction and (mis)representation of Biafra in the Nigerian media. Biafra, the predominantly Igbo tribe in southeastern Nigeria, has been widely portrayed negatively, with the region's political leaders supporting this media narrative. Nigeria returned to democracy in May 1999 and since then, the Biafrans remained marginalized politically and socio-economically. It has been a great challenge for the Biafran people to express their tales in the media. Other major ethnic groups somewhat control the mainstream media, and the media seems to be biased when it comes to covering the Biafran people. But ultimately, Biafrans used alternative media to express their voice. The author defines the term 'Biafra' in detail in this chapter and contextualizes agenda-setting theory to understand the relationship between media and the role of the state. Besides, this chapter examines the literature and analyses how the Nigerian media has marginalized the voices of the voiceless, i.e. Biafran people.

Keywords: Representation, Biafrans, Democracy, Media and Marginality

Introduction

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. Since then, democracy day has been celebrated, and a national public holiday has been declared to commemorate the restoration of democracy. However, Nigeria significantly achieved milestones on various vital issues such as socio-economic disparities, political instability and, especially, insecurity after its return to democratic rule. All ethnic groups in Nigeria raised their voice with their perspectives on substantial national and regional issues based on

their subjective and historical ideas. For instance, the recent agitation by Igbos for the creation of the Republic of Biafra and the conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers emerged as burning issues in Nigeria. Every region or ethnic group member in Nigeria has expressed dissatisfaction with the central government over the issue of social capital provision and the equitable distribution of national resources.

The media play a more significant role than ever in influencing people's perceptions. Information and communication networks are spread to every part of the globe. Through visual, aural and textual mediums, it can transform civil society, debate policy and build the environment surrounding us as a forceful social force (Schiller, 2014). Understanding the media's function as a communication stimulus is crucial when analysing an individual's (false) portrayal in the media. In this context, it is crucial to understand the history of colonialism and labour exploitation in the United States. History has impacted the media's capacity to depict stereotypical portrayals of minorities (Castañeda, 2015).

Prejudices of Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans in the media tend to emphasize racist, discriminatory and sexist notions about their sexuality, friendliness, intelligence, reliability and socio-economic status. The emergence of digital technologies has opened up a multitude of new options, especially for creating narratives that challenge the status quo and build alternative visions of racial/ethnic communities. While stereotypes about racial minorities in the media vary across ethnic/racial groups, some commonalities exist.

The prevalence of stereotypical representations in regulations and forms of communication is a result of complex media production processes, norms and values, business dynamics and a lack of ethnic media producers. Their impact, however, is potentially enormous since mass media plays a significant role in developing collective identities and attitudes among groups. Media also categorize specific groups and distort the public's perception of other groups (Ross, 2019). Literature shows that these biased media images can lower the self-esteem of members of ethnic minorities and incite public hatred of different ethnic groups.

Statement of the Problem

The new Biafra unrest in Nigeria has become a major issue in the mainstream media, as it is portrayed in various ways. In the context of the coverage of the media protests, framing, speech and rhetoric have been used in previous literature. However, the fragmentary description of the unrest in Biafra has not received enough attention. Therefore, representation of the Biafra people in the Nigerian media has received greater attention for discussion. Even though media has a broad reach in society through which people get to know each other. Some studies show that it still reinforces stereotypes, ethnicity and race, often with negative consequences. Ethnic minority groups are usually ignored and overlooked in media, including news, sports and games. When introduced, they are repeatedly portrayed in narrowly defined roles, such as diaspora Asian idealists or exotic Latinas, or as problematic 'others', portrayed as a disproportionately violent or criminal group and the dominant 'inferior', i.e. less intelligent groups, less rich, less powerful. Ethnic minority media (created by and intended for ethnic minorities) often presents minorities in a more favourable light and provides a counter-story.

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), led by the Biafran people, launched *Radio Biafra*. The Nigerian government's inability to address the problems that precipitated the Republic of Biafra's 1967 declaration of independence was the cause of the new chaos in Biafra. Biafra was a part of Nigeria until it was re-integrated between 1967 and 1970. However, related issues are starting to surface once more, leading to social exclusion. The Biafran people are excluded politically and socio-economically because, since 1983, they have never been elected president or vice president. The central government has also failed to build international seaports or an airport in the area. Additionally, the region has been purposefully rendered economically unviable. During live broadcasts, the voices of those raising concerns about these activities would receive uncensored warnings. The chapter examines the portrayal of the Biafran people and their struggle by the Nigerian media, resulting in a bad perception of the people's cause in other parts of Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This context and the problem over Biafra's representation in the media is justified with the agenda-setting theory. This theory examines the role of media and the state's power and hegemony. Agenda-setting theory explains the influence of media on culture and society. It describes the powerful impact the media can have in determining, selecting and framing the issues. The public learns not only about public affairs and other matters through the media but also how much importance should be given to an issue or topic due to the media's emphasis.

Going further, in the works of McCombs and Shaw (1972), it is observed that the power of news agencies that influence people's thinking, often referred to as *setting the agenda*, emerges emanating from the ability to choose stories that will attract media attention (Eze, 2011). This means that greater visibility of an event will lead to public awareness and interest in a larger issue. Thus, how an event or an issue is presented in the mass media contributes greatly to the knowledge and understanding of this event or issue. The thrust of agenda setting is that media content may not change your view on a particular issue but will change your perception of what is important. For today's researchers, the key point when setting an agenda is that once people get attention, they tend to influence government policies.

The media select a certain weight for news stories depending on the size of the location and the frequency with which these stories appear. Agenda-setting theory holds that media audiences learn the importance of news media issues and then assign a similar set of weight and importance to their agendas (Okoye & Oparaugo, 2019). The constant depiction of the Biafran struggle by the Nigerian media is believed to provide misinformation to Nigerians and foreigners about the content of the struggle.

The theory 'public opinion' was developed in 1922 by Walter Lippmann, an American social scientist and researcher. He argued that the media is responsible for the pictures they create in our heads. However, this theory was later reinforced by two American sociologists and researchers, Marshal McCombs and Donald Shaw, in 1972 and 1976. Their idea of the reinforcement was based on the 1960s elections in the United States of America,

when they discovered that most of the electorate who voted during the election relied on the media message for their decision on which candidate to vote for. As a result of this, they stated, 'Audience not only team public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic by the emphasis the media place upon it.'

This theory is relevant to this context because, through the agenda-setting principles, the radio would be the best instrument for representing or misrepresenting the Biafrans in the Nigerian media space. Also, knowledge from the Nigerian media can affect how other Nigerians perceive the Biafra agitation/movement. The editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping reality since they set and select the agenda. Thus, the mass media determine the important issues for the media coverage.

Brief History of Biafra

The Republic of Biafra was a breakaway state from Nigeria in 1967. Following the Nigerian state's failure to keep their side of the agreement signed in Aburi Ghana, which would give each region (East, West and North) power to decide their fate politically, the then military leader of Eastern extraction, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, after consultations with other stakeholders in the East, declared the sovereignty of a new country – Biafra, on 30 May 1967. The new country Biafra promised to be a new role model for Africa. The government of Biafra would be moderate and modern, guided by humanism and the gospel of prosperity (Daly, 2020). The Republic of Biafra lasted for less than three years, but the war over its secession would contort Nigeria for decades to come.

While Philip Effiong was the second in command to Ojukwu, Sir Louis Mbanefo was the Chief Justice of Biafra. Mbanefo was a widely respected judge, known to the Nigerian public as the chief justice of the Eastern region. To his peers in the judiciary, he was a formidable moralist – a 'black Englishman' who 'did not mix well at parties' as one would recall. As the

chief justice of the Biafran Court of Appeal, Mbanefo had a prime position to watch things fall apart. Presiding over cases in the dwindling territory that the Biafran army controlled, he heard accounts of violence that surpassed what he thought people were capable of. Ojukwu fled to Ivory Coast on 10 January 1979, handing over to his second, Philip Effiong. On 12 January 1970, Effiong surrendered to the Nigerian government. The country Biafra was quickly re-integrated into the Nigerian system.

Understanding Marginalization: *Biafra Community*

Several crises and deaths have occurred in Nigeria due to the Igbo (Biafran) people and current accusations of social marginalization. Their claim of marginalization stems from what they see as a denial of their rights, in the sense that this community has not attained any leadership positions in the county in the last sixty years. Compared to other tribes, there seems to be a systematic denial of the Igbo sense of belonging, especially in leadership positions. There has been a deliberate attempt and the exclusion of residents of the five Igbo states from specific leadership positions in Nigeria, as well as the strategic location of important national businesses and establishments in the region.

The people of Biafra have faced numerous obstacles due to their policies that seem designed to limit their ability to realize their economic and political potential. The restructuring of Nigeria to create more states for the Northern states at the expense of the Southern states, especially the South East, is not only a political obstacle but also harms the Igbo people's economic potential.

General Yakubu Gowon, the then chairman of the Nigerian State Army, declared 'no victor, no vanquished, but the victory of common sense and the unity of Nigeria' after the 1970s Civil War. To establish conditions conducive to unity among all, Nigerians allowed the reintegration of Biafrans. A transitional justice programme called '3R' – Reconciliation (Reintegration), Rehabilitation and Reconstruction – was included in this statement. Unfortunately, no court has considered genocide against

the Igbos throughout the conflict, and no government has taken action against the perpetrators (Ikegbunam & Agudosy, 2020).

Morgen (2016) asserts that the repeated attempts at secession are the result of an accumulation of illogicalities within the Nigerian state. Before 1966, many constitutions were drafted and enacted, but none addressed the basic socio-economic inequality of the Nigerian state, ethnic imbalance, economic competition and political tension.

Concerns about underdevelopment, marginalization, and social and political imbalances mainly drove the demand for unrest and disintegration within the Nigerian federation. Furthermore, the policy of unequal distribution of wealth fueled feelings of separatism from Nigeria, as evidenced by agitation towards Biafra in the South East of the country. Due to the depletion and exploitation of Biafraland's resources, calls for restructuring were made in the country's South-Western region.

As a result, the feelings of social marginalization and suffering of the people of Biafra (South East) have fueled calls to secede from Nigeria. The unrest in Biafran arose from failed government leadership, which resulted in years of social neglect, economic isolation and political isolation for Nigerians, especially those in Biafran. Politicians from the country's most populous ethnic groups have continued to make important choices, sometimes ignoring the voices of leaders from smaller ethnic groups. There is no single international airport in Biafraland, although the Biafrans visit Nigeria the most. There are no seaports for transportation despite Biafrans being the country's largest importer and exporter.

While Biafra has only five states (although it would be more if the South-South area were included in the revised Biafra map), the other geopolitics for ethnic groups have six. Those from Biafra receive the fewest federal positions and are often assigned to less lucrative positions. Although they have the country's highest literacy rate, it has the lowest employment rate. Even when hired, they are rarely allowed to supervise members of other ethnic groups. And, when they had a ministry, industry or government agency, it was often just a statutory position, as their employees from other ethnic groups often have more influence than they do. People in the Arewa region (North) can boldly say in public and the media that they are Arewans; people from Oodua (also called Oduduwa) (West) can proudly

say that they are from Oduduwa; those in the South-South area of Nigeria may call themselves Niger Delta; but it is not allowed to hear someone from the East calling himself Biafra. This often goes hand in hand with being arrested by the police, tortured and labelled as a terrorist.

The Nigerian Media Landscape

Mass media is widely recognized as a means of communication capable of simultaneously addressing many different audiences with a consistent message. They cover a wide range of topics, including health, music, fine arts, crime, sports, entertainment and political events (Oparaugo, 2021). Mass media disseminate new ideas and information to a specific audience in society. In addition to education, information and entertainment, the media also persuade and inspire social activism. In other words, they can penetrate all sectors of society. Mass communication can be seen as a powerful form of information and social service.

The role of communication in any civilization is just as important as other essential requirements of life because communication has changed people's perceptions of situations that threaten their existence. In short, media is called the 'mirror' of modern society. The publication of 'Iwe Irohin' by Pastor Henry Townsend in 1859 marked the beginning of mass media in Nigeria. During the colonial era and nearly the twentieth century, the media became an important tool in the hands of Nigerian nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Anthony Enahoro, among others, in the power struggle. After independence, the Nigerian media environment was dominated by various propaganda methods, with politicians using media propaganda to sidestep their political opponents (Ekah, Eminue & Okpalaeké, 2017).

The Nigerian media has come a long way in the fight for the country's democratic establishment. Since the Reverend Henry Townsend founded the first newspaper in Abeokuta in 1859, the media has played an active role in Niregerian's development. Other publications were established after Iwe Irohin took a strong stance against the subjugation of

the Nigerian people by the colonial government. The nationalists who initiated these newspapers used them as vehicles for political agitation, calling for full independence and democracy for the country. Here are a few leading Nigerians who have used the media to achieve this goal. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who created *West Africa Pilot*; Herbert Macaulay, who founded *Lagos Daily News*; Head MKO Abiola founded *National Concord*, *Nigerian Tribune* owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo; and *Nigeria Pioneer* founded by Kitoye Ajasa with some other newspapers and so on. The media has been and continues to lead the struggle to establish a healthy democracy in Nigeria. Even after independence, the press continued to strive to glorify the democracy.

Media and Marginalization

Many researchers have critically defined marginality in various contexts and perspectives (Pearce et al., 2020). Marginality has a considerable focus on issues related to minorities, representation, equity and inequality (Turner, 2019). Gatzweiler and Baumüller (2014) argued that disadvantage can be the experience with individuals or groups. Going further, it is worth noting that disadvantaged people are excluded from the resources and opportunities they need to participate fully and be part of mainstream society. This experience is due to demographic identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, and based on circumstances, such as personality, physical ability, occupation of a person and its intersection points (Pearce et al., 2020). Marginal status affects what people can achieve and limits their ability to take advantage of the resources and opportunities available to their non-disadvantaged peers. In addition, marginalized individuals and communities are often socially, politically and economically susceptible, often because they remain excluded from availing essential resources.

Mainstream political communication is found to be less influential in contemporary times than those spread through social media. Researchers have pointed out that social marginalization is a complex, relational and

circumstantial phenomenon; that results from ideological and structural oppression. Certain identity groups and their respective interests are marginalized in the political and public spheres (Johnson, 2018; Noble, 2018). Therefore, it has been understood that marginalized groups are those who 'experience patterns of social and political inequality' through membership in a perceived 'negatively significant' group, thereby promoting oppression (Williams, 1998). We broadly define 'disadvantaged identities' to include marginalized groups and their symbolic indicators (Coe & Griffin, 2020).

Of course, issues of social isolation have long been considered and theorized by many scholars in the fields of humanities and media. But, most genuine researchers working on social media never talk about significant work. The experience-oriented researchers are trained to avoid making *objective* critical statements. However, empirically oriented researchers are often well-positioned to examine the antecedents and consequences of marginalization in social and mainstream media communication (Pearce et al., 2020). As Carragee and Frey (2016) argue, social justice issues should not be exclusive to the field of critical research since it is often not actively involved in identifying causes and problems.

The IPOB and the New Biafra Agitation

Nigeria has seen a series of violent separatist uprisings since it was established as a sovereign state. Nigeria's political, economic, cultural and religious structure makes the country susceptible to ethno-religious conflicts, fuelling the desire and fight for independence. Olomojobi (2015) states that Biafra's unrest arose from failed government leadership, resulting in Southern regions' socio-economic and political exclusion for Nigerians. Again, massive underdevelopment and unemployment have unbalanced the political stability and slowed the financial growth of Nigeria. It further resulted in distress, poverty, hunger, insecurity and despair.

With the participation of the IPOB in unrest and a nagging need for autonomy, Biafra revived the radio station called *Radio Biafra* during the war. IPOB has enhanced radio and internet broadcasting so that the

Nigerian government cannot disrupt its activities and operations. This has led to the current growing unrest in Biafra, with the radio being the main means of communication with the people. The new separatist movements in Biafra claim that successive Nigerian administrations excluded the Southern part of the country, especially the Igbo people, from socio-political problems and development progress (Igwebuike & Akoh, 2021). Lieutenant Colonel Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu declared Southeastern Nigeria an independent country in 1967 and was the first to advocate independence. Following this declaration, the Biafra warriors were crushed by federal troops in a thirty-month war. Since the end of the Civil War in 1970, the Igbo people have continued to complain of ethnic domination, marginalization and lack of ability to re-integrate socially and politically into the Nigerian state following the defeat of the Nigerian state (Adangor, 2018).

The situation is aggravated by the failure of successive governments to tackle high unemployment, corruption and mismanagement of public funds that have damaged the national interest over the years. It resulted in money laundering from government officials, people moving abroad and, more recently, deadly clashes between Fulani farmers and the herders in the region from the north centre of Nigeria. The customs, culture, language, political affiliation, personalities and characteristics of the people give shape and meaning to what constitutes a Nation. The new wave of advocacy for creating a sovereign Biafra state has gained momentum and is spreading across Southeastern Nigeria (Omilusi et al., 2020).

The cause is supported by the IPOB. With the establishment of *Radio Biafra* and many other digital forums continuing the struggle for the dissolution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Biafra's revival as a sovereign state takes on a new dimension. Since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic government, the sovereign nation of Biafra has been in turmoil again due to a lingering sense of marginalization and the idea that fundamental concerns leading to the Civil War remain unresolved. Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), led by Ralph Uwazuruike, led the new movement, which used the predominant non-violent method to secure Biafra's secession from Nigeria. Despite MASSOB's non-violent stance, its members repeatedly clashed with security agencies and its leader was detained and released multiple times.

While the combination of official repression and internal dissension has damaged MASSOB and exposed major rifts within the organization, it has opened the door for IPOB to continue to agitate, albeit with force (Ibeanu et al., 2016).

Media Representation: *Radio Biafra*

During the Nigeria-Biafra War 1967–1970, the non-functional government established Biafra radio to promote Biafran military propaganda (Omaka, 2017). From 30 May 1967 to 15 January 1970, the radio station served as the official broadcaster of the Republic of Biafra. The Bay of Biafra (the Gulf of the Atlantic Ocean to the south) gives the country its name (Ugorji, 2015). The majority of the inhabitants are Igbos, who took the lead due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious hardship among the many ethnic groups in Nigeria. Military Governor of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who proclaimed the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967, claimed the massacre of Easter people in post-coup violence as the main reason for the disintegration. Because newsprint became scarce during the conflict and the government-owned newspaper *Biafra Sun* could only print a few copies, radio demand became important to Biafra. Nkpa (1977) notes that ‘the main difficulty in disseminating information is that only about fifteen per cent of Biafra’s population is literate. The most common source of information for ordinary people is word of mouth; a situation known to be very favourable for the formation of rumours. Radio is still the only channel through which the Biafra government can communicate with citizens in English and the local language.’

Nkpa (1977) further notes that ‘radio, press and official statements are not very reliable and average Biafra does not distinguish between broadcasts and official statements’. He explains that ‘both come from the same source – the radio – and are considered the same’, so ‘the transistor radios that once belonged to many young people are very useful even for those who are literate and illiterates, who can understand broadcasts in English

and their mother tongue' (Nkpa, 1977). Even before the outbreak of hostilities, 'politicians often use these means of communication to make promises to the people and in many cases, these promises are never fulfilled' (Nkpa, 1977).

With the support of the then MASSOB members, *Radio Biafra* started broadcasting on shortwave frequencies from London in 2009 but did not begin broadcasting in Nigeria until 2013. It began broadcasting as a mobile station on FM 88.2 in Nigeria. Enugu, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Nnewi, Abkaliki, Owerri and other parts of the Southeast region have it. The director of *Radio Biafra*, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu says, 'Broadcasting in Nigeria, on FM frequencies, different from London's original shortwave frequencies, was intended to give Igbo and other Nigerians the opportunity to receive the station's announcements without much difficulty.' It was dead for about two years but was reactivated on 13 April 2012, after killing the Igbo in the North. The station has been revived to bring hope, enlightenment and knowledge to the Igbo Aboriginal people. Kanu further explained that the new *Radio Biafra* was created to promote 'Biafra's ideology of freedom, the liberation of all Biafra people, including all those linked genetically, culturally and by same value system.'

Media Representation: *Television*

Representation means a lot to people of colour who want authentic participation and inclusion in the cultures and communities that are important to them. 'Represent or present' all that is absent (e.g. people, places, events or abstractions) in a new form, according to the Oxford references, recognize that media representation of ethnic minorities is neither new nor ideal. While images of ethnically diverse individuals in different media have improved significantly, there is still room for improvement and change. The representation of race/ethnicity on prime time television was documented over the past twenty year, along with their association with national racial/ethnic attitudes. A few articles

published in 2015 focused on media representation of ethnic minorities. The 345 most viewed American television shows across twelve consecutive television seasons from 1987 to 2009 show how the representation of each ethnic group has changed over twenty-two years. It ranks whites, representing eighty-eight per cent of regular characters from the most popular primetime series at their highest representation. The study suggests that African American characters followed by 21.6 per cent at the top. Latinos and Asians are 'underrepresented' on television, accounting for three per cent and Asian characters at 2.8 per cent, respectively.

Media Misrepresentation: *Biafra Community*

Media coverage of ethnic minorities seems shocking and sad – consistent and unchanged across decades. The lack of coverage of ethnic minorities in the news is a common phenomenon. The ethnic minority voices in the news are also getting a lack of attention. Even when the topics affect them directly and there are minority experts who can speak their minds, minority organizations, leaders and spokespeople in Nigeria have little access to media than other tribes like Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba and others. In Nigeria, the Yoruba tribe is known to own the media and has dominated the media since colonial times. With its cooperation with the federal government and its hatred of the Igbo tribe, Biafra has been heavily misrepresented in the media.

Almost all, if not all, of the violent and criminal acts occurring in the Southeastern part of the country are reported by the Nigerian media as 'Biafra agitators' or 'IPOBs', even if the evidence contradicts the reports. Even community clashes, armed robbery, kidnapping and indiscriminate killing by unidentified gunmen are labelled 'Biafra Inciter' or 'IPOB'. The media influences people's views, attitudes and opinions by portraying a variety of ideologies that mask significant inequalities based on race and class (Katz & Nossek, 2019). The images help the public to understand the reality and their role in it as they are provided by media representation. Because different audiences perceive these media images differently, they

are interpreted in different ways by viewers. Indeed, object concept maps influence the deconstruction of meaning (Hall, 2005).

In addition, members of ethnic minority groups may recognize and understand limited depictions of themselves in the mainstream media, while some use defence mechanisms to consume media depictions of themselves further that they do not accept (Katz & Nossek, 2019). Previous works suggest that others prefer a balanced perspective, which includes counter-stories about themselves as it is generally spread in the media (Katz & Nossek, 2019; Smets et al., 2019). Information flow, control and rearrangement of messages, whether written or visual, all are important aspects of the media's role in constructing social reality. Communication executives choose the logic and aspects they want to emphasize and/or apply to the media message encoder (Katz & Nossek, 2019). Research finds that differentiating frameworks see refugees as a danger – social, economic and/or security – or victims – people deserving of pity – such as in images of representatives of refugees (Smets et al., 2019). The frameworks themselves are problematic and are beginning to impact public perception of minorities in areas where media hegemony is becoming pervasive (Smets et al., 2019).

Social Media as Alternatives to Self-Representation

The social and communicative aspects of self-expression become especially evident on social media. On the other hand, self-representation is always social (Rettberg, 2017). However, the growth of social networks allowed Biafrans to express themselves satisfactorily in the media. They now bring their own stories to national debates and objectively present a different perspective on domestic events as portrayed in the mainstream media. Social media allows users to decide how they present themselves to an audience, according to Zheng, Duff, Vargas and Yao (2020). On social media, most people like to present their ideal selves. However, this may depend on how well they connect with the target audience of their content. Mahmud and Wong (2021) further state that the context

of social aspects has changed dramatically due to the widespread use of social networks as a powerful tool to facilitate the creation and sharing of social media knowledge. The navigation, structure and characteristics of social media-mediated communication have led to the creation of identity maps, which are narrative techniques for implementing and controlling online identity lines.

New digital technologies provide marginalized communities, those excluded from economic, social and political life around the world, a means for their voices to be heard (Walsh, 2006). Although the mainstream media has a social function to represent the interests of all members of society, it often downplays the grievances and needs of those in need and marginalized people. The media focuses less on the content of dominant or popular groups (Lievrouw, 2011). Power elites have been criticized for aligning with the mainstream media since it creates their interests and distorts views. In addition to the lack of representation in the mainstream media, disadvantaged groups often face exclusion from the decision-making process (Ortiz et al., 2019). When considering social issues, elite groups dominate, initiate communication and have their ideas more influential (Sunstein, 2002). However, over the last few years, digital technology has created tremendous opportunities for expression and interaction between activists and disadvantaged groups. These individuals found digital technologies 'to be powerful and inexpensive tools' compared to traditional media (Lievrouw, 2011).

Digital technologies brought light views that would otherwise be 'invisible, silenced, or stifled in mainstream debate' (Sunstein, 2002). Information Communication Technology (ICT), such as the Internet, has given rise to many social movements and thus offers marginalized communities the opportunity to raise their voice. Digital technologies offer potential benefits to improving the livelihoods of the less privileged, which is neither new nor recent (Desouza et al., 2007). Nevertheless, marginalized people are still using digital technology to speak up and advance their cause. Unfortunately, various fringe groups use the same technologies to spread their messages. Hate groups also use ICT-based protest tactics that allow marginalized groups to oppress others (Young, 2018).

Conclusion

The Nigerian media has seriously misrepresented the Biafrans and Biafran's struggle, leading to a negative perception of the struggle by people in other parts of Nigeria. The Nigerian media should adhere to ethical practices when portraying Biafra and the struggle in Biafra in the media. The Nigerian media should be objective and take no sides when it comes to reporting on issues related to Biafra. The Nigerian media may refrain from using the words 'war aggression', 'terrorists' and 'Biafra is war' when reporting on the Biafra movement. Nigerian media cease to associate any criminal acts by unknown gunmen with agitators of Biafran or the Eastern Security Network (ESN).

The uniqueness of this study rests on the premise that few researchers have studied much on the subject. This is based on the fact that the Biafran unrest issue from 2014 has recently become well-known among the Nigerian masses. Following the above, this study may add to the existing literature on agitation and secessionist movements in Nigeria, such as Biafra and Oduduwa. Furthermore, this study would be important for the public in Nigeria to understand the plight of agitators. This would help them (the media) understand how best to create and disseminate information about secessionist movements and how to use this information to educate their audience about human rights and human rights violations. This study may benefit the federal, state and local governments' three tiers on how best to address perceived injustice and implement National Confab 2014 recommendations in the context of calls for restructuring or the division of the country.

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PART II

Media, Marginalized and Exclusion

AMIT KUMAR

Chapter 7 Commercial Norms and Social Exclusion of Media in India

ABSTRACT:

Mass communication has travelled far from being a potent propaganda tool during World War to shaping opinion and influencing the behaviour of almost every façade of humane life. From international power struggles to domestic development agendas, the media is indispensable wherever public opinion matters. The scepticism about the uncontrolled influence of mass communication has not deterred its ubiquitous presence through popular culture, which is considered a potential force of social integration. However, social scientists are also concerned about the near absence of mainstream media representation of marginalized groups and communities. The deprived communities are less visible, and their voices are rarely heard in the mass media. Why is that so? The answer lies in the very foundation and growth of the private media industry in any democratic setup. The bone of contention is the expectation of the media to work in tandem with the wider public interest owing to its status as the fourth estate of democracy. However, free and private media do not have any compulsion to carry out work on behalf of society. However, based on historical facts, constitutional recognition and public perception, the conduct of the media institution is bound to adhere to certain unwritten obligations in its practice. None of the modern organizations, including mass media, operate in isolation. Media theorists have always deliberated on the idea of how media should operate within a specific system of social values and diversity, i.e. including the inclusion of marginalized sections of society. In this context, this chapter attempts to critically analyse six normative theories (authoritarian, soviet-union, social responsibility, libertarian, democratic participant and developmental) in the context of the role of the press, media structures and inclusion/exclusion of diverse communities. This study proposes the need to revisit normative theories given the contemporary socio-political-economic circumstances that own the ever-evolving media landscape, the change in audience profile and perception, and the subsequent implications in terms of social exclusion.

Keywords: Normative Theory, Social Exclusion, Marginalization, Television Rating Point, Media

Introduction

None of the modern institutions, including the media, works in isolation. They work in a certain time and space, under a particular type of socio-political-cultural environment, which influences the way it functions. The ground-breaking book *Four Theories of Press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm begins with this core argument. Further, it goes on to build an understanding of the functioning of the press following the social and political structures within which it operates. It is important to note that the term 'press' is not restricted to print media only but consists of all other forms of mass communication (Siebert et al., 1956).

Four theories of the press propose two fundamental theories, namely, the authoritarian theory and libertarian theory, and the other two, the Soviet-communist theory and social responsibility theory, derived from the former in their respective order. The fundamental premise of this chapter is based on basic beliefs and assumptions that society holds about the way the press functions. These assumptions are identified as the nature of man, the nature of the state or society, the relation of man to the state and the nature of knowledge and truth.

During the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century, the press functioned under the authoritarian regime, which decided what, how much and when the information should be disseminated for mass consumption. Publishing was either exclusive rights to ruling elites or, permitted with certain conditions to private owners till they adhered to the rules set by the power centre. From the late seventeenth century onwards, the quest for a democratic system of governance, the radical ideas of free trade and travel, and religious freedom set the stage for a new kind of press primarily free from government influence and responsible for propagating free ideas and information. The phrase *Fourth Estate* was mentioned in the context of the press during the French Revolution, where the church, nobility and commoners comprised the other three estates (Crichton et al., 2010). Thomas Carlyle mentioned the reporters sitting in the parliament gallery as the *Fourth Estate* of democracy and more important than all other three estates in the book *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* and the

Heroic in History (Carlyle, 2013). The libertarian theory surfaced in the eighteenth century and flourished throughout the nineteenth century until the concept of new authoritarian and new libertarian theory started to immerse in the communist and non-communist nations, which gave birth to soviet-communist media theory and social responsibility theory, respectively (Siebert et al., 1956). The libertarian system of the press, usually working in the democratic system of governance, started exhibiting the signs of authoritarianism, where the private owners, under their monopoly in media, were accused of disseminating selective facts in collusion with political parties and profit-making organizations, in the so-called free world. The social responsibility theory asserts that institutions like media are required to showcase the weak part of an individual before the face of a powerful state and corporations. On the other hand, in communist countries, especially in the Soviet Union, the press was controlled by the ruling power and what facts they deemed to be fit for mass consumption were disseminated by their mouthpiece in disguise of the press.

The Criticism of Press Theories

The critical insight of the four theories is their inherent biases in favour of liberalism. The theories hold that 'the press is not an autonomous system but rather a subsystem of the larger political, social and cultural system'. The critics have pointed out that the four theories of the press found their wider acceptance during the Western liberal global hegemony, reflecting the Cold War narrative while leaving the non-Western and non-liberal perspectives and their related dimensions like race, class, gender, etc., untouched (Nerone, 2018). The quest to formulate a new international economic system and the urgent need to decolonize and demonopolize the global information order by non-aligned nations gave birth to the requirements of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was mandated to address this structural imbalance in the global flow of information and to bring non-aligned

nations' perspectives into the broader international arena. A commission under Sean MacBride's chairmanship was constituted, comprising seventeen individuals of different regional and cultural backgrounds, including a representative from non-aligned countries. The report, 'Many Voices, One World', produced by the commission, presented a far-reaching vision of communication by focusing on the sound development perspective as envisioned by developing countries and linking audiences, media and institutions (Padovani, 2015).

The authors, Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White, in his book *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies* have recognized the importance of MacBride's report as an initial inspiration to reflect on the normative role media is supposed to perform in the society. The authors also mention that the media–society relationship can be articulated either at factual and descriptive levels or ideal and normative levels, drawing parallels to Altschull's *seventh law of journalism* (Christians et al., 2009).

The majority of works try to present an alternative to the four press theories, including the one mentioned above. It deliberately limits itself to the democratic theories while making an important distinction. The proposed theoretical frameworks attempted to build around the model of democracy to keep the focus on *people* rather than a model of communication, which primarily focussed on *media*. This can also be justified by the fact that any media system and individual journalists share multiple philosophical traditions, and it is not appropriate to label them under a rigid theoretical framework. The main actors in the four theories paradigm were *man*, *state* and *society* based on the assumption that man as an individual resides in one society and is subject to one state. This assumption is limited to identifying the individuals who straddle societies or states, larger groups smaller than a state, societies with more than one competing state, transnational or global forms of governance, or governance by non-state actors (Nerone, 2018).

Realizing the importance of the normative framework and its inadequacy contributions, scholars looked for more applied versions to map media systems. Four theories received harsh criticism from scholars like Paolo Mancini, who believed it stupid to assume that norms derived from

some historically specific social order can be contextualized to different social orders with entirely different philosophies (Nerone, 2012). Another significant criticism of *four theories* came from J. H. Altschullin's book *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (1984). Altschull argues that media power is dependent on the media systems and vice versa. Power is further complemented by the media systems that exist in our society. He contends that 'the content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press' (Altschull, 1984). Dan Hallin and Paolo Mancini's work *Comparing Media Systems* (2004) is considered one of the most influential works in the early years of the twenty-first century. Instead of using the *four theories*, it is assumed that the nature of man, the state or society, knowledge and truth, and four social, political and economic dimensions strongly prevail in society and remain dependent on each other. The structure of media markets, the extent of political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and the role of the state are equally important when one looks at the function of the press. This allowed them to identify three models of media systems: a partisan southern European model, a market-based North Atlantic model and a social democratic northern European model, with a caveat that their three models were appropriate only for the countries they had studied in detail and refused to conclude media in the rest of the world (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Relook of the Normative Theories

Raymond Williams (1962), John Merrill and Ralph Lowstein (1971), Williams Hachten (1981) and Dennis McQuail (1987) reviewed normative theories. Among them, a most notable attempt was made by McQuail, who developed a typology of four plus two by adding the development media theory and democratic participant theory to the original four theories. Development media theory is specifically meant for developing nations, where media is expected to work in tandem with the government's development objectives rather than antagonizing it. On the other hand,

the democratic participant theory resists private media profiteering while opposing public media institutions' bureaucracy. The theory keeps the interest of the public and focuses on the needs of the receivers and media entities (Oluwasola, 2020).

The Sociology of Media

John B. Thompson (1995) argued that the development of communication media, from print to electronic communication, was an integral part of the rise of modern societies. Media's development was interwoven in complex ways with other developmental processes that were key to modernity. Therefore, the institutional characteristics of modern societies and subsequent life conditions owe a large part to the development of communication media and their impact (Thompson, 1995). Chaudhuri (2010) argued by citing multiple scholars, namely Habermas 1989, Macintyre 1962, and Therbon 1977, that there is no linear relationship between free media and deliberative democracy. That means increasing consumption of media is not directly proportional to greater democratic participation (Chaudhuri, 2010). The central argument of her article is that the media plays a crucial ideological role in legitimizing neo-liberal capitalism in contemporary India. Lodziak (1995) emphasized 'theory of dominant ideology' in advanced capitalist societies managed to remain stable despite growing inequalities because the vast majority of people accepted the subordination of the capitalist class by ideological manipulation. Lodziak further argued that both the supporters and critiques of the dominant ideology have exaggerated the power of ideology and underplayed the material power of economic and state practices in manipulating the needs of the vast majority of people to facilitate capitalism (Lodziak, 1995). John Nerone contends that a large part of the national focus of the media system is on news media in general and political reporting in particular. The nation-state becomes the subject of most political news, and political reporters embrace the role of critic or advocate of political personnel or processes.

However, political news is a relatively small domain of media activity. Modern media organizations draw larger audiences and revenues from entertainment and sports, which are only loosely tied to the nation-state and governed by rather different norms (Nerone, 2018). Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2020), in their study, pointed out the rise of dissatisfaction with democracy and declining trust in public institutions among citizens across the world, citing many long-term studies. The key reason is the waning role of the 'fourth estate in presenting a multiplicity of voices. The concentrated media ownership and digitization of communication restrict electorates' right to obtain impartial news.

Deliberating on the work of these scholars, few conclusions can be drawn that media is impacting almost every aspect of modern societies (Thompson, 1995). Media actively promotes unequivocally articulated neo-liberal principles on the market and the state (Chaudhuri, 2010). Therefore, the growth of media consumption doesn't necessarily translate to increased democratic participation; entertainment and sports draw larger audiences and revenues than news (Nerone, 2018). There is a decline in trust in democracy and public institutions as citizens are not able to find diverse opinions due to the consolidation of media ownership (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2022).

Media Market Trends in India

The Indian media market is uniquely influenced by its large geography and varied demography. Twenty-two official languages are recognized in the eight schedules of the constitution of India. Taking the language as the yardstick, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has determined twelve geographic markets in various states: Assam, West Bengal, English pan-India, Gujarat, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Important considerations like consumer behaviour patterns, national and local brand preferences, and

basic customer and competitor demand are considered or define relevant geographic markets (TRAI, 2022).

All these markets have witnessed the steady growth of news channels, newspapers and magazines, and their electronic versions are delivered live to handheld devices, reaching a staggering number of audiences. Indian Readership Survey 2019, of the fourth quarter, has pointed out a rapidly evolving media landscape with growing multi-media adoption and more rural internet users than urban ones. The strong media usage is reflected in data that suggests 400 million newspaper readers, 840 million television viewers, 226 million radio listeners and 449 million internet users. To put things into perspective, if we compare the changes between the period 2017–19, there is a two per cent decline in newspaper readership, a seven per cent increase in television viewership, an eleven per cent increase in radio listeners and a whopping one hundred and twenty-three per cent increase in internet users. Forty-three per cent of internet users are from urban areas, compared to fifty-three per cent of users from rural areas (Media Research Users Council India, 2020).

A comprehensive understanding of this promising growth of India's media & entertainment sector is important to critically analyse the content production and consumption trend and its close interlinking with the ownership structure and subsequent implications regarding social exclusion.

FICCI (2022) report suggests that as of September 2021, there were a total of 906 television channels, including 392 news and current affairs channels. The media and entertainment sector in India witnessed advertising revenue of INR 746 billion, 0.32 per cent of gross domestic product in 2021, with ninety-five per cent of ads spent on television (forty-two per cent), digital (thirty-three per cent) and print (twenty per cent). Interestingly, both general entertainment channels and news channels have a twenty-eight per cent share of advertisement volumes. English business news was the channel genre that saw the maximum number of new advertisers in 2021. Overall, 115 new advertisers preferred English business news channels to advertise their products. A total of 4,00,000 hours of news bulletin content were released for consumption in 2021. News channels also produced over 35,000 hours of non-news bulletins or, advertorials (FICCI, 2022). India also has more than 17,160 registered daily newspapers in India, including

English, Hindi and regional languages (Reporters Without Borders & Data Leads, 2019). The four prominent English dailies in terms of maximum readership include *The Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu* and *The Telegraph*. In Hindi, *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Hindustan* and *Amar Ujala* together constitute the majority of the readership (Media Research Users Council India, 2020). American media measurement and analytics company, Comscore data indicates that in 2021, out of 503 million smartphone users in India, 467 million, i.e. fifty-six per cent of overall internet users, were consuming online news. A large majority, approximately ninety-five per cent, of news was in vernacular languages. This trend has further encouraged regional news players to increasingly work towards non-editorial utility to users by offering relevant ads, hyper-local content, engagement tools like opinion polls, graphics, etc. and building a curated community. Another exciting trend is the increasing connection between social media and news. According to the Reuters Digital News Report 2021, after the celebrities-related content, the second most popular views for social media users in India were from mainstream news outlets and journalists. Also, as many as ninety per cent of these visitors are redirected to news sites through search or social media (FICCI, 2022).

Media Ownership and Content Plurality

These trends indicate a robust appetite for news consumption through both traditional and online media platforms in India. The strong Indian democracy is one of the possible explanations for this inclination towards news consumption both at the national and regional levels. However, one pertinent question remained unanswered: Has this increase in the reach of media, in general, and news, in particular, contributed to the inclusion of a marginalized section of society by offering a multiplicity of opinions, or on the contrary, is it doing the opposite of it by reinforcing limited views and silencing the divergent voices?

The answer to this puzzling question lies in the concern raised in the TRAI consultation paper *Issues relating to media ownership*. In this paper,

TRAI has pointed out the importance of media pluralism for healthy democratic practices while stating apprehension that the concentration of media ownership leads to a reduced number of diverse information sources, which eventually undermines the quality of public debate and may restrict the freedom of speech and expression as enshrined in article 19(1) (A) of the constitution of India.

‘Data LEADS’ and ‘Reporters Without Borders’ jointly conducted a media ownership research project in India to find out which media outlets influence the opinion-forming process. For this project, twenty-three television channels, twenty-five print publications, nine online media outlets and All India Radio were selected for data collection. The selection was based on the criteria of highest reach in terms of audience share. The study focuses on the newsworthiness and opinion content of these media outlets. The report describes Indian media as a strongly controlled space by a few business houses with apparent political affiliations and an absolute State monopoly in radio news. It also suggests that many media outlets do not necessarily translate into a pluralistic media landscape (Reporters Without Borders & Data Leads, 2019).

Multinational media companies are also interested in the lion’s share in the Indian media and entertainment industry through the merger and acquisition route. A few prominent examples include Viacom18 Media – a joint venture of Network18 and Viacom CBS, owning fifty-nine channels and a twelve per cent viewership share (Network18 Media & Investments Limited, 2020), Star-Disney owning a network of seventy-three channels and over eighteen per cent viewership share and recently merged Zee Entertainment Enterprises and Sony Pictures Network India, owning ninety-two channels and having over twenty-six per cent of viewership share across Hindi, English and major regional languages (Reuters, 2022; TRAI, 2022).

In the context of the Indian media and entertainment industry, it is also important to understand how the opaqueness of media companies’ ownership patterns makes it crucial to differentiate between ‘ownership’ and ‘control’. *The Caravan* magazine reported in 2016 that through complicated corporate structure, including direct loans, optionally fully convertible debentures, i.e. loans fully converted into shares at the investor’s discretion and

direct ownership of shares, business tycoons Mukesh Ambani, Mahendra Nahata and Abhey Oswal have invested into *New Delhi Television* (NDTV), *News Nation*, *India TV*, *News24* and *Network18* (Kaushik, 2016). The modus operandi continued in 2022 when Adani Group, owned by the world's third richest man Gautam Adani, through his group company AMG Media Networks, bid to acquire Vishvapradhan Commercial Private Limited, which allows indirect control of about twenty-nine per cent stake in NDTV, which is known to take a critical and independent stand on various issues. AMG Media also stated its intention to buy twenty-six per cent more stakes in NDTV from shareholders (Cornish & Reed, 2022).

In its 2022 consultation paper, TRAI also cautioned against cross-media ownership and vertical integration in the broadcasting sector, where content ownership and its distribution are getting increasingly consolidated. In 2020, *The Economic Times* reported the merger of Ambani's three group companies – Television 18 Broadcast, Hathway Cable and Datacom, and Den Networks – to further consolidate its content production and distribution business (Laghate & Barman, 2020). It gives a glimpse of the ongoing consolidation in Indian media, leaving little room for a plurality of voices.

Manuel Castells pointed out in his book *Communication Power* that the earlier anticipation of a new decentered world of *mass self-communication* has now clearly been replaced by the global internet, dominated by a small number of highly capitalized platforms, service providers and equipment manufacturers, and the future government will have to continuously struggle for dominance by the host nations of these giants (Castells, 2010). Shakuntala Rao, in her work *The Nation-State and Journalism* (2019), argued that the concept of the nation-state, which has historically been defined in terms of territorial and political jurisdiction, economic independence and cultural, linguistic or religious affinity, is now increasingly getting integrated to and dependent on capital, corporations and more powerful states, due to the forces of globalization. The challenges include the rise of new media technology and platforms, which have expanded the definition of who can create content and the range of topics that can be covered. Each nation has socio-cultural-historical footprints on which new media gets imposed (Rao, 2019).

The media industry data and critical scholarly observation point towards the dominance of media technologies designed in a certain way to manipulate people's views, emotions and behaviour by fostering addiction, muzzling a multiplicity of opinions and surrendering to commercial gains with the aim of profit maximization.

Media Laws and Ethics in India

The Constitution of India provides every citizen of India a fundamental right to free speech and expression under Article 19 (1)(A), including media. There is no special and separate provision for the freedom of the press in the Indian Constitution. The economic and business aspects of the media are regulated under Article 19 (1)(G), which provides freedom of profession, occupation, trade, or business. It is also restricted by Article 19(6), which includes provisions for public interest, professional and technical qualifications and state nationalization, total or partial. However, these restrictions are also subject to reasonability as mentioned in the Constitution of India under Article 19(2), 129 and 215, which includes sovereignty, integrity and security of the state, maintaining public order, promoting decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation and incitement to an offence (Kumar & Singh, 2019).

The fundamental right to free speech and expression constitutes two important rights: the right to receive and communicate news and views. The media is expected to provide factual information to the public, which will help in forming rational opinions and eventually lead to a quality exchange of information and views in society. Former Supreme Court justice Markandey Katju, who also served as Chairman of the Press Council of India from 2011–14, called out the media's portrayal of non-issues as real issues. He cited an example of a Fashion Week Event in Mumbai, covered by 512 accredited journalists, reporting about cotton garments while not touching on the issues of suicide by cotton cultivating farmers in the Vidharbha region, situated at a distance of a few hours from Mumbai (Katju, 2021). Judiciaries also raise concerns related to media trials and the peddling of

fake news on social media, and they call for the need to regulate social media for commenting on sub-judice matters (Times News Network, 2021). Here, the concern is about making legal issues socio-political because of reckless reporting. However, barring a few too suggestive instances, neither the judiciary nor legislatures attempted any meaningful course correction to create a socially responsible media that is much desired in a diverse country like India.

Need for a New Normative Model

Ostini and Fung have proposed a new model incorporating individual journalistic practices into prevalent political and social structural factors to represent contemporary press practices. This model is a departure from the state-policy press model and emphasizes the relative autonomy of the journalistic endeavour and its constant negotiation with the structures of state policy (Ostini & Fung, 2009).

Toepfl proposed a discourse approach to the comparative study of media and politics through a case study of the dominant discourse in Russia in 2012–13. This approach emphasized how the people assigned meaning to the ways they interacted with their media. The author suggested that discourse perspective is usually investigated as it prevails at certain times and contexts, thus helping to understand the distinct meaning systems of the different media landscapes (Toepfl, 2016). Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2022) suggested *custodiary*, in line with the ancient Athenian practice of sortition, as a new democratic organ to promote a fourth democratic wave and to balance the existing legislative, executive and judicial structures. Authors further argued for the institutionalization of the *custodian* with a mandate to keep an eye on independence protocols to protect them.

Nerone asserts journalism is an *ism*, a belief system that defines the appropriate practices and values of news professionals, news media and news systems. This hegemonic Western model assumes that news organizations are independent of state control and gives freedom to their journalist to give

expert accounts of affairs of public importance. However, journalism has been failing to discipline the presentation of news for years (Nerone, 2012).

Most scholars recognize that media, society and the system of governance are closely interlinked. The classic four theories of the press have almost become obsolete in practical terms. Popular discourses supported by liberal media still favour a democratic form of governance and on the ground, liberalism has been replaced by neoliberalism by strong advocates of market-linked reforms in every aspect of society. Media ownership in India is plagued with cross-media ownership and vertical integration, limiting the plurality of opinions. News first lost its objectivity to become *views* and then commodified to become a product, which is packaged in a certain way to grab the maximum eyeballs to win the race for television rating points. The media has embarked on a journey where self-regulation has turned into no-regulation. The digitization of content and its associated algorithm has changed the context of news for its consumers. In the era of disruptive media technologies and the dynamic media landscape, which is impacting every aspect of humane life, it seems the right time to revisit the normative theories for media.

Commercialization and Social Exclusion: A Discussion

A famous Sanskrit verse goes like this: '*Satyam bruyat priyam bruyat. Na bruyat satyam apriyam. Priyam cha nanrutham bruyat. Esha dharmah sanatanah.*' This verse loosely translates to: 'Speak the pleasant truth. Never speak the unpleasant truth. And, never speak the untruth even if it's pleasant. This is eternal philosophy of righteousness.' The first part of this verse, sort of, characterizes contemporary Indian journalism, which believes in maintaining the status quo rather than creating conflict by raising uncomfortable truths. Interestingly, the domain of protectorate consists of advertisers and brand capitals, a group of corporates with shared interests with the media organizations and audiences too. Vinit Jain, Managing Director of Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., commonly known as The Times Group, one of the largest Indian media

conglomerates, infamously quipped, 'We are not in the newspaper business, we are in the advertising business', pointing out that ninety per cent of the revenue of *The Times of India* comes from advertisement (Auletta, 2012). The quote appeared in the article published in the 2012 issue of *The New Yorker* as 'Citizens Jain', drawing the parlance from the cult 1941 Hollywood Classic film *Citizen Kane*, also based on the life of a media baron. The article further clarifies Jain's views on the content of *The Times of India* then, which has now become the go-to mantra for almost all the media houses in India, finding the aspirational niche of the target audience who consume the content. Therefore, youthful content is not only restricted to cater to a certain demography, rather it appeals to everyone as an aspirational value. Advertisers feel happy when the consumption of their offering increases through advertisements and the media gets their credit for being a facilitator of an aspirational class. However, in the process, exclusion becomes the norm for those marginalized voices who fail to raise their stakes in the market-driven superficial aspirations.

Marginalization challenges the traditional understanding and representation of individuals around the world. In the global media, marginalized voices, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, class, ableism and religion, belong to groups with distinct cultural norms and rules that are different from the mainstream. This often leads to either their invisibility in the media or representation through stereotypical lenses.

Marginalization and its relationship with media can be examined from various theoretical perspectives in sociology, media studies and cultural studies. These theoretical perspectives highlight the power of media in shaping social realities and its potential to contribute to the marginalization of certain groups.

The term *sociology of knowledge* was first coined by German philosopher Max Scheler (1924) and was concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The phenomenological philosopher Alfred Schütz made an important contribution to the sociology of knowledge in his work 'The Well-informed Citizen' by demonstrating that knowledge is derived from people's practical experience of the world. He does this by constructing the ideal types of 'the man on the street', 'the citizen who aims at being

well-informed' and 'the expert'. The expert has restricted but clear and distinct knowledge within their specific field. The man on the street has a vague, recipe-like working knowledge across many fields based on following procedures without deeper understanding. The well-informed citizen aims to form reasonably founded opinions on issues of indirect concern to them through gathering information (Schütz, 1946).

Professor Wilson observed that Schutz's work focused on the subjective experiences and interpretations of social actors, emphasizing the importance of understanding how individuals construct meaning and make sense of their everyday lived realities (Wilson, 2002). To understand how social interactions, language and cultural influences shape the perception of reality, Berger and Luckmann emphasized two key terms, *reality* and *knowledge* in their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966) to put forward their fundamental argument that 'reality is socially constructed and the *sociology of knowledge* must analyse the process in which this occurs' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Communication scholars felt the need to integrate the theories of Schütz (1946) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) to form a comprehensive understanding of mass media's role in the social construction of reality. Adoni and Mane discovered the direct relevance of Berger and Luckmann's argument on the sociology of knowledge for the study of culture and mass communication. This assertion also aligns with McQuail's idea that mass media shapes individual and collective consciousness by organizing and disseminating people's knowledge of their everyday lives and broader contexts (Adoni & Mane, 1984). The authors further argued that the social construction of reality is a dialectical process in which human beings act as creators and products of their social world.

These constructs were further developed by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach through their Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects, underlining the tripartite relationship between media, audience and society. The model argues that people rely on media in various ways to fulfil their information needs. For instance, one form of reliance stems from the necessity to comprehend one's social environment; another type of reliance arises from the need to act purposefully and efficiently in that environment; and a third type of reliance is based on the need for escapism and fantasy to cope with

daily issues and tensions. The stronger the need for and dependency on information, the more likely it is to influence audience cognition, feelings and behaviour. As societies become more complex, advancing media technologies tend to occupy a larger space by performing more unique functions. Dependency on media increases further when there is a relatively high degree of change and conflict in society, indicating the media's capacity to acquire and transmit information because it facilitates the reconstruction of societal arrangements (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1976) also pointed out that the information dependency of the individual on media brought about specific kinds of cognitive changes like ambiguity, attitude formation, agenda setting, expansion of peoples' systems of beliefs and impact on values. Among all these changes, *agenda-setting* is one of the key contributors to the process of marginalization. The process of agenda-setting involves the interaction of various factors. Media outlets gather and process information largely owing to their commercial compulsions, selectively choosing which topics to share. The individual then engages with this information based on their personal differences and societal background. As a result, a list of topics emerges that different individuals assign varying levels of importance to. This list represents the overall agenda of the media audience (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Scholars also examined how various forms of oppression and marginalization, such as race, gender, class and sexuality, intersect and compound each other. They observed that media representations often fail to capture the complex experiences of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities. A law scholar and leading thinker in critical race theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw, coined and developed the framework of intersectionality in her influential work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* (1989), which examined the experiences of Black women and how they faced compounded discrimination due to the intersection of their race and gender identities.

From the perspective of media and marginalization, Crenshaw's (1989) work is the critique of how feminist discourse on issues like rape and domestic violence has largely reflected and reinforced the experiences of white

women while obscuring the distinct intersectional experiences of Black women. Crenshaw argued that the feminist critique of rape law as reflecting male control over female sexuality fails to account for how racism interacts with sexism in cases of sexual violence against Black women. The author highlighted the media portrayal of the Emmett Till case as an example of how the intersectional dimensions of violence against Black women have been marginalized, with discourse centred on white female sexuality rather than racial terrorism (Crenshaw, 1989).

The popular press has always thrived on commercial advertising since its inception. The primary mode of revenue generation in media industries is circulation/subscription and advertisement, besides sponsorship, advertorial, syndication services, affiliate programmes and asset management. In the publication business, circulation is the number of paid copies distributed and is one of the principal factors used to set advertising rates. In the broadcasting business, the household pays for subscribing to a bouquet of channels/services; the same goes for digital media, where subscription and advertisement are the primary sources of revenue. The largest chunk of total advertising revenue goes to broadcasting media based on television rating points, provided by a joint industry body representing broadcasters, advertisers and advertising agencies, the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), which is an estimate of the number of people watching a particular programme on a channel during a specific period. The demographic data and associated television viewing habits of 50,000 households are analysed by BARC, giving advertisers an effective idea for their media planning to spend their advertising budget. This process completely commodifies the audience, leaving little room to represent those who are not potential consumers, such as marginalized sections of society. Marginal communities have been excluded from participation in the public sphere. Media also takes fewer attempts to locate media structure and performance in the environment in which they operate.

Noted journalist P. Sainath, known for his commitment to social causes and rural journalism, blames the structural compulsions of media to lie (Marathe, 2014). He claims that it starts with the *private treatise*, a kind of arrangement where a media house takes up an equity stake in a business in return for media coverage through advertisements, news reports

or advertorials. Times Group's Brand Capital openly boasts its association with most of the top brands in the country to facilitate brand-led growth and value creation, a model followed by other media conglomerates too. However, no one has a clear answer to how the conflict of interest will be managed. This creates a vicious circle of media turning to big businesses with multiple interests or controlling media by direct or indirect means, resulting in serving the narrow interest group and further excluding the community from the media.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework of the social construction of reality provides a valuable lens for analysing the role of media in constructing and reinforcing societal narratives and beliefs (Adoni & Mane, 1984). This understanding has been instrumental in analysing how media portrayals owing to their commercial compulsions can contribute to the marginalization of certain groups by perpetuating stereotypes, underrepresentation or misrepresentation.

The framework of intersectionality helps to understand and address the complex and multidimensional nature of marginalization experienced by individuals with multiple intersecting identities. It has challenged the tendency to view different forms of oppression as separate and distinct. It has emphasized recognizing the interconnected and compounded nature of multiple marginalized identities. In the context of marginalization in media, the intersectionality framework has shed light on the limitations of traditional representations that often fail to capture the nuanced experiences of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities. It has highlighted the need for more nuanced and inclusive media narratives that accurately reflect the complex realities faced by these individuals (Crenshaw, 1989).

The present study attempted to address the question of marginality at the broad social level of the *powerless* and *powerful*, where media becomes a part of the socio-political nexus to keep the *powerless* section away from the mainstream due to its market-driven profit-making structure. Though

media institutions and their practitioners both seem to bat for the *powerless*, in reality, they become the tools of the *powerful* and can't be counted on to level the playing field. Many models have been suggested since the four press theories, but none seems to find sufficient ground to replace the old one. Nerone asserted that this might be a transitional moment and that new systems and norms will eventually coalesce (Nerone, 2018). However, when there seems to be no answer, it is important to ask questions and reflect on the varied dimensions of the problem. This study doesn't attempt to propose a new normative model. Still, it provides sufficient ground to work on one, which might positively impact addressing the malice of social exclusion in media representations.

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SOMASHRI MONDAL, NILOY KUMAR BHATTACHARJEE,
SANDIP MUKHERJEE & BHASWATI ROY

Chapter 8 Role of Media in Transforming the Workplace and Promoting LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Industry in India

ABSTRACT:

The gradual evolution of *Homo sapiens* into modern-day human beings has been a progression through many stages of physical and behavioural transformations. The psychosexual alignments and predicaments of people have been a natural and integral part of this transformation. In the recent and ancient past, India's religious and mythological scriptures depicted the embodiment of different sexual orientations and the trend of pejoration towards 'unnatural orientations' did exist. Due to repeated assaults on tradition by medieval colonization, culminating in the British Raj, Indian society deviated from the endemic traditions of recognition of sexuality and deviance to a distinct binary order of (male and female) gender identity and heteronormative sexuality only. The Victorian sensibilities of the *babus* criminalized almost all sexual activities by classifying these as being against the order of nature. This, in turn, fostered the uncompromising view towards homosexuality as debauchery, crime and mental disorder. With the codification of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and its subsequent application with effect from the year 1861, the invocation of Section 377 mercilessly put Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) people in terrible social and judicial stigma, forcibly restraining their sexual expressions in the society. Today, the choice of sexual orientation by adult citizens lies at the core of the fundamental rights in India. Therefore, the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community are founded on constitutional doctrine. However, the state defied this very fundamental right of the community as guaranteed in the Constitution by discriminating on the grounds of sexual identity and orientation, thus violating Article 15 of the Constitution of India. After signal swedge and opprobrium, the Supreme Court, through a landmark judgment in 2018, decriminalized homosexuality, thereby paving the way for recognizing the sexual rights of the community. Nevertheless, though India is estimated to have about seven to eight per cent of the population belonging to this community, there is an utter lack of appropriate legislation to address their issues. Whereas the employment and related issues of the other minority/vulnerable communities are largely addressed through various central and state legislations in India, the community in question remains underrepresented. Indian industry, in the absence of suitable legislation and proper

media attention, has not been able to make significant leeway towards inclusive workplace transformations to provide employment opportunities to this vulnerable community so far. This chapter examines the most prominent media attention on the issues gathered by both social survey methods and web-scraping. The periodic updations from Google News India, YouTube, IMDb and social media platforms were used for data collection. Certain aspects of fundamental policy analysis are appended to the said end. Inter alia, the exegesis is expected to provide the necessary impetus to the lawmakers of India to bring forth suitable legislation to promote the inclusiveness of the LGBTQIA+ community in Indian industries in terms of employment generation and facilitation programs as a part of workplace transformation, leading to eventual transformations in the greater society.

Keywords: Heteronormative, Inclusiveness, Legislation, LGBTQIA+, Workplace Transformation, Media and Marginalization

Introduction

The history of sexual orientation and sexuality (and homosexuality) dates back to the dawn of civilization. We find very little attention to the portrayal of homosexuality as antagonistic to social norms in the scriptures, although to claim studied neutrality might seem far-fetched. In fact, the Dharmasutras, the Dharmashastras, even the Manusmriti often warn against indulgence of all forms, providing Purusharthas or life goals that prescribe strict purity of body, mind and soul. The Kama Sutra, 3rd century BCE is said to contain descriptions of non-heteronormative copulation, albeit with a touch of pejoration. Sanskrit Itihasa takes a different route, with the Mahabharata (Jaya Samhita, the scintillating description of tumultuous events of Lord Krishna's time, approximately 6 millennia ago) mentioning Hansa and Dimbhaka, the allegedly gay generals of King Jarasandha and citing the central role of the transvestite Prince Shikhandi in the actual Kurukshetra battle. Of note is the fact that sculptures embedded in the 12th century CE Khajuraho Temples in Odisha depict what is clearly sexual fluidity between man and man and woman and woman. The 3rd century BCE Arthashastra, penned shortly after the arrival of Alexander the Third in Western India and the collapse of the

corrupt Emperor Dhanananda, mentions minor penalties for homosexual activities rather than heterosexual activities. The timeline is of great significance in the present matter, because Alexander is depicted in some narratives to have been very close to Hephaeston and the Persian Bagoas. That remarkable clash of civilizations might also have been an opportunity for Greek Hellenism and post Buddhist Hinduism to reflect on respective cultural mores in an unprecedented fashion. However, homosexuality was a rare aspect in the official records of the medieval age as it was thought to be against the law of nature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in spite of harsh pejoration and punitive rules, the period of the Mughal Sultanate was, on the contrary, characterized by widespread homosexual activities and pederasty among the rulers and high officials, against the strict observances of Sharia law, as embodied in Emperor Aurangzeb’s Fatwa-e-Alamgiri, 17th century CE. Figure 12 summarizes the evolution of the official/legal status of the LGBTQIA+ community in India.

The more prominent post-Mughal radical changes began taking place in the aftermath of Indian governance shifting to the British Crown. The British colonial era, with the presence of Section 377 in the Indian Penal Code (1861), criminalized homosexuality and addressed the Transgender people as a ‘Criminal Tribe’. Any homosexual activity was treated as against the Law of Nature and dealt with stringent punishments forbidding such human desires and behavioural manifestations. Later, after independence too, there were no instances of either support or cases related to the LGBTQIA+ community. It might have been that due to the presence of section 377 in IPC and its levied restrictions, people rarely came out openly for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. It was treated as taboo in Indian society to address instances related to the LGBTQIA+ community.

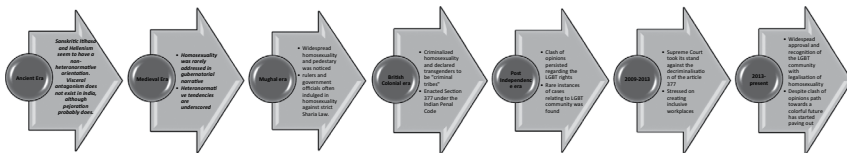


Figure 12: The Evolution of the Status of the LGBTQIA+ Community in India

Later, with the revocation of the IPC section and declaration of homosexuality as decriminalized, honourable Justices S. J. Mukhopadhaya and G. S. Singhvi announced homosexuality as a fundamental human right (Ians, 2014). They also marked this incident as paving the path for newer and better times, characterized by the social inclusion of all. The justices jointly opined that with emerging generations and the passage of time, society and its practices are changing; hence, inclusion and recognition of all communities will result in a better India. They also suggested developing workplaces with the essence of an inclusive culture. Since then, though the decision has faced opposition from time to time from certain quarters, the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community have prevailed to some extent. The struggle for widespread recognition continues as only a few progressive corporations, almost exclusively foreign multinationals operating in India, have included the third genders in their human resource inventory. It can be noted, in fact, lobbies, formal and informal – both far left and far right of centre – have often pointed fingers at such corporations as providing a safe harbour to criminal elements and thus waging a silent war against Indian society and culture as part of an insidious agenda of continuation of colonialism.

In present times, after legalizing homosexuality in India in 2018, in 2020–2022, discussions about legalizing same-sex marriages are finally doing rounds. Many gay and lesbian couples have filed their applications for legal recognition of their marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Special Marriage Act, 1954, or the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. Though the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act has been enacted by the parliament recognizing them as legal persons to take part in elections, the issues about their marriage, nature of sexual exploitations and remedies connected thereto, or availability of employment opportunities and welfare amenities in industries (especially in private sectors) remain uncovered. Two Lok Sabha members, in the recent past, introduced two private members' bills for the benefit of the LGBTQIA+ community, but, to the utter dismay of the enlightened citizens, those have not seen the light of the day so far (*Lok Sabha Members Introduce Private Member Bills for the Benefit of the LGBTQIA+ Community - the Hindu*, 2022).

On the contrary, many organizations have started including third genders in the recruitment process, but the identification of individuals who recognize themselves as citizens belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community wholeheartedly is seldom noticed. The workplaces have treated it as an informal recognition, and a kind of celebration limited only to a projection of its progressive and inclusive growth story. No strong initiatives have been taken for formalization, reservation or any legislation regarding the rights and protection of the LGBTQIA+ community. Despite having about seven to eight per cent of the population estimated as LGBTQIA+ community, there is no recognition or inclusion in society, particularly in different workplaces.

When we are talking about media and marginalization, media is defined as the medium of mass-scale communication that is socially recognized and comprises television networks, social media platforms, etc. whereas, marginalization is defined as a *spatial metaphor for a process of social exclusion in which individuals or groups are relegated to the fringes of a society, being denied economic, political and/or symbolic power and pushed towards being 'outsiders.'* We can also term it social exclusion (Carilli, 2021). Lately, the media houses in India are constantly advocating for their causes and have made a transition from a negative portrayal of the community to a positive one. They are choosing liberation from their orthodox viewpoints while covering stories and news related to the LGBTQIA+ community and incorporating a progressive outlook in their works. Social media and contemporary cinema have rather openly covered the topics and intricacies related to the minds and behaviour of LGBTQIA+ people (Tucker, 2020). But it is mainly because of the advent of social media platforms, like Facebook, Instagram, etc. that the community has started uniting and assimilating their powers to fight for their rights in society. They have started coming out openly with flying colours of the rainbow, crushing their pseudo-identity and projecting themselves as they ought to be. Hardwicke et al. (2023) discussed the participation of transgender participants in sports. They questioned how media can be more reflexive and responsive in reporting the issues of LGBTQIA+ people. They have increased media coverage of these people, but the lack of quantity and quality is still notable. Hughto et al. (2021) and Pham et al. (2020) reported

that many researchers have documented the harmful effects of negative and stereotyped media representations of transgender people, which may directly contribute to stress, depression and anxiety among transgender and gender non-conforming youth and adults. Hence, the media can play a vital role in changing the social picture by changing the course of reporting the issues of LGBTQIA+ people more responsibly while speaking more about their equal rights in society and changing the perspectives of the general masses towards them.

Notably, people recognizing them under the 'Rainbow Flagship' have displayed their bright and colourful side in different fields of work. Starting from cinema, the fashion industry and social activism to the corporate world right up to teaching and vlogging, they have managed to showcase their talent in almost every field (LekshmiPriya, 2017). However, India has yet to tap its full potential and creativity in all fields, which can only be made possible by societal and workplace transformations in general. All forms of media, whether print, electronic, social or digital, can act as powerful catalysts in bringing about such transformation by utilizing their power of expression to create a great stir in society, promoting acceptance and inclusion of the colours of the 'Rainbow'. At the same time, enactments deemed necessary must be fuelled for legislation to provide legal sanctity to employment and related opportunities in industries to the LGBTQIA+ community as a matter of right instead of being allowed to remain purely voluntary. Figure 12 encapsulates the entire oscillating rheology of this socio-political mores.

Review of the Literature

Khatua et al. (2019) took a Deep Learning (DL) approach to study the tweets after the Supreme Court verdict regarding the decriminalization of homosexuality. In this study, they tried to analyse the corpus of tweets made on the topic and understand the point of view of the Indian society towards the legendary verdict, which projects the mindsets of the Indian society. Their DL algorithm, with an accuracy of eighty-five per

cent, suggests that the majority of Indian society supports LGBTQIA+ rights and movements and favours conferring them fundamental human rights applicable to all genders. On the contrary, very few have taken it as a threat to Indian culture. The Indian society on social media has portrayed the modern and inclusive stand while extending its support towards the sexual minority communities. So, the authors believe that, since the majority of the users of social media are youngsters, they can become revolutionaries in paving the path towards a more open and inclusive Indian society in the future with more tolerance and acceptance for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Kumar and Bendukurthi (2017) have described the unfinished legal business and the role of media in uplifting LGBTQIA+ tolerance in Indian society. The concerned research has brought to the surface the facts regarding the perception of the Indian media about the inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community and creating higher tolerance levels for them, as against Article 377, which effectively labels homosexuality as being against the 'Law of Nature'. They have recognized that increased media coverage of the Pride Marches will enlighten the minds of Indians and hence will increase the tolerance for sexual minorities. This will increase openness through their coverage of political discourse. The big picture of the globalized Indian mentality can become more inclusive.

Stephen (2011) has dived deep into the reasons behind the longstanding conservative behaviour of Indian society. He has justified the behaviour of the Indian people, treating homosexuality and sexual minorities as taboo, as a result of conservatism from historical times. Despite mentioning instances of homosexuality in the mythological books, Indian society has always treated it as a strict taboo with their indifference to the LGBTQIA+ community. The discussions regarding the rights and problems of sexual minorities have always been treated with 'benign neglect' – a uniquely seminal and refreshingly accurate reference – thereby, resulting in people turning a blind eye towards the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community or even treating them as exclusion to the societal context. Also, the modern rightist political parties have tried to continue preaching the same avoidance in contemporary packaging, portraying sexual minorities as against Indian traditions and cultures.

Chatterjee (2014) opined that LGBTQIA+ people are more like a social minority group and are undergoing several forms of socio-economic and cultural injustices. They are deprived of every opportunity to exercise their citizenship rights in the country and are often exposed to intolerance, discrimination, harassment and even outright violence by random individuals or groups. This is due to the fear or hatred of homosexuality by the dominant group, which may be called 'homophobia' and primarily attributed to the moral, religious and political beliefs of the group. This homophobia manifests in the LGBTQIA+ community in different forms, such as cutting crude homophobic innuendo or jokes, launching physical attacks, making discrimination in the workplace and propagating negative media representation. Although many societies across the globe have made significant strides in advocating the causes of human rights, LGBTQIA+ rights still largely struggle to find universal acceptance.

The age-old section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) viewed sexual activities 'against the order of nature' as criminal. This very section was decriminalized concerning the sexual activities between consenting adults by the High Court of Delhi in July 2009. However, the judgment was overturned by the Supreme Court of India on 11 December 2013, wherein the apex court opined that amending or repealing section 377 should be left at the discretion of the Indian Parliament, not the judiciary. Consequently, in 2015, the Rajya Sabha passed the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, guaranteeing rights and entitlements, reservations in education and jobs, unemployment allowances and skill development, and provisions to prohibit discrimination in employment. However, its implementation remains rather suspect.

Sangeetha (2019) has presented a lengthy discussion on the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in India to make their rights known to the public and have them widely recognized. She mentions that although Section 377 has been stripped, Indian society is still in the developing stage of accepting homosexuality and LGBTQIA+ community rights. There have been fragmented views from the influential classes of society. Political parties like the Aam Admi Party have strategically recognized LGBTQIA+ rights, whereas influential Yogic personalities like Baba Ramdev have always been anti-gay and against the LGBTQIA+ community. The present prime minister has resorted to taking a neutral standpoint and states, 'The government has no business being in business. It has even less business being in the bedroom.'

The indifferent stance taken by Indians since ancient times by turning a blind eye towards them has kept their issues unresolved. Therefore, India should move towards a tolerant society towards these communities. However, recent Indian cinema has been quite liberal towards the portrayal of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, capturing the essence of homosexual relationships and their struggle, and presenting them in a positive light.

Rao et al. (2016) tried to explain homosexuality in terms of science, culture, medicine and society, law and justice, and Indian psychiatry. Authors argue that society should recognize the natural rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. People with different sexual orientations are not clinically abnormal as heterosexual human beings, and their acceptance in society will help recognize them as equal parts of society. The authors highlight that medical and legal fraternities are required to support the decriminalization of homosexuality. These communities must be included in all spheres of life, such as politics, sports, culture, cinema, business and the workplace. Society and government should consider the LGBTQIA+ community as normalized and ensure their rights as general human rights so that these communities enjoy freedom, justice and equality on the grounds of humanity rather than sexual orientation.

The World Bank report '*Economic cost of stigma and the exclusion of LGBTQIA+ people: A case study of India*' found that the exclusion and discrimination of the LGBTQIA+ community has led the Indian economy to lose productivity and creativity in the workplace, resulting in lower output and value creation. The report suggests that the inclusion can result in better investment in human capital in the form of creativity and value creation attributes, which, in turn, will increase economic productivity. The inclusions will also help to create a better position and status for LGBTQIA+ in society in terms of openness and tolerance. The standards of living of the LGBTQIA+ people will thus increase as a result of the inclusion, causing an increase in all-round economic development (Badgett, 2014).

Dutta (2012) described the importance of recognition of the LGBTQIA+ community as an essential step towards social inclusion, political participation and tolerance. He mentioned, however, that there are discussions and steps taken for the protection of LGBTQIA+ rights in the community, but they are still treated as weaker subjects of the society looking forward to alms and welfare schemes for subsistence or as inadequate citizens.

Instead, to claim equal rights and citizenship in the country, the LGBTQIA+ community people should come up and hold positions on political and civil fronts and get chances to prove their capabilities as equal counterparts in society. Such a revolution will help create an ambience of better acceptance and tolerance for the sexual minority communities in society.

Banerjiet al. (2012) presented a guide towards creating inclusive workplaces in the Indian context with the help of case studies and contributions from various authors, thinkers and organizations like Infosys, IBM, etc. They have mentioned that to create an inclusive workplace, there should be formulation and maintenance of an equal opportunities policy for all employees, diversity training for employees to create a congenial workplace culture, a well-recognized diversity structure providing a framework for recognizing the creativity and expertise of all types of employees, the offer of similar benefits to all the employees employed in the organization irrespective of their sexual orientation like mentoring and counselling. Corporate culture should be built in such a way that it reflects its inclusive environment and it should support various movements, extend their support to LGBTQIA+ staff and create awareness about the same in society (Prajwal & Ghangas, 2020; Raina, 2022). The company's market positioning should be in such a way that it projects its high tolerance attitudes and sheds light on the social taboos relating to LGBTQIA+ rights, creating awareness and trends. Proper monitoring of the LGBTQIA+ staff recruitment, development and maintenance in the organization should be a must. Community and advocacy programmes of the organization should portray a philanthropic outlook towards LGBTQIA+ rights and their protection and recognition. The organization should become a social role model in uplifting LGBTQIA+ rights in the economy. Such steps will lead to the creation of an all-inclusive workplace in Indian society.

Methodology

The present study is based on an exploratory approach with an aim to discuss the findings qualitatively. The data for the present research is

done by administering questionnaire with relevant attributes and a pre-determined scale with a few open-ended questions was prepared and administered through google forms and sent to the email addresses of respondents (LGBTQIA+ group) who recognized themselves as one among the LGBTQIA+ community using a respectful and discreet purposive sampling technique. For the present study we had sent 100 questionnaires to different students and professionals across India through snowball sampling technique. Predictably, a total of only a dozen respondents eventually filled out their questionnaires and sent back their responses. Despite such a small sample size, matters of utmost relevance surfaced from the data and were crucial to explain the present status of the people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ group. Remarkably, all of the respondents were working professionals employed in different private sector organizations within the age group of 20–30 years. Most of them came to recognize their original gender orientation in school or college.

Alongside, different social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter etc. were also accessed over a period of about 60 days from 25 July 2022 to 24 September 2022, and relevant details in consonance with the objectives mentioned in the study were collected. This particular period was chosen as it is quite relevant that the previous month of June being the pride month, the social media platforms were flooded with posts from the people, activists and organizations who belongs or supports the LGBTQIA+ community or wants to portray themselves as inclusive. Various posts, programs and events were quite evident and surfacing widely across the chosen time period to provide us with an ample opportunity for accessing those qualitative the data and information relevant for our study. Not only that it also helped us in recognizing the role of media, organizations and activist societies in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community. The response summary, quantified and tabulated data from the questionnaire, and the subjective responses collected from different sites are appended (See Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 15, Figure 16a and Figure 16b). The respondents admitted their sexual orientations openly for research purposes. In most of the cases, they came to identify their choices regarding their sexual orientations at a very early age, during their school days.

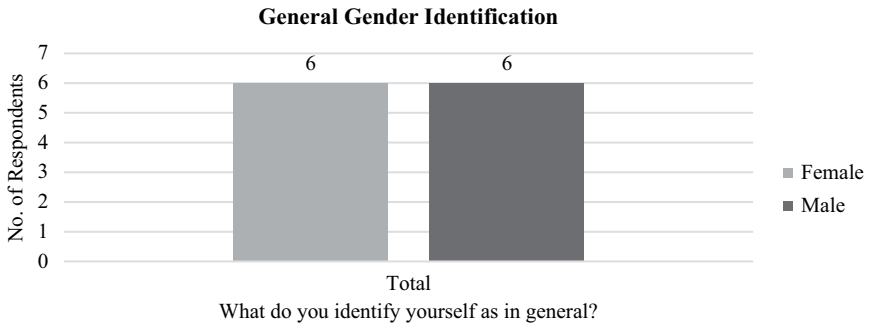


Figure 13: Demographic Profile (Gender)

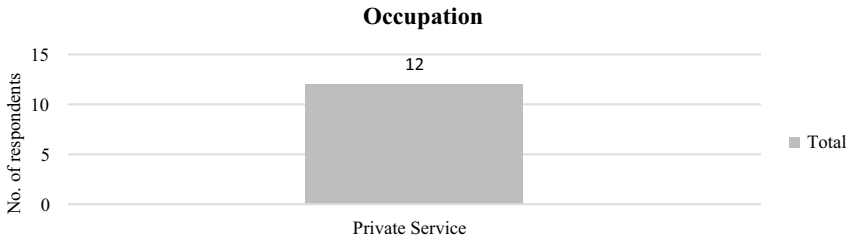


Figure 14: Demographic Profile (Occupation)

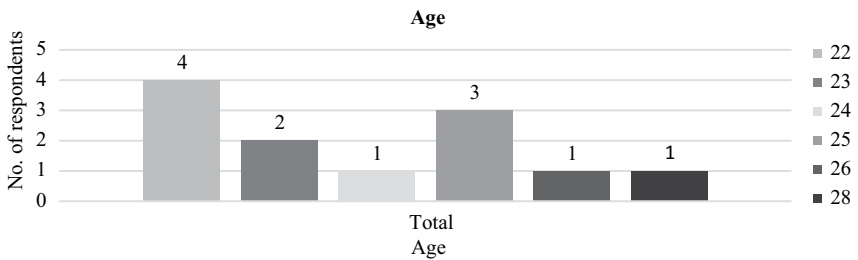


Figure 15: Demographic Profile (Age)

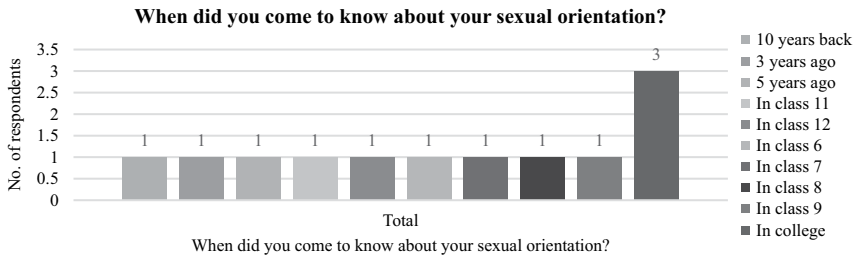


Figure 16a: Gender Orientation (a)

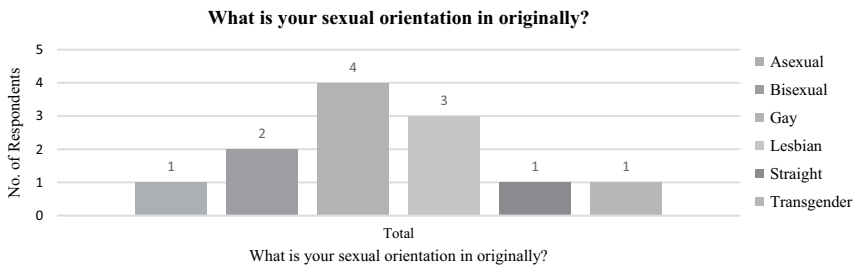


Figure 16b: Gender Orientation (b)

Methodological Concerns and Considerations: A Set of Proposed Techniques for Further Research

The social order might be mapped as an amoebagram (Robbins, 2008). Evolution happens in many different ways, and the nature of changes in the mainstream is often more easy to observe than the general adoption of and/or adaptation to change in the larger polity. Thus, to dynamically identify the socio-cultural orientations towards LGBTQIA+ interests and the keywords circulating in social media, the frequencies of specific frequencies and the media vehicles where such issues crop up with the greatest frequency have been identified consistently as an important first step.

It, therefore, becomes necessary to design a mechanism that regularly tracks and identifies data sources on the internet, traps relevant data and

analyses it. Further, the information gets stored in the relevant output in the required format(s) with manageable errors. The process was manually conducted, to begin with, but a long-term research programme in the present critical area required increasing levels of automation, deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and hybrid supervision. Therefore, we hazard a simple algorithm for computing the local optimum (max/min) from a multi-classifier, multi-parameter summary array, possibly in polynomial time. The algorithm is believed to be scalable to large datasets, even in a dynamic context, and it renders processes and output duly under man-machine hybrid supervision. The suggested method was considered the rudimentary core of a larger development project that eventually unfolded.

In the typical dataset, web-scraped or put together manually, keywords would be stored in/as a data frame (e.g. in R Studio) or a term matrix. Suppose, the parameters 'Keyword Frequency' or ' X_1 ' and 'Media Vehicle Relevance' or ' X_2 ' show different large and small values within the arrays. Then, this part of the problem reduces to identifying the maximum of the array $\{X_1\}$ and the array $\{X_2\}$. Thus, the arrays each present a maximization problem for the identification of a local optimum. Hence, we did partition the data matrix to segregate the performance parameters into two sets of column vectors – the first where the maximum cell value and cell location in the column were identified and the next where again the maximum cell value and cell location in the column was (similarly) identified, separately and simultaneously. Foremost, we traversed the column ' X_1 ' with the MAX() function and identified $\max(X_1)$ as the local optimum. This value was stored in the cell $(Z,1)$, say. We traversed the column again with a function, for example, COUNTIF(), a popular spreadsheet function, to ensure that the local optimum is indeed unique. Finally, we call a function, for example, MATCH(), to identify the location of the maximum value and we suppose herein that it is seen to be the cell $(Z,1)$ in the ' X_1 ' array. We then repeat the process for the remaining parameter(s).

The process might now be generalized. In each column of the first set, we assign the column data range to be the argument in the function MAX(). Upon identifying the maximum value in the column vector, we stored it in the record (row vector) MAXIMUM VALUE, say. We checked

for uniqueness of the local maximum by assigning each range and the identified maxima as arguments in the function COUNTIF() and stored the value in the row vector WHETHER UNIQUE, say. Finally, we identify the location(s) or cell i.d. of the local maximum by traversing the said column(s) with the function MATCH(). As per Aho, Hopcroft and Ullman (1974), these values are stored in the record LOCATION. We now hazard a pseudo-coded algorithm (without proof) for tracking popular sentiment towards LGBTQIA+ issues, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: A Proposed Sentiment Tracking Algorithm

<pre> Begin # comment ->proc {identify MAX(X_1), store value and location} declare array Anxm:= {$z_{i,j}$: $i = X_1$ i.d. $\forall i \in [1, n]$, $j = X_2$ i.d. $\forall j \in [1, m]$} identify column vectors of A = [a₁ a₂... a_m] partition A as [A₁ A₂] s.t.A₁ = [a₁ a₂... a_k], A₂ = [a_{k+1} a_{k+2}... a_m] identify $z_{i,j} \in \mathbf{a}_i$ s.t. $c_{i,j} = \text{MAX} \{a_{ij}; j \in [1, k]\}$ store max values in row vector b:= {$b_{i,j}$: $j \in [1, k]$} check location store location in row vector c:= {$c_{i,j}$: $j \in [1, k]$} check the uniqueness of the MAX value IF unique = FALSE begin check all locations {$\text{MAX} = \text{MAX}_i = \dots = \text{MAX}_\Theta$; $\Theta \leq n$} store locations in matrix C:= {$c_{i,j}$: $i \in [1, \Theta]$, $j \in [1, k]$} end IF end begin # comment ->proc {identify MAX(X_2), store value and location} loop steps fifth -> eleventh \forall column vectors ajs.t. $j \in [1, k]$ identify $c_{(k+1),j} \in \mathbf{a}_{k+1}$ s.t. $c_{i,j} = \text{MAX} \{a_{(k+1),j}; j \in [k+1, m]\}$ store min values in row vector b:= {$b_{i,j}$: $j \in [k+1, m]$} check location store location in row vector c:= {$c_{i,j}$: $j \in [k+1, m]$} </pre>
--

(continued)

Table 2: Continued

<pre> check the uniqueness of the MAX value IF unique = FALSE begin check all locations {MAX = MAX Γ = ... = MAX Θ; $\Theta \leq n$} store locations in matrix $C := \{c_{ij}; i \in [1, \Theta], j \in [k+1, m]\}$ end IF loop steps thirteenth -> twentieth \forall column vectors $ajs.t. j \in [k+1, m]$ mode(location):= optimum. end. # comments: concluding remarks ->the method might be repeated for all key parameters. # comment: concluding remarks ->a final array might be created to host all key parameters and updates. </pre>

Discussions

The empirical survey indicates that they (LGBTQIA+ people) had somewhat opened up regarding their sexual orientations among their colleagues and received mixed reactions and behavioural displays towards their personalities. At the same time, there were no organizational policies regarding the protection and upkeep of the interests of employees with LGBTQIA+ orientations. There is neither any specific provision for LGBTQIA+ people in private organizations nor is there any specific law (like POSH) to safeguard the interests of LGBTQIA+ people in the organization.

Table 3: A Summary of Questionnaire Responses (in per cent)

Questions	Most Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Most Unlikely
Are there any specific provisions for LGBTQIA+ people in your organization?	0	0	13.333	20	66.667
Did you open up about your sexual orientation to your colleagues?	8.333	16.667	16.667	8.333	66.50
Do they accept you as you are?	0	0	8.333	16.667	75
Do you feel people with different sexual orientations are more creative?	100	0	0	0	0
Do you think that the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people can bring creative thinking into workplace culture?	83.33	16.67	0	0	0
Did you ever face discrimination or bullying at the workplace due to your sexual orientation?	25	41.667	25	8.333	0
Is there any policy at your workplace for LGBTQIA+ inclusion and reservation?	0	0	0	8.333	91.667
Do you think media can bring about desired changes by throwing light into the need for legal provisions into the workplaces?	58.333	25	16.667	0	0

Also, there is, typically, no specific department or trained official designated to handle issues or queries related to the problems of these individuals in the workplace. It was found that there is no official machinery to project their problems throughout the organization. On the contrary, organizational people need to be imparted with an adequate

orientation towards all classes and genders to widen their outlook towards life and become more open with colleagues from this community. A summary of responses received from the administered questionnaire is depicted in Table 3.

During the interview, one of the respondent states:

First of all, we all are the same ... gay, straight and bisexual all are in one heart ... so why the a difference between the emotions of a straight and gay? Companies should first and primarily build an environment in their organization where the existence of LGBTQIA+ people is acknowledged. Every organization should recognize the need to acknowledge gender and sexual diversity. In this regard, mandatory legislation to support and protect LGBTQIA+ rights should be created and enforced. Additionally, laws which shall specifically protect the community from different sexual orientations, discrimination, harassment and bullying and ensure workplace inclusion for them, should be implemented.

When asked 'Private companies generally do not have any mandatory legislations to support and protect LGBTQIA+ rights? Do you have any suggestions for such policies?' another respondent said:

Implementing laws is not enough ... companies should also keep a check on the proper implementation of the legal provisions by creating separate departments and designating separate people for this purpose. Policies related to the protection and respect of rights and choices in the workplace are required. Inclusiveness should be increased ... only then shall workplaces become more open and vivid' as an answer to the question.

'Do you feel the need for such legislation regarding inclusion and protection of LGBTQIA+?' Yet another respondent mentioned the role of media in bringing about the necessary changes in policy implementation:

I think the media has immense power to influence the thoughts of en masse. Media can help in bringing forward the need for legal provisions into the workplace by highlighting the discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ people in various organizations. Media is also perceived to be a powerful force that brings about changes in people's mindsets. Hence, they should be considerate of accommodating all such issues in their work.

The above responses can best be bound into meaningful Gestalts, usable for policy engineering, by making direct reference to singular

entities in the sparse yet extant literature. Shaeroy Chinoy (*Pride guide: 16 LGBTQIA+ organizations you should know about*, 2022) enlists various social media pages and accounts that regularly shares blogs supporting the 'Pride Movement' and protection of LGBTQIA+ rights, like Gaysi, Queergarh, Resistive Alliance for Queer Solidarity (RAQS), The Queer Muslim Project (TQMP), Nazariya, Humsafar Trust and many more. Each of these has some definite agenda to highlight and discuss to spread awareness about the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in society. These social media pages are operated by different groups who are continuously fighting for LGBTQIA+ rights from various perspectives. They spread awareness of and raise questions about the unfair legal provisions and practices that are present in society. These groups work towards empowerment of the LGBTQIA+ community-oriented people who fear to admit their identity and tend to be shy, concealing the facts about themselves. It is due to the initiative of these groups that many young LGBTQIA+ people are now able to file complaints against harassment and raise their voices against unfair laws and practices. Through these groups, the LGBTQIA+ community sees the light of the day and can present themselves in the original and surreal forms of personality. Please add the below citation after personality (Singhal & Paul, 2018). They can have the privilege to increase their self-actualization and self-esteem needs with the help of socializing.

Social Media Scanning Exercise: A Discussion

As a result of web-scraping performed through sentiment keyword cloud (as shown in Figure 17) and keyword frequency (as shown in Figure 18) to generate a corpus of data to be analysed to understand the most anticipated media attention gathered by the LGBTQIA+ community to bring about suitable legislation for their inclusion and protection, the most frequently used and discussed keywords that surfaced were related to the LGBTQIA+ community in India. These included events aimed at creating awareness and showcasing their independence and lifestyle like the 'Pride March' and 'Pride Month', and the various cases and incidents of inclusion of the community in the general flow of life. In the present time,

channels like *Brut India*, *Josh Talks*, *BBC News*, etc. give good coverage and create content to raise awareness about the LGBTQIA+ community in India. It is the media that bring us the stories of LGBTQIA+ celebrities like Sushant Divgikar, Gauri Sawant, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Smirti Jha and many more who inspire us and enlighten us with their stories of struggle in the search for recognition of their true self. Taali series by Sushmita Sen depicts the life of Gauri Sawant, who redefines motherhood by adopting and raising a girl child. Media’s approach and representation make a vast impact on the minds of society. Media, with such portrayal, breaks the invisible walls separating and alienating the LGBTQIA+ people from the rest of society by throwing more light on their struggles and wars to find grounds to recognize their human rights in society. It gives a strong message of equality and inclusion by tearing down the



Figure 17: LGBTQIA+ Sentiment Keyword Cloud

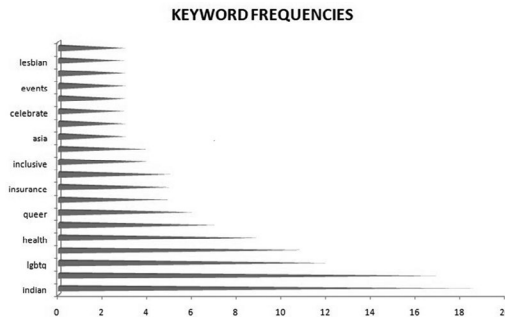


Figure 18: LGBTQIA+ Sentiment Keyword Frequency

orthodox mindset of the large-scale society towards the LGBTQIA+ community of marginalization.

As with the questionnaire-based survey response analysis, the above responses can best be bound into meaningful Gestalts, usable for policy engineering, by making direct reference to relevant entities in the sparse yet extant corporate policy landscape. Presently, in India, quite a few organizations, domestic and multinational, have started portraying their inclusive nature in their business. Some recent studies, though, have brought to the fore the various initiatives undertaken by different companies in India, like Tata Steel, Mahindra Logistics, Godrej, Accenture, Infosys, etc. Yet these inclusions are largely construed as a part of their internal marketing strategy to leverage business credentials. These companies have started giving facilities to their LGBTQIA+ employees, starting from a gender tab option, such as Transgender, in their application forms for recruitment (Anand, 2020; Bhardwaj, 2021). Creating tolerance in the work environment and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusiveness began after stripping down section 377 from IPC. However, such minimal, nominal efforts can be perceived as serving only to add another feather to their caps by associating their names with the ‘Colour Rainbow’.

A Smorgasbord of Suggested Policy Priorities

Since a small segment of companies have successfully fulfilled their target of creating inclusive workplaces and promoting inclusive work cultures, the need for uniform legislation in the country to make such provisions mandatory for all workplaces should be envisioned. The suitable legislation in this regard shall accommodate the rights of LGBTQIA+ employees and gain the privileges of enjoying equal positions and status at workplaces. At the same time, initiatives should be undertaken by employers to bring about adept orientation among the other heteronormative employees to adopt open and welcoming approaches towards their colleagues from the LGBTQIA+ community. This line of action takes greater priority when we reflect on the fact that prior research suggests

that the community in question is believed to apply its unmatched creativity and talent in different working spheres.

We must also bolster political will by taking a page out of the play-book of the new world. The Wikipedia (2022) page states, *The Respect for Marriage Act (RFMA; H.R. 8404) is a landmark United States federal law passed by the 117th United States Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden. It repeals the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), requires the U. S. federal government and all U.S. states and territories to recognize the validity of same-sex and interracial civil marriages in the United States and protects religious liberty.* Whereas the Act has, rather predictably, incited the right wing in US society to crawl out and scream murder, cite such pejorative references in the holy books as Sodom and Gomorrah and protest vociferously, it has inspired great awe and respect in enlightened communities across the 'free' world. To bring such anticipated legislation to India, the role of the media can be revolutionary. The media, as the fourth pillar of democracy, has the power to convey the required message in society in the most comprehensive and meaningful way. It is instrumental in creating a far-reaching impact on lawmakers of India through appropriate documentaries, real-life situations, industry practices and global standpoints across countries on various issues about the LGBTQIA+ community, which can mend the way we are currently accustomed to acting. The movies and social media posts created by the LGBTQIA+ community groups and other supporting persons or entities and pages can influence the minds of the people at large, especially the youth, to think in a changed perspective. Hence, they can play their crucial roles in supporting and spurring LGBTQIA+ movements to bring suitable legislation towards employment generation and workplace transformations to provide them equality in status and opportunity and further elevate them from the understated class of society.

Very notably, the Humsafar Trust published a manual (The Humsafar Trust, 2018) for employers on the Inclusion of Gender and Sexual Minorities in the Workplace, which thoroughly discusses how more diverse workplaces are (typically) better than those that are not. It also puts in place the features of diverse work cultures that can support an inclusive work environment. The manual also states how people of different sexual orientations have unique thought processes, making organizational processes

more creative and efficient than peers. It puts forward the various barriers and challenges that any organization faces while bringing about inclusiveness and diversity in their cultures and hence suggests positive changes towards including inclusiveness and diversity in workplaces and making them desirable workplaces for all human beings. The most important suggestion that catches our attention is that ‘everything should be in writing’. It means merely claiming to be inclusive is not enough for organizations. Each clause related to the inclusiveness and diversity of the organization should be documented appropriately. The new corporate codicil should contain the rules, responsibilities and protection to ensure inclusiveness in diverse workplace cultures and their employees, making the LGBTQIA+ staff aware of their rights and making others aware of widening the scope of their mentality. Also, workplaces should create separate rules for handling employee complaints from LGBTQIA+ people, and there should be properly installed machinery to take care of their health, hygiene and welfare, for example, separate toilets and restrooms, mental health support, etc. However, hard we might try, there are bound to be some invisible barriers that are posed by the thought processes of the other people in society and, therefore, other employees in organizations, who might find it difficult to accept changes in the first place, as they come from very different (family) backgrounds.

Latent socio-political and social-psychological variables must be aggressively researched and understood. A key factor in the present regard is the typical South Asian obsession with Victorian England. Whereas NRIs and PIOs have of late begun to arrive at the top of global corporations and polities alike, a few cases in point being that the Prime Ministers currently seated at the hustings in both London and Dublin are of Indian origin, exactly like the CEOs of Google (or Alphabet) and Microsoft, the average South Asian, be he a citizen of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal or Sri Lanka, is still deeply mired in the inescapable loop of pidgin Victorian morality. The satanic assault by medieval barbaric hordes from as far afield as Turkey on the traditional university system of South Asia (noted instances being the iconic, ancient institutions at Takshashila and Nalanda) and the eventual and utter dismantling of Sanskritic education by Lord Bentinck under advisement from the infamous Thomas Macaulay led to Indians

losing contact, almost completely, with their cultural roots. Thus, Indians learned to comply with half-baked Victorian mores. Given the typically irrational aloofness of the British from continental Europe (as currently evidenced in the Brexit disaster, threatening to turn the United Kingdom into an underdeveloped country), the study of classical European wisdom was also neglected. Thus, the average Indian lost his Sanskrit advantage and did not gain any of the profound learning that full-blooded European tradition could offer. Even today, the typical babu in the executive, legislative and judicial arm of government tends inevitably to find glory in identifying or aspiring to parallels with the morbid UK caught in the great vortex of economic collapse. Thus, a sham and duplicitous moral-ethical code based loosely on faux Victorianism inevitably prevails in local conversations and, equally, in gubernatorial pronouncements. Such an unimaginative and regressive idiom could hardly be tasked with the onerous task of distributing liberty and equality among the hapless LGBTQIA+ communities.

The massive and largely politically motivated vernacularization of education after independence has also not helped in the slightest bit with cultural evolution, at least in the present regard. Today, perhaps every urban middle-class Indian with even modest knowledge and skills of any kind wishes to become a job seeker in the prosperous West, particularly in the Anglophone territories of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. The babudom stemming from vernacular backgrounds is as susceptible to the satanic ideals of Macaulay as the products of 'English medium' schooling. Yet they seem to be blissfully unaware of the same! Poverty, frugality and corruption exist cheek-by-jowl everywhere. Divorce rates hold fast at the lowest levels in the world, consumption of liquors is prohibited (and often repealed) in politically expedient haste, food habits are strictly restricted, while at the same time, adultery is decriminalized and global corruption indices typically rank India towards the very bottom with steadfast consistency. In 2018 the Government appeared to reluctantly take up a defensive stance – eventually being pushed into a pro-Ashley Madison corner – when the Hon'ble Supreme Court struck down Section 497 of the IPC because it violated Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. Summarily, this contradicted the firm stance of Additional Solicitor General Dr P. Anand regarding the irreparable

damage adultery does to marriage, family and the timeless Indian ethos. It was pleaded in a rather pronounced rear guard manner that the armed forces be left outside of the ambit of the abrogation. In 2023 it put up strategic, strident opposition to same-gender marriages, leading to a five-judge Constitution Bench of the apex court ruling in a 3:2 verdict against the constitutional validity of same-sex marriages and prescribing that it is for the Indian Parliament to formulate legislation on it. Such policy stalemates at the apex level indeed bode ill. The mainstream in this land might be enlightened enough to take up many of the highest offices in the great countries and corporations of the advanced West, but the vast masses are caught in ruinous vicious circles of ignorance and duplicity that seem to have gravitational fields of the strength of cosmological singularities. Unless the masses, currently numbering a mind-boggling 1.5 billion, are lifted out of spiritual and material despair, no profound evolution of society will be possible. Equitable treatment of LGBTQIA+ communities at scale will remain a distant dream.

The media must play a crucial role in shaping the thoughts and images of the various elements of the society. In the same way, it has the power to shape the thoughts and mentality of the human beings living in this society. Media, hence, can empower the people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community by sculpting a positive outlook towards natural well-being and welfare. Media is the only agent who can broadcast the present conditions of the LGBTQIA+ society people and also talks about the expected legislation that can be brought forward by the country's legislative bodies. Also, there should be inclusive regulations mandatorily implemented by the organizations in the country. This will empower them and help them lead a normal, inclusive life in different arenas of society. Media plays a vital role in suggesting various legislations to the law-making bodies and their representatives to formulate and thus successfully implement the legislations in the society, which will have the capability to pave new paths in normalizing and diversifying the outlook towards these groups of people from the society. Comprehensive support structures, not limited to not-for-profit networks with specific missions, such as precipitating political-legal consensus for creating conditions for the attainment of nothing short of formal connubial contentment for every adult citizen, irrespective of

gender and sexual orientation, must be allowed to mushroom across the country. The welfare state and its corporate constituents, as also its general polity, must eventually be persuaded – ever so gently, humanely and scientifically – through intelligent policy instruments and skilfully and soulfully orchestrated legal coercion to agree to morph into a rainbow collective of mass prosperity, goodwill and welfare.

Conclusion

Regarding the grave problem of homophobia extant almost universally in India, today, the employment and workplace transformation-related issues might not be considered simple but can be construed as complex ones consisting of composite areas of concern. The employment and welfare amenity-related rules in India are drawn from the existing pieces of labour legislation such as the Factories Act, the Maternity Benefit Act, the Equal Remuneration Act, etc. to name a few, which focus primarily on the trivial dichotomy of male and female genders with ‘straight’ sexual orientation only. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, though enacted recently yet, could not address the issues in whole for the entire LGBTQIA+ community in India. In the absence of appropriate legislation and amendments to the existing provisions of various enactments, their inclusion only in a few segmented sectors of the industry remains minimal.

In the largest democratic republic on earth, slated to soon become the homeland of any political description to the largest population anywhere, such unfairness is otherwise contrary to its egalitarian nature. Therefore, their concerns need to be addressed as soon as possible. The media in this regard can play a substantial role in highlighting their issues and concerns regarding lack of employment opportunities, reservations in employment and provision of suitable workplace amenities addressing their needs, which remain far from the truth and keep this large population on the stigma due to their ill-fated positions in the society.

The present study, it may be noted, is based on limited access to a small sample size and limited information gathering from different social networking sites over a limited time owing to several constraints where social dogma levelled with them being the primary one. The consistency of the collected data and information might have to be further confirmed with repeated surveys and analysis. Nevertheless, the study might provide a fillip for legislators, industry and society at large to incorporate changes to facilitate inclusion. It may also be noted that in transforming the workplace and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusive industry in India, the role of the media in bringing suitable legislation can be significant, which can eventually create a win-win situation for the industry as well as the community in question where innovation, productivity and diversity prevail as essential ingredients of a progressive nation. As social mores evolve inevitably and relentlessly with time, it must certainly not be forgotten that the objective of creating and maintaining a welfare state homeland, as duly enshrined in its Constitution, lies at the core of this age-old democracy.

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KAJAL SHAW

Chapter 9 From the Margins to Centre: The Rise of Indigenous Media in India

ABSTRACT:

The mass media plays a vital role in changing our lives. Media is a significant catalyst of social change and gives voice to the voiceless. However, to a large extent, the media has alienated marginal communities due to their lack of participation, misrepresentation and lack of portrayal in the public sphere. Marginal communities are not equally represented in mainstream social, economic, educational and cultural life due to their gender, caste, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and so on. One such community is recognized as indigenous people in India, popularly known as 'Adivasi' or 'Scheduled Tribes'. Literature suggests that these communities and their issues are the least covered by the mainstream media. However, tribal communities have always taken the initiative to establish their existence and raise their issues. Over the years, it has become evident that the tribal community's existence is widely visible in social and community media. They attempt to serve their community on its own. Right from print and radio to YouTube videos, blogs, books and documentaries, tribal people themselves highlighted their issues and struggles, talking about education, agriculture and employment, among other issues. The digitally divided community has made remarkable progress in portraying its own culture. This chapter aims to review the existence and emergence of tribal media over the years. How and in what way do these community (tribal) media serve to make the indigenous community empowered?

Keywords: Media, Margin, Centre, Tribal, and Indigenous vs. Mainstream Media

Introduction

Mass media is the interface that connects to the world. Despite the immense flow of information and technology, a few communities are unharassed by media across the globe (Gabiola et al., 2022; Tsai et al., 2022; Ittefaq et al., 2023). The sociological process of being left out, particularly

as an individual or as a community within a broader society, creates isolation. Individual marginalization can result from excluding people from meaningful social interaction and participation. *Dalit* [*Scheduled Caste* or Untouchables] and tribal people, women, people of colour and LGBTQIA+ are generally considered marginalized communities (Chinnaswamy, 2023; Tan, 2022). People living on the margins not only suffer from poverty but also face many more difficulties. Regardless of their location, these communities experience vulnerability and discrimination. Some people are on the verge of being outside of society due to caste, religion, gender, class, colour and ethnicity, which leads to creating a kind of marginalization and repression.

Like other marginalized communities, tribes are one such community that the government and non-governmental organizations give little attention to compared to other communities. Further, they are also ignored by the media as well (Tsai, 2022). Tribes' needs are not limited to socio-economic conditions like food, shelter and clothes but also other cultural and political factors, which may lead to their overall growth. The majority of tribal societies are still distant from the technology-linked living systems and development. The continual process of globalization and technical progress favours the forces of the market and excludes society's underprivileged groups. Even though government and non-government organizations attempted to enable tribal people to use technology, many tribes have yet to benefit from these organizations.

Tribal people differ from other sections of the population in terms of their unique culture, social structure, economic conditions and style of living (Rao, 2022). The prolonged digital divide has made indigenous people suffer a lot. But, the advent of the internet and social media has somewhat provided them visibility. In the modern day, community-generated mediated content is essential for creating identities, validating stories and forming communities in both local and international contexts (Howley, 2009). Indigenous media are local and global and emerge from geographically dispersed and regional-based production centres. In the evolution of media, the emergence of community media, particularly tribal media, has witnessed a significant journey. Indigenous communities who were formerly marginalized are reclaiming their narratives through community media

and community-based social media (Siminoff et al., 2022). The digital age has offered the space for the democratization of message creation and spread across boundaries.

Tribal community media catalyses cultural preservation and community involvement, encouraging a bottom-up flow of information and emphasizing the endeavour of the tribal community to create inclusivity in the global media landscape. Indigenous media is earning unparalleled support, respect and love within the community. Beating the hegemonic attitude, indigenous media is building space among its people. This study aims to thematically analyse the existing literature on the growth and development of indigenous media, triggering discussion on socio-economic-political issues of the indigenous people of India. It has tried to highlight the challenges faced by people attempting to bring the problems of indigenous people into mainstream society.

Adivasi [Tribes]: An Indigenous Community

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs defines that indigenous peoples are 'inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment', and they have maintained traits that differentiated their social, cultural, political and economic identities from those of the dominant societies in which they reside. Dutta (2018) highlights that the term 'indigenous people' is interchangeably used for 'Adivasi' and 'Scheduled Tribes' in India despite being 8.6 per cent in comparison to 16.6 per cent of SC of the entire Indian population (Census, 2011). The word 'Adivasi' is taken from the Sanskrit language, where 'Adi' means from the beginning, while 'vasi' stands for inhabitants/residents (Dutta, 2018). 'Adivasis' were the first people to live on the subcontinent, as their name implies, and they once inhabited a far broader region than they do now (Minorities Rights Group International, 2008). 'Adivasis' are formally classified as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in an addendum to the Indian Constitution (Vanneman et al., 2006). However, the aggregate designations used to

identify indigenous people in India are 'Adivasis' and as officially used as 'Scheduled Tribes'.

Media and Indigenous People

Mass media plays a vital role in informing people and a bridge between the government and its citizens. Media also attempts to bring people's issues to the fore and provides a platform for discussion. Besides, it encourages every group of society to find solutions for larger and more significant concerns. But many times, the media is not able to give equal attention to all communities or groups of society, hence leaving some communities out of the mainstream society (Gabiola et al., 2022). 'Scheduled Tribes' or 'Adivasis' are a community whose issues and concerns are rarely taken up by the media. But, neglect by the mainstream media did not leave the 'Adivasis' in the lurch. Small initiatives by the 'Adivasis' themselves have been made in the form of indigenous media and have tried to bring their issues into the public domain. Though, at the same time, they have to face many obstacles and challenges.

Status of Media Usage among Tribal People

Print and online 'Adivasi' media are fundamentally different from standard 'journalistic techniques' in that they have multiple stories to tell, including tales of struggle, history and life celebration. By its very nature, community-run and managed 'Adivasi' media outlets are readily accused of lacking objectivity or not engaging in true journalism (Poyam, 2021). On the other hand, these platforms define journalism on their terms by providing a social justice-driven approach in which 'Adivasi' journalists are not only journalists by profession but also active participants in several 'Adivasi' peoples' struggles. Tribal media initiatives are gradually

working for their folks. Tribal people are breaking all barriers and contributing to all segments of communication. Their dedication to starting and running a particular media within a certain periphery is increasing nationwide. From an illiterate news hawker to an educated Radio Jockey (RJ) girl, all are taking the initiative for their community in their own languages. Some rare examples of community media initiatives by indigenous people in various parts of India continue to exist.

Newspaper

Newspapers played an important role even before the independence of the country by bringing issues and concerns of national importance, particularly the Indian freedom movement. English-language newspapers and regional-language newspapers contribute immensely to the much-needed discussions among political leaders, administrators and other stakeholders. Indigenous people have also started publishing newspapers in their languages. But, only a few of them were able to establish and achieve success in the field of print journalism. Modern media platforms enable tribal people to create and distribute media in their native tongues and regional dialects (e.g., films, audio-visual and text messages). For people whose languages are less well-known and/or have informal scripts, it creates a meaningful way for them to get through semantic and literacy limitations. A total of 340 newspapers were registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) between 1957 and 2015 in thirty-four tribal languages across forty-eight districts and thirteen states of India (Pandey, 2021). However, these newspapers have a lesser audience as they primarily serve specific communities. For example, the *Sumi Zumulbu* newspaper (published in 2011) provides a platform for the *Sumi* community in Nagaland to bring culture and community together, said the founding editor and publisher, Inato Y. Sikhu, also the author of *A Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values* (The Hoot, 2015). The tabloid *Fagun* in the Santhali language not only fills the communication gap between the ethnic groups but also keeps them informed of current events (Burman, 2021). This was developed by *Malati Murmu*, who sold newspapers in

other languages. Most of the tribal language newspapers have been published in the Northern Zone of India and Central and Eastern Zones have a lesser number of papers. Some other popular tribal language newspapers are *Disom Khobor* (Santali language), *Bij Biinko* and *Dhumpkuria* in the Kurukh language. The Bhasha Research and Publication Centre produces multi-lingual periodicals in 'Adivasi' languages, such as *Dhol*, *Balko nu Bol* and *Lakhara* that address current socio-economic, human rights and cultural issues. *Khabar Lahariya* is a weekly rural newspaper that began its publication in 2002, and the second edition was launched in 2006 by a group of women from marginalized communities, i.e. Dalit, Kol (tribe) and Muslim community (Nirantar, 2011). It exposes the corruption practice as well as stories about Dalit concerns and incidents of violence against women. Recently, a documentary was also made on *Khabar Lahariya*, which received an international award. *Taaza Khabar*, *Desh Videsh*, *Mahila Mudda*, *Idhar Udhar* and *Hamaar Sandesh* are the pages of tribal communities in which they publish current news, national and international news, women's concerns, *Panchayati raj* (a local political system), entertainment, regional news and an edit page. Additionally, *Khabar Lahariya* publishes quarterly special issues focusing on current events like municipal, state and federal elections or takes a feminist approach to significant development challenges. Another 'Santhali' leading newspaper is *Janam Dhisom*, which now has its online portal *e-Janam Dhisom*, promoting the *Ol-chiki* script as their language. They deal with tribal issues, socio-cultural and economic changes in daily life (Santhali news, n. d). In Malkhangiri, *Udisha*, *Jayanti*, a female of the *Khoya* tribe, became the first ever tribal journalist of her community who works in Odia language television – *Kalinga TV*.

Radio

Community radio has brought revolution for the indigenous people. It seems to have emerged as the most convenient medium and the indigenous community primarily adopted that. The medium is also popular as it is quite portable, has easy adaptability and can be listened

to anytime and anywhere; therefore, it is ubiquitous and pervasive. From *Bhabra* (Alirajpur), in Madhya Pradesh, the first tribal radio station was launched by *Vanya* and the Tribal Welfare Department in the 'Bhili' dialect (Prativad.com, 2011). The *Asur* tribe broadcasts local news and music through mobile radio, hence providing information and entertainment. *Asur* tribal people used to gather at the marketplace to listen to music, such as playing songs and listening to news and information on various government schemes (Barik, 2020). Another exclusive community radio *Radio Dhimsa* is helping Odisha's tribal school students to attend online classes (The New Indian Express, 2022). *Radio Mittoli* in Wayanad District of Western Ghat is triggering discussion on socio-economic issues. India's first Santhal RJ Shikha Marndi, in the chat show called *Johar Jhargram*, appeared on Radio Milan, a small community radio in West Bengal (Sen, 2018). One of them is *Kutch Mahila Vikas Snaghatan (KMVS)*, which produces programmes like *Kutch Log ji Bani* (the voice of Kutch) and highlights various local issues of Kutch, Gujarat in regional dialects. Others are *Radio Bundelkhand*, *Dharkan 107.8 FM* and *Chanderi Ki Aawaz* (the Voices of Chanderi), which discuss sustainable development issues in Madhya Pradesh, a Hindi heartland of India. To promote local development and community empowerment in about forty-five villages in the Palamau district of Jharkhand, India, two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – Alternative for India Development (AID) and the National Foundation of India (NFI) – launched the community radio programme *Chala Ho Gaon Mein* in August 2001 (Dutta, 2018).

CGNet Swara is an important initiative to promote citizen journalism with the help of mobile phones. This initiative encouraged tribes to talk about their issues if they had some information to share. Tribal people were asked to make a missed call and a team from the *CGNET Swara* would call them back to get the information. By the way, they help them in publishing their news story. This initiative has given voice to the voiceless. The added advantage of Chattisgarh *Net Swara* is that folks can record their voice/problems and send them even though they live in dense forests. It promotes technology like IVR, Android apps and Bluetooth (Bhalla, 2010). *Radio Bulto* is a Bluetooth-based radio platform that helps the marginalized tribal population of *Amujmarh* (Chattisgarh) to share their problems and

issues in 2019. This app deals with the challenges of everyday life in tribal communities and also promotes tribal songs and culture. It serves other tribes like *Gonds*, *Muria*, *Abuj*, *Halbas* and *Maria* as well (Kumar, 2020).

Gram Vani, a start-up that incubated at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi in 2009, focuses on the bottom-up approach for sharing information based on the model of *CGNet Swara*. Later, it extended its services to a mobile-based community programme called 'Mobile Vani'. It receives around 5,000 calls every day. It gives voice to the low-income families on the periphery of mainstream media. They discuss social issues, raise awareness campaigns and cover entertainment news. They even discuss vital government initiatives like MGNREGA, Public Distribution System (PDS), *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana*, etc. During COVID-19, a great deal of work was done and a few initiatives were taken to raise social awareness (Seth, 2016).

In the tribal regions of India, particularly states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, neither newspapers nor radio stations publish or broadcast news in tribal languages. Private radio stations have limited discussion, music and phone-in programmes because they cannot broadcast news in the tribal regions.

Films: Documentaries

Documentary film is a unique genre that portrays indigenous people in different ways. A documentary film produced by *Jayshree Janu Kharpade*, a tribal teenager from the Wada taluka of Thane district, at the age of 15, produced the best documentary and was awarded a prize at the Asian American Film Festival held in New York. The documentary's name was 'Fire in Our Hearts' based on 'Right to Education' (The Indian Express, 2012). The Tirunelveli District Art Society has released a documentary *Kabza on Kani* tribes (Sudhakar, 2022), directed by *Purabi Bose*, which portrays how badly indigenous people are affected by land diversion mining (cited in Bhattacharya, 2019). *Seral Murmu*, a rising tribal filmmaker, has made remarkable portrayals of tribes. His Marathi documentary 'Uroos' made its way to the Italy Documentary Film Festival including

'Sondhyani' at Dhaka Film Festival (Nigam, 2021). 'Patterns of Life-Prana' by Shino Cherion discusses the native tribes of the Western Ghats' embrace of the natural world, including their dietary customs, agricultural practices, artistic expression, festivals and beliefs (Balasubramanian, 2021).

Social Media Intervention

Social media has a significant impact on tribal societies in terms of their language and their lifestyle (Talukdar & Mete, 2021). Due to social media influence, tribal communities learn other languages more than their native ones. Tribal people consume news from social media like Facebook and YouTube in different languages. Also, new media plays a significant role in promoting the protection and safeguarding of the standards of indigenous people (Wagner & Fernandez-Ardevol, 2020). Some fast-growing YouTube channels like *Tribal India TV* and *Kathadi* (made and run by teachers and students of the tribal community of Nilgiri) (Jeshi, 2020) have lakhs of subscribers. *Koya TV* is a YouTube channel that deals with tribal news, which lacks space in the media; they recently came up with a documentary about the protest of the *Polavaram dam project* (Poyam, 2021). Tribal music and tribal trap are popular channels that showcase unique features of dance and music of indigenous people. 'Adivasi' people share videos on their culture and art on sites like 'Adivasi' topic and Jharkhandi.org on audio-visual platforms like YouTube. Additionally, pro-'Adivasi' groups like *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) and *Eka Parishad* have posted videos about their activities on their websites. Apart from this, X (formerly Twitter) pages like tribes India, tribal army, the Indian tribal, tribes India Rajasthan and many more have emerged.

Blogspot.com, a blog spot that is run by Prasanta Hembram who belongs to the Santhali community in the Jharsuguda district of Odisha, a graduate who did not give up his love for the mother tongue and started writing blogs in Santhali language to serve her community. Along with that, he also creates blogs in *Ol-Chiki* and *Johar* languages for the tribal community (Santhalimingle, n.d.).

Indigenous Media: Issues and Challenges

Even before the advent of the internet, indigenous media initiatives had already begun to serve their community and people. But their journey has not been smooth and easy. Many initiatives were made, but a few could survive. Dutta (2018) found that the initiatives were not able to survive the lack of funding and audience support. Less purchasing power and low literacy rates did affect media consumption among tribes as well.

Lack of Infrastructure

As indigenous people are isolated and live in hills and forest areas, they lack access to basic infrastructure. Their media initiatives within the community suffer because of a lack of basic amenities. Lack of electricity, education and funding hinders their existence (Dutta, 2018). Most of the publications could not survive due to a lack of proper funding and infrastructure as individuals or small groups support them. As evident, two newspapers were published in the central indigenous belt in the 'Adivasi' language, among which *Johar Sahiya* (monthly) was in the *Nagpuri* language, which is now defunct. Numerous tribal periodicals get support from local tribal organizations. As a result, various tribal newspapers, including those in the *Kurukh* language *Bij Biinko* and *Dhumkuria*, have ceased publishing. Due to their economic disadvantage, tribal populations in India confront two major obstacles that prevent them from participating in or accessing new media venues; one of them is, of course, affordability; as a result of their restricted purchasing power, they have limited access to audio, audio-visual and computer-enabled material (Laksh, 2020).

Literacy and Communication of Tribal Community

The penetration of education and computer literacy are found to be comparatively low among tribes. According to the Census 2011, only

forty-six per cent of tribal are literate. Fewer numbers of individuals can use computers and converse in widely used languages. Hence, the majority of them have remained information-poor in this age of the digital divide, mainly due to geographic isolation, poverty and pervasive social prejudices (Laksh, 2020). The 'Adivasi' frequently endure hardships and face exclusion. As a result, this leads to a communication gap among them. Unique scripts and language also add fuel to their problems as their languages are officially not recognized and not offered in the schools. Thus, these communities do not find many learned teachers in many tribal languages and dialects. They barely complete schooling. In terms of education, approximately sixty-eight per cent of 'Adivasi' and Dalit children leave school before they graduate (Minorities Rights Groups International, 2008). Spoken language is concentrated in one or two adjacent regions, and it has an impact on low migration rates. Tribal languages have survived despite having little value in the administrative and economic arenas (The Hoot, 2015). However, the languages do not seem to spread much as it is expected. Along with the literacy gap, the extinction of indigenous languages accelerates the communicative gap. For instance, the last *Aka Bo* language speaker, Boa Sr, passed away in 2010, making one of India's ancient indigenous languages extinct forever. Recent investigations revealed that indigenous and nomadic people in India speak about 480 languages (out of 780 extant languages) (Pathak, 2013). Even though a few tribal print media are campaigning for language recognition, substantial attention has never been received from the general public (non-tribal). The non-tribal people are unable to decode the scriptures/language of Santhal tribes like the '*Ol-chiki*' script. Running a newspaper in a tribal language with little vocabulary in the twenty-first century is challenging (The Hoot, 2015). Another issue is the variety of the readership. Dutta (2018), in his works, highlighted that an editor is to illustrate this since the majority of his readers are older and more conservative. It is challenging to write an opinion on same-sex marriages. He found that there are no dedicated television or radio channels for indigenous people at the regional and national levels (Dutta, 2018). Other than *Santhali* and *Bodo*, no indigenous language has been recognized as an official language for judicial or administrative work in any of the states in India.

Power Dynamics, Silence and Visibility of Tribal Media: A Discussion

Hegemonic Force

Because of the hegemonic domination in the media world, marginalized indigenous people are deprived in all spheres of their lives. The cultural and social capital that the upper caste has amassed over time is what the media in a democracy refers to as 'social reach' and it is what the media depends on. People are given posts, scholarships and incentives, and there occasionally is a pattern of generational journalists working in the same area. As a result, they aren't present in the news media, especially in positions of authority that choose who gets to occupy these positions (Laksh, 2020). Hegemonic discourses have always characterized 'Adivasi' as they lack agency (Guha, 1988). One of the scholars highlighted that the dominant media frequently gives the stories of others and gives less attention to the problems of disadvantaged people (Howley, 2009). The media has extended its hand into a corporate body that operates as a profit-making company. In a rush to earn a profit, it forgets to give space to marginalized groups (especially tribal communities), their struggles and abuse at the hands of the majority, as well as government and corporate interventions that result in flagrant violations of human rights, among other things (Laksh, 2020). 'Adivasi' media, for example, play critical roles in opposing hegemonic depictions in the marginalization of the identities of 'Adivasi' and de-legitimization of their voice (Wilson & Stewart, 2008). Indigenous media works to dispel hegemonic preconceptions, legitimize indigenous discourses, raise public knowledge of regional problems and elevate indigenous topics in discursive spaces to combat such prevalent misrepresentations Morris and Meadows (2003).

Media Silence

Wilson and Stewart (2008) acknowledged that the lack of 'access to the talents of a wider range of indigenous producers do not allow us to be as

comprehensive as we might wish and to cover every form of indigenous media in every cultural corner of the globe and we particularly lament the fact that we do not have case studies from India, Africa and China.' The mass media is responsible for upholding traditions and values and transmitting them to future generations. Additionally, it frequently has a significant influence on the dissemination of new ideologies as well as a new social and political order. According to Dutta (2018), many academicians and scholars refer to the tribal people as 'India's forgotten population'. Given how rarely the media cover indigenous people, the word 'forgotten' is employed here. There are two different types of journalists: those interested in covering tribal issues and bringing them to the public's attention and others; those who are not interested and believe that editors and management discourage them from doing so, which puts them at risk (Mathew, 2015). For Calder (2011), media silence is one of the major causes of the decline in indigenous media. Intimidation is mostly to blame, but there are almost no 'Adivasi' journalists who speak in the mother tongue. The majority of the big periodicals unabashedly back the administration because, along with their traits and contributions, 'Adivasi' media is comparatively less known. And, for this knowledge gap, academic research on the 'Adivasi' or indigenous media in India is necessary.

Media Visibility

The advent of social media has brought ease to the task of being visible. Social media is the web apparatus that empowers individuals to find and learn new information, share thoughts and connect with new folk and associations regardless of time and space. It has significantly altered people's engagement habits, lifestyles and ways of accepting and confirming their preferences, among other aspects of modern life that have widened perspectives. By conveying socio-economic change, traditional folk media serves as the native analogue of exogenous mass media and promotes development in tribal societies. Traditional media can be used to express a person's daily social life. In Northeast India, the majority of tribal communities rarely get their approaches, worries and problems adequately

addressed by the mass media (Kamble et al., 2016). However, very few television and radio (non-prime) time slots were allocated in a few regions to transmit tribal culture programmes and performances like folk dance and singing. In addition, some indigenous and non-indigenous groups and people use electronic media such as community radios, voice-based platforms and documentaries to disseminate tribal issues and programmes (Laksh, 2020). Scholars have demonstrated how novel communication channels and the development of media technology have aided indigenous groups in challenging the widespread misrepresentation of indigenous realities. Mahon (2000) argues that the indigenous people are capable of articulating their discourses and issues. Local 'Adivasi' media and their distinctive qualities like trustworthiness and cultural appropriateness play crucial roles in negotiating with limited resources and structural access to overcome communication barriers and create discursive opportunities in regional and international platforms (Dutta, 2018). Indigenous people build channels for voicing their media concerns by 'combating mainstream stereotypes, addressing information gaps in non-indigenous society and reinforcing local community languages and cultures' (Meadows, 2009). Turner (1979) says native American media outlets act independently to support their objectives and capacity for resistance on their behalf. Downing and Husband (2005) found that community-driven media can help marginalized groups speak up for and maintain their cultural identities, which essentially calls into question and challenges hegemonic misrepresentations. Tribal media is produced locally and the tribal members frequently decide and control its content. While doing so, it actively selects pertinent regional topics and presentation styles, ensuring that the mediated outputs are appropriate on a cultural level. Production by the community people creates trustworthiness and effect because most of the mediated content comes from within the group. Tribal media is now utilizing more contemporary media to build participatory spaces on social media platforms. Such mediated events provide numerous chances to share, discuss, evaluate and promote contemporary tribal issues with a larger audience (Wagner & Fernandez-Ardevol, 2020).

Indigenous Community Media: A Critical Discourse

Marginalized communities are those that are not part of mainstream social, economic, educational and cultural life because of their ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, or immigration status (Baah et al., 2019). Tribals are considered to be one of these minority groups or indigenous communities. Viewing from theoretical lenses, the indigenous community has little digital access, further perpetuating the digital divide and marginalization. The digital divide emerged towards the end of the twentieth century in the United States of America (Dewan & Riggins, 2005; Eastin et al., 2015). They are sensing the primary disparity between blacks and whites accessing computers and the internet (Attewell, 2001). The divide that emerged between the internet 'have(s)' and 'have-not(s)' (Attewell, 2001; Hargittai, 2002; Dewan & Riggins, 2005; Wei et al., 2011) gave birth to the informational gap. With the advent of new forms of media, the concept of digital divide extends to three levels. Scholars (Attewell, 2001; Hargittai, 2002; Goedhart et al., 2019) studied the first level of the digital divide, i.e., connected to 'access' to technology that occurs due to factors like age, gender, education, demographic, socio-economic, cultural status and adeptness to technology (Dewan & Riggins, 2005). The second level of the digital divide deals with the lack of competency in using digital devices for those who already own them (Attewell, 2001; Goedhart et al., 2019) that emerges from the first level and includes factors like local, communal and global level of disadvantages (Dewan & Riggins, 2005) and the last level of the digital divide that deals with the inequality of output (learning and productivity) of exploiting the information technology (Wei et al., 2011).

The importance of indigenous community media has been echoed in the studies of Dutta (2018) to foreground marginalized voices. Tribal issues and culture have been given negligible space in the media. The drastic shift from print to screen has failed to bring about any revolution in the mainstream media world's journey from local to global. However, geographically isolated people with cultural and linguistic barriers are now served by their

community. Indigenous community media achieves adequate attention in discursive spaces in the community. Mainstream media pays less attention to the issues of underserved people (Lewis & Jones, 2006; Howley, 2009), but indigenous community media is a boon (Dutta, 2018). Community media is more important than mainstream media since community-based media aids indigenous marginalized sections to raise issues and voices to defend and protect the community's cultural identities, which significantly interrogates and challenges hegemonic representations (Rodriguez, 2001; Downing & Husband, 2005). Indigenous community media is significant in building identity, legitimizing narratives and constructing communities (Wilson & Stewart, 2008). Mahon (2000) finds that indigenous community media foregrounds indigenous issues, including making images and histories visible and their representations in micro and macro spaces.

Indigenous community media addresses the unique needs of indigenous people since it helps the community to bring in the process of holistic development. The development media theory (Baran, et al., 1995) emphasizes the indigenous media's need to construct social cohesion and deal with various issues such as education, health, employment and economic empowerment. Indigenous media is a part of development media theory that enhances circumstances and living standards for those suffering from underdevelopment.

Community Media: Its Significance

Community indigenous media encourages and has made critical contributions to the development of its community. It has acted as a transformative tool for indigenous empowerment, cultural preservation and representation. Indigenous media platforms have allowed tribal voices to be heard by their communities, whereas mass media fosters a top-down approach to communication (Srivastava & Moreland, 2012). It has represented indigenous people in a negatively stereotypical manner (Wallace, 2019). However, community media encourages participatory communication. Authors emphasize the significance of participatory approaches

in citizen journalism – in the context of mobile storytelling – that provide opportunities to reshape media representation of indigenous people; tribal members with writing and editing skills help to amplify the community's truthful voice Tsai et al. (2022). *Khabar Leheriya*, a medium glorifying participatory forms of development communication, is one such example that evolved through the concept of 'rhizome', disseminating news through print, visual, audio, mobile and the internet (YouTube, Facebook and website). The Wire, The Hoot and Huffington are considered to be the leading digital portals that post stories about *Khabar Leheriya* on their websites. *Khabar Leheriya* has expanded to the mainstream audience with the help of these digital media portals. Community radio plays a critical role in gaining recognition for community media as a whole. Emphasizing its importance, Guo (2017) indicates that community radios are pro-people and play an essential role in facilitating social change and development. It informs and educates the community about diverse strategies for revolutionary social change (Fombad & Jiyane, 2019). New media, an equally accessible platform for all, has provided a forum for marginalized communities. 'Community-based social media' has emerged as a new forum for self-representation (Siminoff et al., 2022). A study by Mohammed (2021) was conducted on community media platforms like 'Dalit Camera YouTube Channel' and 'Roundtable'. His study found that how the use of social media by marginalized communities highlights their problems in front of a large-scale mainstream audience. Similarly, indigenous communities create their own 'community-based social media platforms' on YouTube, X, Facebook and Instagram.

Case Studies

In the contemporary scientific era, media brings tribal people together and contributes to the process of globalization (Subramanyam & Mohan, 2006). In a case study, Mohan (2014) discovered that improved health outcomes for tribal communities are achieved in large part through the media.

Their research found that in a less connected tribal village in West Bengal's Birbhum district, tribal communities choose to receive medical care from qualified doctors, hospitals and rural medical practitioners rather than from ethnomedical practitioners like *tantric* and *ojhas*. The tribes made this decision due to media messages that promote health. According to Gore et al. (2024), communication is a vital component of human existence among the *Katkari* tribes of Western Maharashtra, India. They discovered the way to culturally adjust tactics, i.e., better health communication can be achieved by incorporating the community, using multi-media (e.g. radio jingles and videos), rewarding healthcare providers and using simplified visual aids. For Talukdar and Mete (2021), social media has caused tribes in West Bengal to relocate their places of employment. The impact of social media on the cultural transformation of the tribal community, tribal lifestyle, customs, traditions and culture has been greatly made by social media. Baiju (2021) conducted a case study in a Kolathara 'Adivasi' area in Kerala and discovered that the 'Paniya' tribes that live in the area have low economic and social conditions. They live in houses provided by the government. In the village, individuals use social media to respond to emergencies and facilitate rehabilitation, crowdfunding and relief efforts in Kerala's isolated tribal groups. They devise effective social media strategies and use social media to enhance disaster relief efforts. Datta et al. (2023), in a case study on 'Rabha' tribes of West Bengal, found that the young generation of this tribe is adopting and experiencing active use of the internet, smartphones and social media platforms. It has brought changes in their daily lives, and social media is helping them perpetuate traditional 'Rabha' cultural identity. It has brought changes in their health and well-being. 'Rabha' women when pregnant watch pregnancy-related videos for tips regarding food habits along with various pregnancy yoga on YouTube.

Conclusion

Indigenous media play a significant role in effectively reaching and communicating messages to the community members, whereas mainstream

mass media outlets like television, radio and newspapers frequently fail to reach and accurately represent the issues and concerns of the majority of 'Adivasi' people (Dutta, 2018). Community media should, therefore, serve as democratic spaces that encourage an open and pluralistic public sphere; they should be participatory in fostering a culture of citizen involvement. It should be locally produced and distributed to allow their audience to hold local officials and institutions accountable to the community's primary needs; they should be participatory in encouraging community culture (Howley, 2009). 'Adivasi' media and indigenous media are both regarded as significant platforms from the perspective of communication, as their discourses frequently convey messages of empowerment, peace and development. They serve as important catalysts for social equity by increasing health awareness among various stakeholders (Dutta, 2008). The presence of indigenous media in contemporary times is crucial because they open up new opportunities for networks of collaboration and solidarity locally, regionally and globally as these settings penetrate the global landscape. As a result, they increase knowledge among indigenous and non-indigenous people, which is significant for opening doors for implementing social justice (Ginsburg, 1994; Mahon, 2000). 'Adivasi' media are dedicated to bringing attention to cultural and contextual concerns. They may play significant roles in advancing the rights of preserving and promoting 'Adivasi' languages, traditional knowledge and indigenous rights in local and global discursive arenas. To challenge hegemonic representations, trivialize indigenous identities and present the narrative's perspectives, 'Adivasi' people need to participate in the global-mediated spaces.

Both the tribal and non-tribal communities of India need to bridge the representation gap to achieve effective legitimization of tribal voices, identities, cultures, collective human rights and contextual issues in the age of globalization and the digital divide. Even in post-colonial India, tribal people have suffered since they were distanced from the development processes. Tribal communities have been marginalized essentially in every aspect of social life as the primary developmental processes have continued to produce social zones of inequity. Most of them are undernourished, and two-thirds of them are still uneducated and live in poverty. Globalization, liberalization and privatization have changed the media's

function and raised concerns about their indigenous identity. It is asserted that there is a disconnection between how tribal groups' issues have been covered in the media and how grassroots activists want their issues to be covered. In this context, media is a crucial component of democracy, and it is especially important in the context of how it reflects the social reality of the community.

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MUSTAFA AYDEMİR

Chapter 10 Gender and the Discriminatory Construction of the Male Figure in Turkish Comedy Films

ABSTRACT:

Comedy films show extreme contrasts in terms of deconstructing characters together while also being able to create objective narrative patterns about the representation of the normal. However, in some comedy films, an 'othering' is seen in the editorial context and at the point of obsession. The values of the character who reveals the act of laughing in comedy films, the representation structures of the ends, and sexist rhetoric and accents can deeply affect the audience's perception and value system. The act of laughing reflects the identity of a film in the most memorable way, showing how its own identity is shaped in the face of the amazing and absurd events covered in the main character's story and encountered in the dramatic structure of the film. However, among the general forms of behaviour, the main character shows towards events that one experiences in the face of their strengths or weaknesses. Elements of ideological conflict, such as marginalization, can also arise in this context. This chapter examines the concept of gender and discriminated discourses through eight films by Cem Yılmaz to show how they are portrayed in comedy films. Within the scope of the study, content analysis was carried out on the scenes to reflect the element of 'othering' in the films. The chapter asserts that the subject of 'othering' is built based on singular genders at the point of the act of normality and does not see the patterns of trans behaviour at the humanistic point, and the audience is given a marginal suppression at the ideological point.

Keywords: Film, Comedy, Othering, Gender, Cem Yılmaz

Introduction

Humour, a sensory and psychological reflex that humanity has developed towards the outside world's reality, is a universal means of communication. Although the act of laughing shows some differences according to

the cultural structures of individuals, it is also possible that the narrative corresponds to common values. Humour and laughter can occur through behavioural actions such as a verbal and physical reaction, storytelling, or imitation. The physical characteristics of the artist or comedian representing the laughing area of this action along with the ability to tell a story and provide their instant and surprising natural reactions can contribute to the creation of humour. The environment of humour is shaped by the internalization of what is being laughed at and the narrative identity of the person who makes you laugh. Although the concepts of laughing and making people laugh are considered objective values, they can be constructed in the equations of power-opposition, strong-weak, right-wrong and physical-psychological contrast. The narrative and indicators that form the basis of humour are processed through themes such as mimetics and the return of fortune. Comedians-narrators, whose laughter constitutes the entertainment field, contribute to transforming society into a demonstration society in proportion to the richness of critical perspectives. In ancient times, while the act of laughing was defined as a noble behaviour in limited patterns, it was generally thought of as folk entertainment, especially in the form of visual narratives that present the weaknesses of power or authority in a critical context. The act of laughing defines a field of representation, such as the expression of one's situation with the state of reacting that expresses the life that people live themselves.

Humour sometimes summarizes the state of miscommunication and discontent between the governed and the governors, while observing an objective field that mirrors the reality of the society in which it is located at a deconstructed level. Films usually convey the plot to the viewer from the point of view of the main character within the narrative universe. The values represented by the main character are processed in the story through their reactions, emotional changes and inner voices. Some of the sections presented from the past life of the main character of the film and the presentation of the present perspective together make the character's reasons for behaviour meaningful to the audience. The way the camera frames the scene in films allows the dramatic structure to be established by considering the scenes through narrative structure and aesthetic values. The viewer identifies himself with the main character in the movie.

Comedy films are narrated through the absurd situations experienced by the main character and the naturalness of his reactions. In the main character's communication with events and people opposite, the subject of othering is carried out with negative words, insults and curses, regardless of gender. In comedy films, the fact that the main character is usually a man and the vulnerability to humiliate other people and genders increases in his behaviour turning the level of a narrative structure in the form of rough comedy into a critical structure. The transformation of the comedy field into sexuality-themed expletives and gender superiority, through the act of marginalization, creates discrimination on the social plane. This study evaluates the act of othering at the thematic and categorical levels against the background of the laughing area through a local example from within the universal comedy area. Cem Yılmaz, a prominent figure in the new generation of Turkish comedy films, departs from traditional Turkish comedy. In his movies, he explores themes such as othering, the humorization of violence, and gender discrimination, while examining these elements within the overall narrative structure.

Literature Review

Motion pictures are the reflection of artistic actions that are made in a different genre. Each one is designed according to the different emotional structure, ideology and audience preferences. Indian (Bollywood) and American (Hollywood) cinemas, which constitute the largest film industry in the world, are pioneers and have dominated in this field. One of the most popular film genres in world cinema is comedy. Comedy films attract greater attention with their laughing, entertaining, relaxing and critical fiction structure. Generally, the issues covered by comedy films are both global and local. The act of making people laugh is universal in nature. Comedy films represent laughing content and thereby define the relationship between the actors and the narrative. This could select all segments of society, and the focus is decisively on certain ideologies. On the other hand, the script and the director's point of view create a holistic

view and bring a common feeling, as well as sometimes cause negative effects.

All sexual preferences and personalities ascribe gender representation in one aspect, i.e. called 'The bio-political' (Kjellen, 1905; Foucault, 1997; Barrett, 1991; Agamben, 1998; Esposito, 2008), a daughter (Wearing, 2013; Gunneflo, 2015); bio-economy (Rose, 2008; Terranova, 2009; Jozefiak & Ostwald, 2011; Oksala, 2013); one aspect of the subject building processes (Lacan, 2013) othering and discrimination (Fuller, 1990); the transformation of body anatomy into politics (McWhorter, 1999), all of which are evaluated in the form of concepts of bio-power (Foucault, 1976). Some views argue that the issue of bio-politics is not just the body and economic processes and instead stands at the critical point (Powell & Biggs, 2003; Lyons et al., 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Urlick et al., 2017; Reed & Thomas, 2021). They argue that since Foucault's views do not have a sociological scope, social structures and sociological transformations also have an impact on bio-policies.

Individuals are not only spectators but also valuable biological assets that are put forward. The identity and values of the characters are frequently supported through sexual elements. Apart from conservative films, comedy films also normalize the devaluation of personalities other than uniform genders or heterosexual preferences in terms of the narrative of bio-power. There is also an important film in which individuals show their innocence and identity in the face of many stereotypes that represent the oppressive state of political authority in motion pictures. Among these films, Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* (1997) shows the importance of decency and humour elements in people's lives. As in the case of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), the struggles to hold on to life and human values are shown even in the event of the Holocaust.

According to Foucault (1984), the interaction between humans and machines in the eighteenth century used to be called as industrial economy as far as individuals study are concerned. According to him, 'The good, poor, bad, the wilfully idle, the involuntarily unemployed, those who could and those who could not do some kind of labour' states that the policies on the bodies of individuals are modelled according to the state of work and equivalence with machines. Zizek, on the other hand, 'is precisely

post-ideological insofar as bio-politics design the regulation of the security and welfare of human lives as its primary goal' (2008) and examines the influence of individuals on the post-metaphysical plane with the expression.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt argue that bio-politics focuses on the relationship with the exploitation and oppression of individuals (Negri & Hardt, 2000). Negri describes it as acts of resistance in the formation of the subject of the effect: 'a site of struggle between "the biopolitical life of exploitation and resistance", and the practice of an experimental cell interstitial space' (Negri et al, 2008) is expressed in the form. The condition of rebellion and resistance in the construction of the subject is a prerequisite for self-realization or the ability to build. Similarly, Fuller (1990) states that marginalization is made at the sexist and racial points through Hollywood films. It is accepted that the body image is politicized with new patterns of meaning in the virtual order with the examples of interactive cinema as an orientation of web 3.0 technologies, especially in the new media order of the world, which is constructed through films within the narrative system formed by bio-politics.

Bio-Power and the Construction of the Subject

The political scientist Rudolf Kjellen put forward the concept of bio-power in 1905. The concept is interpreted through the welfare and influence of the social democratic understanding of the state. Bio-politics, as a concept, also analysed by Foucault (1997) and other concepts such as control of bodies (Revel, 2005); the construction of the subject (Henriques et al., 1984; Mc Namara, 2019); cinema and bio-politics (Smith & Wartenberg, 2006; Lemke et al., 2011; Liesen & Walsh, 2011; Natalio, 2015; Papanikolaou, 2021); the relationship between film animations, queer influence and bio-politics (Chen, 2012); gender and bio-politics (Hogan, 2018); the interaction of biology and politics (Agamben, 1998; Esposito, 2008); biology and political science (Blank & Hines, 2001); identity processes (Revel, 2009; McGowan, 2014); post-ideological (Zizek, 2008) are studied and taken as the theoretical framework for this

chapter. Bio-politics defines the general policies of governments within the scope of body politics. Bio-politics also falls under the area of security and national interest as the ethical and legal areas. This is rooted in cultural, economic and political status quo regulating technologies (Collier, 2009; Cover, 2011; Sandor et al., 2013). The movie, *Star Trek*, is considered to be a cult figure in motion pictures. This movie has experienced a change in the identity and structures of bio-politics. In this context, this chapter examines the bio-political and security organization in the film *Star Trek*, exploring subjectivity as a search for personal development and entrepreneurship, strengthening contemporary neo-liberal foundations.

The concept of bio-political and its processes is understood as an individual becoming subject to which Descartes refers to *Cogito ergo sum*. It is the fact that the subject is formed by the act of thinking with the word. Lacan (2013) emphasizes that the individual develops in the unconscious process between thinking and realizing what he is thinking, while Homer (2013) suggests that the subject deconstructs oneself from the other depending on the interaction of the subject and the other through the concept of desire.

Laurie (2015) argues that there is a privilege among the white class in society and that unlike the character of Daenerys who is 'dirty, noisy and obscenely'. Citing a web series *Game of Thrones*, the character Cersei Lannister is described as 'a walk of shame' when the actor walks naked on the street. Various web series portrayed that sex work and women's bodies bear the burden of the social order. Thus, it is understood that cinema and other visual arts focus on issues of marginalization and discrimination, especially in emphasizing gender and body representations. In this context, the forms of representation of gender as an important field in the study and the relationship of these representations in the narrative of cinema and comedy films are broadly discussed.

The Use of Superiority Theory in Comedy Films

Although motion pictures have different narrative structures in terms of genre, they focus on the interactive areas between people and the

environment. Since each individual is different in terms of physiological, psychological and behavioural dimensions, the world is, therefore, more meaningful and full of human as well as cultural diversity. The individual's personal lives helped to live sustainably in a community and established strategic partnerships with other living beings.

Thomas Hobbes's saying, *Homo homini lupus* [A man is a wolf to another man] is a reference to the ideological deconstruction based on the interests of the idea of competition and self-glorification of people among themselves. In this case, people can create typologies of actions aimed at all disadvantaged groups. It is possible to list these typologies as follows:

- (a) *Inaction*: This is when a person produces actions aimed at limiting the living spaces and achievements of other people and people with inhibitory activities.
- (b) *Marginalization*: It is the fact that an individual sees himself at a perfect level in the processes of self-meaning and evaluates other people in humiliating and negative patterns on the social plane.
- (c) *Sexist Actions*: While glorifying one's own identity, they include activities that harm the possible development and socialization processes of people of the same or opposite sex.
- (d) *Character Building*: While the individual defines himself at the main character's level in a system based on his interests, it includes transforming other individuals into objects with a low spiritual structure that have lost their auxiliary character and subject qualities.
- (e) *Discrimination and Indigestion*: It defines the activities that will prevent all the good things that a person can achieve with their level of intelligence and skill, as well as causing harm with derogatory words and behaviours that will devalue them.
- (f) *Socio-Economic Actions*: It refers to the negative change of a person's social environment, blocking social environment interaction areas. The consumption of his personal reputation and economic gains by turning them into a structure prone to violence through repression.

The main characters usually symbolize as they are portrayed as intelligent, cunning, analytical, humane and loving individuals. The limited stories of the supporting characters and making the main character's story meaningful with supporting stories constitute his area of superiority. Aristotle and Plato were the first to deal with the subject of superiority at the theoretical level. Thomas Hobbes (1996 & 1651) reinterprets theory with the humour of the modern era, guided by his work *Leviathan*. Hobbes (1996 & 1651) divides the narrative into actions over the main character, stating that the audience's laughter and relief are valuable in terms of the importance of the theory.

In the design of humour, the act of relaxing through the main character is the second stage. The first stage is the relaxation and dominance of the main character and the second stage is the dominance and relaxation of the spectator/audience. Some studies examine the theory of superiority, such as 'Good-nature' (Gruner, 1997); 'Psychology of humour' (Morreall, 1982; 1983; 1987); 'Laughter' (Scruton & Jones, 1982); 'Political humour' (Weise, 1996); 'Theories of humour' (Monro, 1988); 'Disparagement humour' (Ferguson & Ford, 2008); 'Superiority of humour theory' (Lintott, 2016).

According to any superiority theory of humour, the laughter always looks down on whatever they laugh at, judging it as inferior by some standard as evaluated from a theoretical point of view. 'Humour is employed to make a point, humiliate others, or highlight someone's own perceived "superiority" over colleagues in the workplace' (Plester & Sayers, 2007). The subject of superiority in this context consists of the decoupling interaction between the subject and the laughing people. While the viewer positions himself as the controller and the authority of the show society, he provides high interaction by associating the main character's striving for a similar superiority with his psychological state.

Methodology

The Purpose, Scope and Importance

The issue of gender and representation is addressed through the identities of the characters in the film narrative. Apart from genre-specific narrative

features, the feature that draws the viewer's attention in the films is the presence of gender discrimination and marginalization among the characters. The study aims to determine the general level of sexual discrimination and marginalization in comedy films and the way individuals who deconstruct identity through humour are handled in films. In this study, he was identified as Cem Yılmaz, who represents the new era of comedy films in Turkish Cinema and is very popular in the field of comedy. Yılmaz's roles in films written and shot by other directors and screenwriters were selected only within the scope of the research since the films he wrote and starred in were indirectly related to the subject. In this process, only Cem Yılmaz's feature films were examined for this study, ensuring that the show and medium-length films were not considered. This situation constitutes the limitation area of the research. Addressing the issue only through Turkish Cinema and Cem Yılmaz constitutes another area of limitation.

Universe, Sample and Method of the Research

The universe of the study is comedy film genres, and the prominent Cem Yılmaz films were selected as the sample. Within the scope of the research, an analysis of the feature films written by Cem Yılmaz and in which he acted as an actor is carried out. In the eight films considered within the scope of the study, the content analysis method was determined to reveal the narrative structure of comedy films built on the lead actors and supporting roles and rival-enemy characters. For this analysis, themes and categories were determined first; the subject of representation levels and how the characters are handled are examined.

Findings and Results

Content Analysis: Selected Movies

Within the scope of this study, the data obtained from eight films are analysed. These films are (1) *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak* [*Everything Will*

Be Beautiful], (2) *Gora*, (3) *Hokkabaz [Juggler]*, (4) *Arog*, (5) *Yahşi Batı [Good West]*, (6) *Pek Yakında [Coming Soon]*, (7) *Ali Baba ve 7 Cüceler [Ali Baba And The Seven Dwarfs]*, (8) *Arif vs 216*. The content analysis of each movie is described below.

1. *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak (1998)*

The film, directed by Omer Vargi, tells the story of two brothers who have not seen each other for a long time. In the film's narrative structure, it is important that the two brothers stay together despite all the negative stories that have happened in the intervening time and that the old father is the subject of a common reunion. Due to his perspective on this issue, he wants to realize his dreams by earning money without working/labouring and presents a contrasting view to the established male view of society (the profile of a man who takes care of his family). Altan's older brother Nuri is closer to the male image imposed by the capitalist system. In general, the movie tells that the long/short, detailed/superficial stories of three men and women are almost non-existent (They are either dead or portrayed as a character who betrays the marriage, and the woman in the scene where love is shown unadulterated is a Japanese woman.). The up-and-down and tidal world of men is portrayed through the brother-brother narrative, and the characters use profanity, insults and innuendo. The harsh, ruthless and rigid world of masculinity is portrayed mainly by the villains in this movie.

2. *Gora (2004)*

The movie tells the story of Arif, a carpet salesman who is kidnapped to the planet Gora by two men who come to his shop disguised as King Charles and his friend. Arif rescues Ceku despite Commander Logar's obstructions, and they go to Earth together. Arif is portrayed as a cunning and pragmatist heterosexual, while his enemy Logar is portrayed as bisexual. Other characters are portrayed as bisexual, homosexual and asexual (such as Robot 216). The film makes some references to American Hollywood cinema with *The Frog and the Prince*, *The Matrix*, Indian culture and Far Eastern fights, as depicted in Figure 19.



Figure 19: Scenes from the *Gora* Film

Source: *Gora* [Film] (2004). Omer Faruk Sorak (Director).

3. *Hokkabaz* (2006)

Iskender (Cem Yilmaz) is a magician. They perform at events with his childhood friend Orhan (Alias Maradona). Everyone considers Iskender and Orhan to be jugglers who love their work very much and take it seriously. Iskender also includes his father, Sait (Mazhar Alanson), in his touring schedule outside of Istanbul. As the tour fuses the trio, the different people they encounter and the tragicomic events they experience colour the narrative. Cem Yilmaz, as in the movie 'Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak', is positioned with a side character next to the main character. Thus, the main character is introduced to the audience more closely and sincerely. Similarly, the old father figure is one of the important representations in the narrative. Although the tense relationship between father and son continues throughout the movie, as in all road movies, there is a closer meeting/introduction. In this relationship, the act of communication, which is interrupted by criticism based on traditionally existing sexist stereotypes, is resolved in the film *Hokkabaz*, directed by Omer Faruk Sorak.

4. *Arog* (2008)

The film directed by Cem Yılmaz & Ali Taner Baltacı highlights that the commander Logar does a trick to punish Arif and take Ceku to the planet Gora. Commander Logar punishes Arif into a time machine from 1 million years ago. Arif starts a new life here. Arif, whose only goal is to get out of here, plans to return to his home in the parallel universe by developing the Arogan civilization he left. It refers to movies in which modern man positions himself as an authority and superior intellect. On another level, it emphasizes the importance of the concepts of love and family. The appearance and superstitions of other people in society are taken as a site of conflict in this movie.

5. *Yahşi Batı* (2010)

The movie's opening scene depicts how the character Zeki, who aims to sell valuable antiques to a group of a few people gathered in a place in Istanbul, gets his hands on an American Wellington Boot, which belonged to his great-grandfather, to market it. The film also includes humorous



Figure 20: Scenes from the *Yahşi Batı* Film

Source: *Yahşi Batı* [Film] (2010). Omer Faruk Sorak (Director).

references to local cultures as the Ottoman Emperor (Sultan), Aziz Vefa (Agent) and his close friend Lemi Galip (treasury officer) embark on a journey to present a diamond to the American President Garfield and the adventure they have there (as shown in Figure 20).

His adventures with the Indians to regain the character of Aziz after stealing the diamond and his conflicts with William Lloyd as the Sheriff-Priest are told. A reference to the gay cowboy is in director Ang Lee's 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain*; the film deals with his struggle to return to his female identity to win the character of Suzan, with whom he falls in love.

6. *Pek Yakında* (2014)

Kemal, who once worked as an extra in motion pictures, is in the process of divorcing his wife due to involvement in the pirated film business, which he turned into a profession after unsuccessful experiences. He is now embarking on a new life struggle to mend his relationship with his son. Zafer goes to visit his close friend Ejder in order not to be separated from his son and to dissuade his wife from divorcing him. Here, he meets Ahben, a former director who is about to commit suicide, along with his friend Zeki.

The figure of masculinity in the film is based on fatherhood, jealous behaviour and friendship. Director Ahben's homosexual relationship with his partner Zeki, who plays a key role in the film, and Ahben's ongoing admiration for his ex-wife Meral are shown among the complex representations of the psyche. The character of Zeki is defined as a person whose homosexual identity is constructed through a knowledgeable, decisive, mischievous, benevolent and naive personality, presented with positive characteristics. Compared to the other films analysed, this film, as shown in Figure 21, has a more tolerant representation structure regarding gender discrimination and marginalization. The film also bears traces of Cem Yilmaz's filmography, with scenes referring to some scenes in old Turkish films. The film is based on the figure of masculinity, fatherhood, jealous behaviour and friendship. The film has a more tolerant representation of gender discrimination and marginalization than the other films analysed.



Figure 21: Scenes from the *Pek Yakında* Film

Source: *Pek Yakında* [Film] (2014). Cem Yılmaz (Director).

7. *Ali Baba ve 7 Cüceler* (2015)

The movie, directed by Cem Yılmaz, takes its name from a pun on Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. As is prevalent in Cem Yılmaz's scripts, the main character in this movie is surrounded by a shadow side character. Despite all the misunderstandings/glitches and problems, this friendship is portrayed as very valuable and unbreakable. In this movie, since the main character is positioned far away from the concepts of family and spouse (no family/dead spouse), masculine attitude (swearing-implication) and humiliation are more common in the discourse. As a narrative element also used in this movie, when the main character and his/her relatives face any difficulty, he/she gets rid of this difficulty by getting help from the same sex. In the forest, where the Russian mafia wants Şenay and İlber, Şenay does not believe Veronica's offer of help and her statement, 'I'm not one of them' and then gets help from the person who lives in a secret underground place in the forest is one of the examples of a biased sexist perspective.

8. *Arif v 216* (2018)

The movie, directed by Kivanc Barüonu, which tells the adventures of Arif (Cem Yılmaz) and his friend 216 (Ozan Güven), who suddenly arrive from outer space, uses standard narrative codes of the melodrama genre preferred in old Turkish films, such as poor but happy family and disabled character. In the thematic analysis of the film, the high use of insults and swearing stands out. Although he is portrayed as emotionless/ soulless at the beginning of the movie and is a robot, he later starts to swear and use swear words by taking humans as an example. It is seen that the wrong or biased practices in representation are reinforced and reproduced, even if it is a robot. The use of harsh style and masculine gaze in language has become widespread and legitimized by passing to robot 216 after Arif's real uses. These expressions are frequently used and reflect the masculine structure after Arif's real uses.

Results and Analysis

In the study, eight feature films written by Cem Yılmaz were examined carefully and a sexist look was traced through the main and side characters.

Although the ratio of films differs, the harsh, negative and discriminatory structure of masculine language, which is a reflection of gender, has attracted attention in almost every film. In Table 4, around eight films were examined over twenty years about the 'othering distributions of movies and sex discrimination action' between 1998 and 2018. It was found that 'sex discrimination and othering' were often used as elements of family-themed films. Although relatively few were depressed with the gender identities of Cem Yılmaz complex characters that were processed to build the field of comedy, turning the topic of gender and superiority.

The 'representation structure of the character', which constitutes the themes of the film, is constructed with characters in the category of selfish and utilitarian in particular, while the universe of the story is determined

Table 4: Gender Discrimination and Marginalization in Action Distributions of Films⁵⁴

Code Value - Levels of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization (In order of number of films)			
A	B	C	
1-4	3-6-8	2-5-7	
Themes	Categories	Levels of distribution	
		A	B
The representation structure of the character	Good & Fair	4	1
	Friendly & Humane	5-6	4-6
	Selfish & Utilitarian	1-2-3-8	2
	Malicious	-	5
	Neutral	7	-
The story universe	Ancient Times	3	
	Past Tense	5-8	
	Present Tense	1-2-4-6-7	
	Future Time	-	
Type of irony	Dramatic	1-6	
	Verbal	2-3-5-7-8	
	Situation	4	
Character typology	The Main Character	2-3-5-8	
	Supporting Character	1-4-6-7	
	Rival & Enemy	2-3-5-6	

54 The code value of the character and impact of the suppression of the level of discrimination according to the stage and film structure according to the number three fields between 0 and 0 values between 0.50, 0.50 1.0 value between 2, 3 1,0 and are ranked as higher the value. (Threshold of Violence). The distribution levels are determined as A: Itself B: Opponent & Enemy.

Table 4: Continued

Code Value - Levels of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization (In order of number of films)			
Gender identity	Heterosexual	1-2-3-5-6-7-8	-
	Gay	-	2-5-6-8
	Masculine	5	4
	Bisexual	-	2-5-6-8
	Asexual	4	-
Typologies of gender discrimination	Humiliation	432	
	To Curse	336	
	Implicature	258	
	Other	20	

as ‘present time’. While verbal elements appear as ‘irony type’ in films, it turns out that there is a balanced distribution in character typologies. While heterosexual identity comes to the fore in films, gay and bisexual identities are also processed. On the contrary, while a positive typology is reflected in the movie through the ‘Zeki’ character in the film ‘Pek Yakında’, the levels of discriminating identity and othering are limited.

In Table 5, looking at the distribution of ‘Gender Discrimination and Marginalization Typologies’ of different eight movies, it was observed that the ‘Humiliation’ of the action occurred at least three times and a maximum of 117 out of a total of 432 occurrences. Similarly, the action ‘To Curse’ appeared a minimum of fourteen times and a maximum of seventy-one times out of a total of 336 occurrences. The ‘Implicature’ occurred a minimum of five and a maximum sixty-nine times out of the total 258 occurrences. As the ‘Other’ category is specified, non-verbal facial expressions and gestures, the minimum was zero and the maximum was twelve times out of a total of twenty actions.

It is observed that all actions took place 1,046 times in the analysed films, as seen in Table 5. With this percentage, the films reached the level of slapstick comedy due to too many acts of gender discrimination and marginalization. In these movies, the encoding set in triple the number of

Table 5: Distribution of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization Typologies of Films

Movie ⁵⁵ Name	(F ₁)	(F ₂)	(F ₃)	(F ₄)	(F ₅)	(F ₆)	(F ₇)	(F ₈)	The over all Total
Ranking of Films By Year	1 (1998)	2 (2004)	3 (2006)	4 (2008)	5 (2010)	6 (2014)	7 (2015)	8 (2018)	
Number of Scenes of Films	131	151	147	150	138	230	123	161	1.231
Total of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization of Films	58	221	22	146	153	161	197	88	1.046
Percentile Rates By Number of Scenes (%)	0.44	1.46	0.14	0.97	1.10	0.70	1.60	0.55	6.96 %
Gender Discrimination and Marginalization of Films	General Status According to The Number of Scenes (Percentage Value)								0.84 %
Ranking of The Types of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization of Films	7	2	8	4	3	5	1	6	
Distribution of Gender Discrimination and Marginalization Typologies In Films									
Humiliation	22	79	3	43	37	88	43	117	432
To Curse	22	71	14	50	53	59	35	32	336
Implicature	14	69	5	51	61	12	10	36	258
Other	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	12	20
Total	58	221	22	146	153	161	88	197	1046

55 Movie titles in the study are coded as letters in the table. For example *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak* (F₁), *Gora* (F₂), *Hokkabaz* (F₃), *Arog* (F₄), *Yahşi Batı* (F₅), *Pek Yakında* (F₆), *Ali Baba Ve 7 Cüceler* (F₇), *Arif vs 216* (F₈) are listed in Table 5. The names of the movies *Gora* and *Arog* are made-up names with no equivalent.

remaining below, the rate of the film is only 20.50 per cent (*Hokkabaz, Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak*), in movies (*Arif vs 216, Pek Yakında, Arog*), the rate is 1.0 per cent and higher value, and in three movies (*Gora, Yahşi Batı, Ali Baba ve 7 Cüceler*) the rate is over total 6.96 per cent, indicating the level of discrimination and othering.

Again, it is understood that there are 1,046 scenes of gender discrimination in a total of 1,231 scenes in these films, and this rate is at the level of 0.84 per cent for each scene. This situation also shows that the values in question have reached a severe rate. In addition, it is understood that most instances of 'humiliation and other' actions are in the film *Arif vs 216*, most occurrences of 'curse and indirect actions' are in the film *Gora*, and the film *Gora* ranks first in all types of actions.

Discussion

Yılmaz, who often uses the dual structure, has often built the narrative through dialogues with the shadow side character that he/she positions next to the main character. While the story is told through a dual character who values each other because they are excellent friends, allusions, jokes and curses between the two are accepted more decently. For this reason, the use of sexist masculine language is widespread and binary dialogues in films reinforce this use of the language.

As can be seen from the last feature films selected as a sample in the study, the films are mostly concentrated on male stories. It is believed that male characters are predominant (brother, father, brother, childhood friend, commander, etc.), while the use of female characters in this structure, in which their stories are told, is very far from the general narrative in an othered and segregated way and is extremely low in proportion. Dead mother, cheating spouse, spouse on another planet, lover of the mafia, spouse who is thinking about divorce, etc. are the female representations depicted as having adopted an understanding that positions the woman outside the centre by highlighting the male identity/gender.

In addition to the sharp male figure representation in Cem Yılmaz's films, genderless characters and gay representations also attract attention.

The 216 character as a robot featured in the film *Arif v 216* is genderless and wants to have emotions like humans. Soon, the gay characters featured in *Gora and Yahşi Batı* films were mainly used as laughing/laughing objects with their speech, clothes or movements. In Yılmaz's films, the depiction of the characters with different sexual preferences is ridiculous who are positioned in just a scene or situation that is far from reality. Similarly, when the main characters meet a more powerful counterpart, mafia police, etc., suddenly, he tries to save the situation by becoming a child. It has been observed that the strong masculinity created or inflated here immediately changes and transforms in the face of a stronger male figure. Again, the sharp and strict use of masculine language is being reconstructed through people with different sexual preferences. With the use of the word 'faggot' as an expletive, attention is drawn to the man's sexist gaze and sexist perception.

As a result of the thematic content analysis conducted on the characters of eight films written by Cem Yılmaz, the sexist structure is reinforced. A discriminating narrative is exhibited on the figure/character of masculinity. It glorifies, blesses and values men, while women and individuals who have free sexual preferences are depicted as side elements, positioning them away from the narrative centre of the film and preparing the ground for the further prominence of the male figure. In these films, the male figures depicted outside the sharp masculinity patterns formulated by the sexist view (humorous, mostly escaping from the struggle with difficulties, far from taking responsibility, not using / not using wrist strength) are created and the narrative structure of the male's existing distinguishing characteristics are revealed.

The character legitimizes the figure of masculinity by revealing it prominently. Especially the characters who lack some characteristics of the traditional male gaze and the negative situations they experience. First of all, they reactively use this language and make the dilemmas of the language ordinary. In films, the character has a father figure who is alive and this is also depicted in the narrative. There is less curse/humiliation/indirection, etc. However, there is a more intense use of bad words in films where the character is shown as independent (rootless). As a result, it is understood that gender discrimination and marginalization are often processed by decorating comedy films with humour elements through Cem Yılmaz's films. The discriminatory language is realized through the dominant male

discourse, while the heterosexual identity of the main character is supported by discourses. When compared to the identities of the side characters, such a language is not established in the side characters. In comedy films, it is understood that marginal voices are looked at at an ordinary level as a negative identity structure. Instead of positioning them as subjects, they are exhibited more in the form of superficial characters and bodies without identity.

Conclusion

This empirical study concludes that films where masculine figures are presented more dominantly and aggressively to women's and shared identity areas lead to marginalization. The areas of gender are relatively less destroyed in areas where the family and paternity figures are used. The language and humorous films made on items Cem Yilmaz alienate are limited between the genders of the opposite sex or are unlimited in identities. The representation of the masculine body and wearable identity indicates the tendency to be fed with many of the genres of cinema that reveal the ideology of writers and director's affinity or show. So much so that success is usually shaped by the correct presentation codes on mono-type or singular gender, while the opponent in the opposite position has been presented exaggeratedly with sexist codes such as bad, gay or criminal.

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ANITA A. AZEEM

Chapter II Media and Minorities: An Analysis of Exclusion, Self-Categorization and Social Identity

ABSTRACT:

This chapter discusses the representation of ethnic and religious minorities in popular media globally. The media consistently represents specific communities, especially ethnic and religious minority groups of society, in a particular manner. These representations are reflected in various forms, including advertisements, television shows, Hollywood movies, magazines and books. The consumption of negative information about these groups leads to the assumption that these ethnic and religious minority groups are homogenized, unchangeable and, overall, a threat to the ingroup member's safety and stability. This, in turn, may lead to an increase in prejudice and discrimination targeted towards these groups. Thus, this chapter examines whether changing the media representation may influence the levels of prejudice and discrimination that these outgroups experience. This chapter also attempts to explore the unique relationship between media consumption and prejudice towards outgroup members. The common patterns in the media's representation of minorities have been explored. Previous works and literature were examined using the integrative review method to find published research on three minority group clusters, i.e. People of Colour, Immigrants & Refugees and Muslims. The findings of this chapter indicate that these outgroups are continuously represented as dangerous, threatening and less deserving, pointing to the need to review the content of mainstream media and move towards a less stereotypical representation of these groups.

Keywords: Social Identity, Media, Prejudice, Islamophobia, Ingroups and Outgroups

Introduction

People often rely on media to seek and gain information and thus form impressions about others worldwide. These impressions include understanding unfamiliar cultures, religions, regions and ideas. Media sources like news, television, the internet, social media, online news and magazines (to name a few) become the only source of information in homogenized cultures, i.e., where direct contact with anyone different is not possible or even in cultures where it is actively discouraged. Under these circumstances, the media provides an opportunity to learn more about outgroup members. Where direct contact with an individual is lacking, the media provides an opportunity for *parasocial contact* (Horton & Wohl, 1956), which has some of the same qualities as direct intergroup contact. When viewing an outgroup member on television, the audience reports feeling a similar experience as when they meet someone in person. Reeves and Nass (1996) propose that mediated contact is comparable to real-life contact in that both evoke physiological, cognitive and emotional responses. Suppose audiences see a Chinese character on television. In that case, they experience a similar physiological, cognitive and emotional response as they would if they came into contact with a Chinese person in real life. Therefore, the media can replace direct contact, where the latter is not viable.

Ingroup vs. Outgroup

Social psychologists have described an ingroup as the group you belong to as opposed to an outgroup, i.e., a different group. For instance, if you are a Muslim then other Muslims are considered a part of your religious group. In this case, your ingroup is 'Muslim' and your outgroup includes anyone who does not identify as a Muslim. So, if you use the statement,

'Our group has often been misrepresented in the media' then you are referring to the fact that Muslims have often been misrepresented in the mainstream media. Similarly, your ingroup could be based on any other trait, ranging from things that are under your control to subjects that you have no control over. For example, your height, age and ethnicity are all attributes that you do not have control over, yet you can form an ingroup association with them. Similarly, aspects like beliefs, political views and area of residence are aspects that are more within one's control and can also be the basis of ingroup formation. These ideas form the basis of two leading theories in Social Psychology, i.e. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982) and Self Categorization Theory (Turner, 1985), which have been broadly discussed in the chapter.

Outgroup representations in the media have an impact on how the ingroup feels and acts towards those outgroups, and this has been demonstrated across several studies (Schemer, 2012; Fuochi et al., 2020). When media sources projected immigrants in a negative light, the audiences reported a prejudiced attitude and general suspicion towards that outgroup. Further, negative portrayals of immigrants in the media also predicted a greater likelihood of voting for an anti-immigrant party (Burscher et al., 2015).

Similarly, Conzo et al. (2021) found that negative representation of ethnic minorities in news and entertainment media leads to two specific outcomes. First, it leads to a greater likelihood of viewing your group (ingroup) favourably and thus increases ingroup favouritism. It also results in physiological arousal and emotional resentment towards the outgroup, which the media have negatively portrayed. Specifically, Conzo et al. (2021) found an increase in the testosterone-cortisol ratio which has been linked to aggression. Therefore, their work also provides evidence for physiological changes that occur due to negative media consumption as well.

In sum, negative media consumption can steer the audience's physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural response in a negative direction, and therefore, it is essential to explore the content of media and emerging themes that appear in the mainstream media regarding these outgroups or minority members.

Background Review

Dovidio et al. (2002) note that intergroup communications are frequently initiated with suspicion and reservation. Levinson (1949) wrote, 'Outgroups are the objects of negative opinions and hostile attitudes and [they] are regarded as properly subordinate to [the] ingroup.' Social psychologists have also found that people tend to behave more exploitative and competitively when they are part of a group as opposed to when they are alone (Insko et al., 2001). This explains why individuals would loot, burn and vandalize property if they were part of a mob protesting but would never do the same if they were on their own. Being in a group causes individuals to change their behaviour, feel more energized by the presence of others and feel like they alone will not be held accountable for their actions.

Previous literature identified three main motives that lead to prejudice against outgroup members. These three motives are important to understand as they are the primary reason why one may feel anger/hatred towards outgroup members. The first reason is noted to be *intergroup threat* (Neuberg & Cottrell, 2002; Riek et al., 2006), which is marked by a fear that outgroup members will cause some sort of harm to ingroup members. This threat could be either physical, emotional or economic. For example, the belief that African Americans are violent and criminal and may attack you or steal from you represents a physical threat. Another threat can be the stereotype that immigrants will take up all the jobs in the country. This would be an example of an economic threat where the threat is that you may lose your job because of them. Similarly, some stereotypes about Southeast Asian individuals are that they will scam you and manipulate you. This represents an emotional threat. Regardless of what threat a person experiences, it all leads to negative cognition, emotions and behavioural tendencies towards those outgroups that are considered a threat.

Another identified motive is the *need for intergroup dominance* (Pratto et al., 2006), which can be explained as the basic need to view the ingroup as superior to the outgroup. To say that 'we' are better than 'them' or 'we' deserve more than 'them'. This can be initiated when the media represents

outgroups as inferior, unworthy or undeserving of the same facilities as ingroup members. For instance, the media may suggest that immigrants are not as worthy of healthcare benefits as the locals.

Finally, the last motive has been recognized as *intergroup competition* (Esses et al, 2005). This refers to the fact that often ingroup members view outgroup members as competitors for jobs, fame, money and relationships (to name a few), which gives rise to negative feelings towards outgroup members. As they begin to view outgroup as a competition, this gives rise to negative emotions, cognitions and behavioural tendencies.

These three motives are thought to generate and maintain negative feelings towards outgroup members. These three themes can also help us evaluate the media's representation, providing a framework for understanding how outgroups (minorities) are represented in the media. Are they presented as a threat? or as a group that is inferior and, thus, needs to be ruled over? And finally, are specific ethnic and minority groups represented as a competition? As we proceed through the chapter, we explore various specific outgroups. We will continue looking for themes that suggest threat, inferiority or competition to understand how mainstream media represents certain minority groups.

Statement of the Problem

Media sources are meant to relay information, but they are exaggerating it. They select certain terms and images to highlight specific aspects of minority groups in various media channels like newspapers, magazines, the Internet, television, radio and social media. Media can potentially mould public opinions (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Current literature suggests that this portrayal can lead to negative attitudes, cognitions and behaviours towards these members. Thus, there is a need to explore how specific minority groups are being represented in the mainstream media. For this chapter, the author explored the media's representation of three clusters of minority groups: *people of colour, immigrants & refugees and Muslims*.

Methodology

For this chapter, the integrative review method was chosen as it allowed for wider search criteria across disciplines. As a result, the shortlisted review articles were selected from various peer-reviewed media and communication journals, sociology, race and inequity studies, and social psychology databases. I followed the proposed step-by-step methodology, which included identifying the problem, searching the literature, evaluating data and presenting an analysis (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

Multiple bibliographic materials were combined with ancestry search. The inclusion criteria for selecting research articles were based on certain themes: 'African Americans in the mainstream media,' 'Latino in the media,' 'Chinese representation in the media,' 'Muslims in the media,' 'Immigrants in the media' and so on. Articles were further shortlisted based on relevance, and only those journal articles published in the English language – in peer-reviewed academic journals and containing structural analysis, meta-analysis or direct analysis of media content – were selected to be reviewed for this chapter. The results are presented in a thematic style where each minority group has been discussed one by one.

Theoretical Framework

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982) and Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, 1985), individuals often place themselves in groups. This allows them to get a better sense of belonging and enhances their social identity. They start categorizing the world into two distinct categories 'us' and 'them' to reflect the group they belong to (ingroup) as opposed to the group that they do not belong to (outgroup). Indeed, Social identity theory is an eminent theory in the field, and Tajfel (1978) described *social identity* as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his (their) knowledge of his (their) membership of a social group

(or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’.

A few theorists also link intergroup tension to evolutionary changes (Cosmides et al., 2003; Schaller, 2013). The key idea underlying this linkage is that in a hunter/gatherer society, it was an advantage to belong to a strong group as that would increase your chances of survival. While the function was merely survival back then, belonging to a group offers numerous benefits in today’s world. For instance, belonging to or being a part of an affluent family opens several doors of opportunities for you. Similarly, belonging to a more widely accepted religious or ethnic group means many more opportunities.

Creating social categories and then placing oneself in one of these leads to self-categorization (Turner, 1985), which forms the basis of Self Categorization Theory. This process of categorization makes individuals discriminate against the *other* group even when group membership is based on something trivial, is random and has no long-term consequences (Tajfel, 1978).

Self Categorization Theory explains that one can utilize a range of social categories for social grouping, ranging from overt, easily observable (skin colour, outfit and accent) to exceedingly personal (sexual preference, religious beliefs). Also, some categories have higher salience due to their obvious nature and consistency (e.g. gender, race) whereas others may be more contextual (e.g. being the only left-handed person in a class or being the only single mom in a café). The intergroup context will most likely emerge when social identities are salient (Turner et al., 1987).

Tajfel (1978) also noted that people place themselves and others in the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ categories. It alters their entire thought patterns. For one, they pay more attention to the similarities between ingroup members while neglecting any discrepancies. With the outgroup members, however, they act completely differently as they start focusing on things that are uncommon or distinct. Social psychologists claim that most individuals dislike outgroup members. Indeed, I am using ‘dislike’ as a milder term and this outgroup hatred can exceed many boundaries, as noted in historical accounts. Being different has led to several atrocities globally. For instance, consider the treatment of minorities in most countries – be it Christians in

India and Pakistan, Muslims in Western countries, or, in some cases, even certain religious sects like Roman Catholics and Ahmadis that have been viewed as an outgroup and been persecuted for the same reason.

Social Identity Theory and Self Categorization Theory conclude that group membership changes how individuals think, feel and behave. Further, ingroup members are placed on a higher pedestal than outgroup members – such that the groups one belongs to are seen as more capable, valuable and efficient than outgroup members.

Social Identity, Categorization and Media: A Critical Analysis

The literature suggests that United States of America media emphasizes that certain outgroups are ‘a burden on the nation’s economy’, ‘violators of American traditions’ and ‘most important problem in the country’ (Johnson et al., 2003). Often, they have been labelled as a threat to the country. A particular interest is the media’s representation of Latinos who are often described as dangerous, problematic, illegal and the biggest problem in the country. Several headlines and news stories framed all immigrants as illegal and as a threat to the culture and economy of the United States of America.

Research by Dragojevic et al. (2017) found that negative statements were used much more frequently than positive statements when describing immigrants from Mexico. This study was based on an analysis of 4,663 sentences published in US newspapers from four different states. Similarly, Kim et al. (2011) also found that news stories about Mexicans mostly centred on themes of criminality.

Another important aspect to note is that although there is much more research on analysing US news stories, such stereotypical representation is not limited to American media. For instance, a study led by Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2010) found that British media also consistently exemplified outgroup as a problem for the ingroup members. Khosravini (2010) observed that labels like ‘burden’, ‘law abusers’ and ‘danger’ were

recurrently used to describe immigrants. These and a handful of other studies have indicated that media in other countries also represents immigrants negatively. Gorp (2005) reported that phrases such as ‘they use dark practices’ and ‘we fear the degradation of our neighbourhood’ were often used by mainstream media for outgroup members. As we will further explore, such representations widen the chasm between ingroup and outgroup. These representations portray outgroup members negatively and suggest that the outgroup is perpetually different from the ingroup.

The Portrayal of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in the Media

Several social psychologists have attempted to decode media messages in terms of how they make the audience feel, i.e. whether that is positive or negative feelings (valence) and what the strength of that experienced emotion is (the arousal). For example, the word ‘disgust’ has a negative valence and high arousal. On the other hand, the word ‘sadness’ has a negative valence but low arousal. Similarly, ‘calm’ has a positive valence, but low arousal, and ‘enthusiasm’ has a positive valence and high arousal. Thus, we can understand specific words’ impact on the audience using valence and arousal. In terms of outgroup representation in the media, words like threat, illegal, fear and danger that routinely appear in the media are all negative valence and high arousal adjectives (Barrett, 2004).

In the following segment of this chapter, we explore the specific terms that have appeared recurrently in the media to describe certain outgroups. Thus, this chapter examines *people of colour* (African Americans, Latinos and Asians), *immigrants*, *refugees* and *Muslims*.

People of Colour

African Americans are very often termed as ‘criminals’, ‘lazy’, ‘violent’ and ‘troublemakers’ (Staples, 2011). This outgroup is represented more than

any other in the mainstream media. However, the problem lies not in whether they are shown on mainstream media, but how they are represented. The series of research that has been conducted on this group's representation in the media has all concluded that they are shown as barbaric, uncivilized, lazy and criminals, often coming from poor backgrounds. This is a constant narrative that the media is telling us about this ethnic group. Be it in the news, magazines, movie posters, or web series, African Americans are widely seen in violent roles like drug dealers, aggressive and poor, but rarely seen as high academic achievers or successful entrepreneurs (Ramasubramanian, 2011). Such representations communicate to the audience that this group may be dangerous, unreliable, undeserving and dangerous. Thus, the media creates a dislike and fear to some degree of this minority group while at the same time highlighting the inferiority of this ethnic minority group.

For African American women, it has been found that they are often shown as hypersexual and lacking work ethic (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Behm-Morawitz and Ortiz (2013) found that African American women are often typecast as 'Mammy', 'Jezebel' and 'Sapphire'. Every time a black woman is represented in movies, she is shown to be one of these.

Mammy is the representation of a faithful Black nanny who serves and supports the main white family. Even though Mammy is a dedicated and sincere worker, she is shown to be inferior, of low intelligence and submissive to her masters. The master and his family are usually a white affluent family who trust Mammy. This characterization is also represented as asexual with no desire or need for intimacy.

The second typecast is the complete opposite as she is a highly sexualized woman, usually in a corporate workplace. Jezebel, named after the Biblical villainess, usually has a lighter skin complexion, is sexually hyperactive and repeatedly tries to make advances on her boss and other colleagues. Her life's main goal is to get the attention of white males, eventually ending up in marriage to a white man with the promise of a secure and stable future. Finally, the last typecast is that of an angry female who dominates the house, known as the Sapphire. She yells at her husband, is annoying and is often angry. She is also represented as unhappy about life.

Such representations over decades reinforce the stereotypes in the audience's mind. Of late, the media has attempted to represent African Americans in leading roles. Particularly, in the recent movie *The Little Mermaid* (2023), an African American Halle Bailey played the role of Ariel. This movie reportedly tanked in a few countries like Korea and China as they failed to accept a Black Ariel. Disney princesses in the past have looked and been a certain way, and this Ariel did not meet the stereotypical representation of a Disney princess. Nonetheless, such initiatives are to be commended as they attempt to include African Americans in roles that they've never seen before. It will still take a long time for the audience to recover from the years of consuming stereotypical content.

Similar trends have been observed in other groups that may be considered people of colour. For example, Latinos have been missing from most media representations traditionally, and when they are shown, they are often presented as belonging to lower socio-economic status, illegal immigrants and prostitution (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). Media discussions regarding this group often revolve around drug involvement, illegal residents and problematic behaviour (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985).

Prejudice against Asians is also a common theme in the mainstream media. For this group, however, a common theme of threat is seen. The term 'yellow peril' which was first used in the 1990s stemmed from a fear that Asians will take over or dominate the white race because of their technological advancements (Odijie, 2017). Another theme in the media suggests that the Chinese way of life might damage the American style of life (Zhang, 2010). Thus, this group is typically depicted as 'exotic', 'non-American' and 'unassimilable foreigners' (Suzuki, 2002; Zhang, 2010). Some other typecasts include presenting this group as old-fashioned, irrational and shy (Ramasubramanian, 2011). Even in Hollywood films that are enjoyed by audiences worldwide, Asian characters are often shown stereotypically. For instance, Asian men are shown as having a distinct accent. They are shown as weak, nerdy sidekicks who lack social skills. Chinese women are frequently depicted as 'dragon lady' or 'China doll'.

Immigrants and Refugees

A few examples of media representation of immigrants in the United States of America, United Kingdom and Belgium have already been discussed. It is imperative to recognize that media sources globally serve as the primary relay station for conveying information regarding immigrants to the public. For decades, the media has been recurrently framing immigrants and refugees as the 'enemy at the gate', i.e. a group to be detested and looked down upon (Lynn & Lea, 2003). The situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic when all immigrants were viewed as the 'virus carriers' (Devakumar, 2020).

Immigrants are presented as a significant hazard to the ingroup in various forms including political, social, economic and cultural. Thus, the main message repeatedly communicated is that immigrants are a major threat to the well-being of ingroup members. The result is a dehumanized representation of immigrants and refugees (Leyens, et al., 2007).

Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2010) found that terms like 'dangerous' and 'uneducated' were used by the media to describe Sudanese refugees. The use of such language communicates to the ingroup that immigrants should not be welcomed as they don't deserve it and can be a potential threat to them. Abid et al., (2017) noted that for Syrian refugees, the allegory of water was being used with the most frequent words being 'flood', 'swell', 'outflow' and 'burden'. Abid (2020) noted that 'burdening', 'surging' and 'sparkling' were used for evacuees from Yemen. The verb 'surging' was used to link their arrival to that of a natural disaster. All these terms have a negative valence and high arousal and, therefore, leave an impact on the audience. These terms emphasize that immigrants are a problem that the government does not have a solution to. It is 'surging' like water in an uncontrollable manner, just like surging water is hard to stop.

Moreover, this phenomenon is observed in developing countries as well, and they view immigrants as an unpleasant problem. Mohanty (2020) studied the representation of Rohingya refugees who fled from the violence in Myanmar and went to Bangladesh. Indian Television shows used statements like 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' to describe these immigrants. Mohanty (2020) also found that phrases like 'Pandits thrown out, Rohingyas thrown

in' were circulating in the Indian media, suggesting that the Rohingya refugees were a problem for the country. Perhaps in developing countries, immigrants are viewed as a competition for resources and, therefore, a threat to the well-being of the ingroup.

Researchers have also found that prejudiced representation of immigrants and refugees is not only found in news stories and headlines but also in visual representation via photographs shared (Batziou, 2011). This is particularly important with social media tools like Instagram, which rely heavily on sharing images. Even in these sources, the media continues to pose immigrants as a danger to the country, as considered to be the biggest problem and as a threat to the fabric of the ingroup member's society. All these terms and phrases indicate that 'they' are perpetually different and inassimilable.

For instance, Bleiker et al. (2013) found that the pictures of boats frequently accompanied news stories regarding asylum seekers. Only two per cent of the stories focused on human interest stories focusing on individuals and their specific situations that led them to seek asylum in Australia. Thus, the arrival of these individuals was represented as unwarranted entry via boats into the land down under. Farris & Silber Mohamed (2018) analysed 338 pictures from American media and found that the consistent themes were illegality and criminality even in the visual representation.

Batziou (2011) examined images from Spain and Greece and found that immigrants were dehumanized. The visuals selected for publication had individuals looking expressionless; most of those pictures were taken from a distance. Such representations may elicit a cold response from viewers and possibly worsen intergroup relationships.

Muslims

Finally, the media also has painted a specific image of Muslims. In essence, the media has formed images of Islam and Muslims around the themes of extremism, violence and religious radicalism (Mohideen & Mohideen, 2008; Nurullah, 2010). The religion is often characterized as regimented and chauvinistic, while Muslims are usually described

as ruthless barbarians who pose a life threat to others (Mishra, 2007; Korteweg, 2008; Shaheen, 2009). Therefore, the theme of threat in the case of Muslims is often tied to physical threat or the threat of losing one's life.

In the British media, Muslims are presented as an alien 'other', 'deviant' and 'un-British' (Saeed, 2007). Such representations highlight the social and cultural differences between Western society and Muslims. The general message being communicated regarding this religious group is that they are extremely different to the ingroup, cannot be trusted and that the religion of Islam teaches violence to its followers. As a result, several notable Muslim scholars, philanthropists and influencers are overlooked, and there is little emphasis on the positive contribution of Muslims in the world.

Another common theme in the media is that regarding Muslim women who are expected to be oppressed and victims of domestic violence. Over two decades ago, Bullock and Jafri (2000) found that Muslim women were highlighted as the perpetual outgroup. Some examples from their study included headlines like, 'Two Unveiled Women Murdered, Muslim Extremists Suspected' (Vancouver Sun, 1994). This headline makes a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Rather than stating that two women were murdered, the media source elaborated that the ones murdered were unveiled 'ingroup' members while the suspects are the dangerous Muslim extremist 'outgroup'. Some other terms that are used to describe women in a 'hijab' in the Canadian media are 'uniform of oppression', 'invisible' and 'voiceless' (Bullock and Jafri, 2000). All of these point to the distinction between ingroup women and outgroup veiled women.

Women in hijab are frequently shown as victims and 'objects of mystique, exoticism and eroticism' (Donnell, 2003). Comparable to an illness, the veil or 'hijab' that Muslim women use has become a symbol of stigma and fear. In France, women are labelled as 'disobedient outsiders' if they wear a veil (Sotsky, 2013). A Muslim head covering has thus become synonymous with an unassimilable outgroup who are and always will be dangerous foreigners.

Even in commercial Hollywood cinema, Muslim characters are often presented as wealthy, blood-thirsty, violent and illiterate (Reza, 2011). In an analysis of more than 900 movies, Shaheen (2009) found that Muslims were represented stereotypically. The consistent representation of Muslims

in this manner suggests to the audience that all Muslims are the same and are the dangerous, perpetual oppressors that belong to the outgroup. Further, as Shaheen (2009) notes, when it comes to Arab characters in movies, Hollywood has only one kind, 'Bad Arabs'.

Very few movies show Muslims positively (Abdalla & Rane, 2008) and that is where the problem lies. Scientific research studies spanning across decades have confirmed that Hollywood and other mainstream media represent Muslims and Islam as a religion of fanatics and blood-thirsty people. Such repeated representations enhance the stereotype about this religious group and encourage stereotypical thinking among the audience.

Minority Community: Media Representations and Prejudices

One of the studies concluded that media representation may work both ways, i.e. it has the potential to increase prejudice amongst the masses. At the same time, a positive representation has the power to reduce stereotypes and prejudice (Banas et al., 2020).

Sadly, as we have seen in this chapter, negative representation is more prevalent and outgroups are more often represented as the perpetual foreigners and the obvious 'them' (Schemer, 2012). This constant negative representation is problematic as current research suggests that such representation can result in negative attitudes towards these outgroups even after a one-time exposure (Mastro, 2009; Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017). As expected, greater media consumption leads to more stereotypical attitudes (Ogan et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2017; Fuochi et al., 2020).

Negative media portrayal communicates to the outgroup that they are devalued and not appreciated which may lead to low self-esteem (Schmader et al. (2015)). These media communications convey to the immigrants that they are not welcome in the country and that they are inferior, not worthy and a problem in the country they are entering. Schmader et al. (2015) found that immediately following a stereotypical movie, Mexican Americans reported feeling negative emotions like shame and guilt. Thus, stereotypical

portrayals increase the gap between the ingroup and outgroup members in more than one way.

First, they form certain ideas in the minds of individuals in the ingroup, communicating to them that outgroup members are different and inferior. Second, the same sources, when consumed by outgroup members, result in their lower self-esteem and mistrust towards ingroup members.

At the moment, there is only limited research that explores how positive news/media representation affects audiences. Some researchers like Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2007) have found that counter-stereotypical news helps reduce prejudice against Asians, but the same result was not found for African Americans. The reason behind this discrepancy might be that in the study, participants expressed different forms of prejudice towards the two groups. They expressed hostile prejudice against African Americans but benevolent prejudice towards Asians. Thus the news media worked towards reducing benevolent prejudice but not hostile prejudice.

Given the complexities and numerous layers associated with prejudice reduction, it is imperative to explore how flipping the script via non-counter-stereotypical representation in the mainstream media would impact the audience's perception. A few studies have looked at the impact of positive representation, and they have found that positive representation of minorities does lead to more positive feelings towards minority groups (Graf et al., 2019).

Tukachinsky et al. (2015) have also found evidence that positive representation of outgroup members reduces prejudice towards these groups. Based on research from the entertainment industry, Alrababa'h et al. (2020) found evidence for a similar effect. Therefore, current research does provide some proof of this and generates a need to represent outgroups positively.

Conclusion

Given the lack of research in this area, it is important to continue exploring how media representation of various outgroups impacts the audience and whether changes in media portrayal would be able to reverse this effect and reduce intergroup prejudice. The best way to move forward

would be to note the media consumption pattern how the audience is receiving new media, i.e. counter-stereotypical media representations. For instance, Disney has now consciously created movies like 'Brave', 'Moana', 'Encanto' and 'Frozen' that show strong female characters. Some of these new Disney princesses, like 'Moana' and 'Merida', do not look like the traditional stereotypical princesses and convey that women can also be strong and capable. Similarly, suppose African Americans are shown as heroes. In that case, Mexicans are portrayed as an asset to the country. Muslims are represented as peace-loving individuals who have won the Nobel Peace Prize, and Chinese are shown as socially capable, which is likely to reduce the existing stereotypes about these groups amongst the masses. Future research should focus on how positive media representation impacts the audience's thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards these ethnic and minority groups. Perhaps these counter-stereotypical representations will help reduce the gap between majority (ingroup) and minority (outgroup) members, and thus, it may lead to a more peaceful community worldwide.

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Notes on Contributors



SHIRIN ABBAS, PhD has been working as a media educator since 2006. At present, she is Senior Research Fellow at the Foundation of Evidence Research on Development (FEDI), Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. She has contributed to many sterling educational institutions like Whistling Woods International, Mumbai Wigan & Leigh College, Mumbai, Symbiosis International University, Pune, and a few other private universities where she served as Founding Dean for their media Institutes. Her PhD work was in the areas of Social and Behavioural Change Communication. Since 2008, she has been providing consultancy in development communication to various international and national NGOs like UNICEF, BBC Media Action, Resource Alliance, HLPPT, UP State AIDS Control Society, etc. She is an expert in women and gender studies, human and child rights, media & communication, and migration studies. Before this, she started her professional career as a trainee with The National Herald in 1987 and worked in various capacities with international news organizations, news agencies and news portals. She received the British Chevening Scholarship for Young Indian Print Journalists and studied at the prestigious media school of the University of Westminster, London, United Kingdom.



MUSTAFA AYDEMİR completed his PhD in New Media. Before this, he pursued his master's degree in Media Law under the Radio Television and Cinema Program of the Institute of Social Sciences and undergraduate education from Ege University, Bornova, Türkiye. Aydemir has held technical and administrative positions at Ege University in many academic and scientific projects. He has participated in many assignments and artistic events and has been involved in various national and international studies. He is the author of books and has contributed research papers and scientific articles to many journals. Aydemir's main areas of work include new media, social media, radio and television broadcasting, interactive publishing, information systems, media technologies and cinema.



ANITA A. AZEEM, PhD, is currently working as Assistant Professor of Psychology at Carson-Newman University in Tennessee, Jefferson City, Tennessee, United States of America. After completing her PhD, she started working as a lecturer at the Dunedin Medical School at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her PhD thesis focused on social identity theory, the representation of outgroups in the media, and using media-based interventions to reduce prejudice in adults and children. She worked as a PhD scholar in Professor Ted Ruffman's laboratory.

Azeem received her BA (Hons) with double majors in Psychology and Mass Communication from Forman Christian College, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. She also completed an MS/MPhil in Clinical Psychology from Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan. She has the unique experience of teaching social and developmental psychology to students in three cultures around the world: Pakistan, New Zealand, and the United States of America.



NILOY KUMAR BHATTACHARJEE currently teaches at the Faculty of Management Studies, Dr B. C. Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. He is an alumnus of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, and completed his MA (Economics) and MBA (PGDFM) from the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, India. He works in the area of application of data science, machine learning, deep learning, stochastic modelling and classical inference in marketing research, marketing management and general management.



SANGITA DE, PhD, is a faculty member at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College, affiliated with the University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India. Before joining

this institution, she worked as Senior Research Fellow (University Grants Commission-UGC). She was awarded a PhD in Environmental Communication from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India. She has also been working as a guest faculty member at the Department of Mass Communication and Videography at Rabindra Bharati University. She has eight years of experience in academics. She has published her research papers in both national and international journals. Her publications are on variegated areas of mediated communication like social media and social movement, folk media as a tool of political communication, environmental communication strategies, media representation of Northeast India, pandemic communication, etc. Principal areas of her academic endeavour are media management, advertising, media laws, television production, cultural communication, communication theories and environmental communication.



ABDUR RAZZAQUE KHAN, PhD, is Associate Professor at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Khan has about twenty-four years of experience in university teaching and more than twelve years of experience in journalism. He began his journalism career at the United News of Bangladesh, a significant private news agency. He completed his PhD at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre (JMSC), a prestigious media studies school at the University of Hong Kong. He has presented many research papers at various international conferences and seminars, and his areas of interest are the critical political economy of media and communication, critical theory, media and crony capitalism, communication and social justice, subaltern journalism/communication, social media, and

religion, television studies, spiritual communication and qualitative research. In addition, Khan is one of the directors of the Global Listening Centre (GLC) in the United States of America and an active member of the Critical Theory Research Network, Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) and International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR).



AMIT KUMAR, PhD, works as a consultant (film & television) at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Aryabhata Knowledge University, Patna, Bihar, India. He has over sixteen years of professional experience in media, academics, government and consultancy. His academic qualifications include a PhD, MPhil, MA, University Grants Commission – National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for lectureship in Journalism and Mass Communication, PGDBA in e-business, PGD in Brand Management and BSc from Delhi University, India. He has more than eight years of teaching experience in mass communication at various private universities in India and has a decade-long experience in the media industry. To his credit, he has over two dozen research publications, conference presentations, and faculty development programme and workshop participation. His research interests include development communication, sustainable development, marketing communication, digital media, film studies and eco-tourism.



V. VIJAY KUMAR, PhD, is an Associate Professor & Dean of the School of Communications at XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. He has a blend of more than two decades of industry and academic experience as his strengths. He is a seasoned media professional and a media educator, with sixteen years of industrial experience in audio-visual content development, supervision and management. Right from television reality shows to non-fiction live broadcasts, from television commercials to feature films, he worked on various projects in different capacities. He worked with Sun TV Network, Chennai; Shop CJ TV Network, Mumbai; Frames Entertainment, Chennai, India, in senior roles, and he was the creative head and show director of an award-winning Tamil reality talent hunt show '*Naalaya Iyakunar*' (Future Director) and South India's first reality television show for identical twins '*Iruvar*' (Twins). Kumar has completed his PhD from Anna University, Chennai, India. His doctoral research is on the topic '*Interactive Reality Television*'. He specializes in audio-visual content development, entertainment television programmes, documentary production, digital filmmaking and educational media design. His research interests are television programming, television studies, film studies, Tamil Cinema, leisure studies, social media, interactive digital communication, positive psychology, public relations, corporate social responsibility and educational media. He co-edited the book *Media and Marginalized Voices: Women and LGBTQIA+ Community*, which was published by Peter Lang International Academic Publishers in March 2025. Apart from teaching, he is actively involved in audio-visual content development in documentaries, music videos, television shows and educational video modules in the capacity of executive producer, head of creatives and production.



SOMASHRI MONDAL is associated with the Department of Business Administration, Dr B. C. Roy Academy of Professional Courses, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. She is an alumna of the Faculty of Management Studies, Dr B. C. Roy Engineering College, where she has pursued her MBA in the areas of Human Resource Management and Marketing. She has qualified with the University Grants Commission – National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for lectureship and West Bengal – State Eligibility Test (WB-SET) and is also currently associated with the Department of Business Administration, University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India, as a research scholar. Her research interests lie in human resource management, psychology at the workplace, quality of work-life and work-life balance, performance appraisal and training & development.



SANDIP MUKHERJEE, PhD, currently *teaches at the Faculty of Management Studies, Dr B. C. Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, West Bengal, India.* He earned both an MPhil and a PhD in Human Resource Management. His PhD thesis encompasses tenets of labour and social welfare measures of industrial workers. His research interest also involves other operational areas of Human Resource Management and the areas related to the

general well-being of different sections of society. Mukherjee completed a Master of Personnel Management from the University of Pune and pursued his degree and diploma in labour laws and welfare. Apart from his participation at different national and international seminars and conferences, conducting an administrative capacity-building programme for the faculty members and a management development programme for the industrial executives are his recent additions.



CHIBUIKE NNAMDI OPARAUGO is an author, a journalist, a media content writer and a former lecturer at The Polytechnic of Sokoto State (now Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic), Sokoto, Nigeria (2015–2016). He is a mass communication graduate from the prestigious Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu (2014). Oparaugo also obtained his professional Diploma in Education (PDE) from the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, in 2016 through Shehu Shagari College of Education (SSCOE), Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria. His areas of interest include advertising, public relations, news writing and reporting, photography and photojournalism, political communication, communication theories, film production and research. He has written various articles in regional journals. He is the co-author of '*An Introductory Text on Political Communication*' (2019, with Dr J. I. Okoye), '*Public Relations Copywriting*' (2023, with Roseline Anigbo), '*Advertising Case Study*' (2021, with Dr Sam Omeje) and '*Media Organisation Management*' (2023, with Dr Bob Madu).



USHA MANCHANDA RODRIGUES, PhD, is an adjunct senior research fellow with Charles Sturt University in Australia and an adjunct professor at the Manipal Institute of Communication, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, India. Usha is a leading scholar on Indian news media and contemporary journalism topics in Australia, including cultural diversity in the media, reporting violence against women and the impact of digital transformation on journalism practice, audience news consumption and political communication. She uses an interdisciplinary agenda to study the news media, social media and community media. Her publications include several peer-reviewed articles in leading international journals and two landmark books: *Indian Media in a Globalized World* and *Indian News Media: From Observer to Participant*. Usha also holds the Kopenhagen Fellow's award with the Lillian Lodge Kopenhagen Centre for the Advancement of Women in Communication, USA.



BHASWATI ROY, PhD, is associated with the Faculty of Management Studies, Dr B. C. Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. She has been awarded her PhD and completed her MA (Industrial Sociology) from the University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India and

her MBA from the National Institute of Personnel Management, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. She has been awarded Junior Research Fellow by the University Grants Commission (UGC) as well. She has been associated with UNICEF (as a life member) and WHO for the last fifteen years as a voluntary research project associate. She has participated in various national and international seminars and conferences. Her research interests involve organizational behavioural practices, employee engagement, CSR (Uplifting 3Ps) and sustainable development goals. Roy has also acted as a motivator and corporate trainer in different industries.



ALI SAHA, PhD, is a researcher and sessional media studies & social science lecturer at Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. She also teaches at the University of Melbourne and Swinburne University and frequently serves as a guest lecturer at other Universities. Besides teaching, she has 10+ years of experience as a communication professional. Before embarking on her teaching journey, she completed a PhD in the School of Social Science at Monash, Australia. She has previous degrees and a faculty gold medal from Banaras Hindu University, India. Her research interests and expertise are in media sociology, and she frequently works with interdisciplinary subjects such as sociology, communication design and journalism. She curiously explores the changes in the social system to the caste system, racism, religious sentiments, gender identity, discrimination, inequality and the media's role in shaping ideas and behaviours.



JYOTI RANJAN SAHOO, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the School of Communications, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. He has nine years of teaching, three years of research and five years of industry experience. Sahoo received his PhD in *'Media and Social Life'* from the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia (a Central University), New Delhi, India. He has published eighteen research articles in national/international journals and contributed various chapters in edited books on media sociology, media and marginality, development communication, advertising, media education, information communication and technology, communication and culture, media and gender. He recently published a co-edited book (with Dr. V. Vijay Kumar) *"Media and Marginalized Voices: Women and LGBTQIA+ Community"* from Peter Lang International Academic Publishers in March 2025. He has also conducted four research projects at Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi and presented over twenty six research papers on diverse interdisciplinary media and communication issues at national and international conferences like the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA) and Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) abroad. His research interests are media and society, media and margin, media education, media culture, development, spiritualism & politics. He also teaches communication theories, media research, print & digital journalism, development communication, corporate communication, media laws & ethics. A few of his other research assignments are currently in progress such as COVID-19 health perception and communication, media and democracy, technology and media students' learning, and media, religion and digital spiritualism.



KAJAL SHAW, PhD, is a research scholar at the Department of Mass Communication and Media Studies, Central University of Punjab, India. Her research theme is the usage of mobile media by tribal women in India. She was awarded a gold medal for her academic performance in her MA in Journalism and Mass Communication from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India. Kajal holds a distinguished academic record, securing a first-class position in English (Hons) from the University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India. She has qualified with the University Grants Commission – National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for lectureship and West Bengal – State Eligibility Test (WB-SET). She has contributed to academia with a few research publications and showcased her expertise by presenting papers at international conferences.



PRIYAM BASU THAKUR, PhD, is presently working at the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, The Bhawanipur Education Society College, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. After qualifying University Grants Commission – National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for lectureship, she completed her doctoral research at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India on *Television Journalism*. Her research interests include folk and

traditional communication, political communication, new media & behaviour, and Northeast Indian studies. She has contributed several research papers in many peer-reviewed national and international journals. Her recent research article titled *Government Communication Strategy and its Reflection on Media Construction of Pandemic: A Structured Analysis of COVID-19 in India* has been published by Routledge. She has more than ten years of teaching experience in media studies. She also completed a Higher Education Teacher's Training course from the Derek Bok Center for Teaching & Learning, Harvard University, United States of America.

Index

A

- Adivasi*
 - indigenous community, as 205–206
- Ain-i-Akbari* 33
- Ali Baba ve 7 Cüceler (2015)*
 - content analysis 242
- alternative voice/media
 - and counter-publics 59–62
 - for Dalits 57–59
 - genesis of 55
 - political act of using 68
- Arif v 216 (2018)*
 - content analysis 243
- Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 46
- Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, 40
- Arog (2008)*
 - content analysis 240

B

- Bangladesh Observer
 - Magurchhara* calamity, media performance of 87–89
- Biafra 127
 - agenda-setting theory 130
 - history of 131–132
 - and new digital technologies
 - provide 142
 - Olomajobi's* statement about unrest 136
 - Radio Biafra* 137
 - (mis)representation in media 127

- self-representation, social media as alternatives to 141–143
- transitional justice programme called '3R,' 133
- understanding
 - marginalization 133–134
 - unrest in Nigeria 129
- Bongal Kheda* Movement 36
- Brahmanic/Varna* media 53
- Bramhaputra* valley civilization 33
- Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) 166

C

- cases
 - Hathbras* case, social platform, protesting site as 65–68
 - Rohith Vemula case, catalyst for social media discourse by Dalits 62–65
 - tribal people 219–220
- Centre and Periphery* 32
- comedians-narrators 230
- comedy films
 - gender and discriminatory
 - construction 229
 - narrated through absurd situations 231
 - use of superiority theory in 234–236
- Communication Power* 159
- community media 221
- conflict 40
- content analysis
 - selected movies 237–238

- Ali Baba ve 7 Cüceler* (2015) 242
Arif v 216 (2018) 243
Arog (2008) 240
Gora (2004) 238
Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak
 (1998) 238
Hokkabaz (2006) 239
Pek Yakında (2014) 241
Yahşi Batı (2010) 240–241
- corporate capitalist system
 manufacturing consent, media as 78
 cultural marginality 5
 custodianship 161
- D
- Dalits 54
 alternative media for 57–59
 reasons for negligence 57
 violence against 54
 voices, alternative media representa-
 tions of 53
- E
- economic marginality 5
 Equal Remuneration Act 198
 ethnic identity 41
- F
- films
 sharp male figure representation in
 Cem Yılmaz's films 247
 Yılmaz, narrative through dialogues
 with shadow side character 247
Four Theories of Press 150
 criticism of press theories 151–153
 normative theories, relook of 153–154
 proposed theories 150
 sociology of media 154–155
- Fourth Estate* 150
 Fourth World Conference on Women
 (FWCW) 109
- G
- gender and discriminatory
 construction 229
 action distributions of films,
 in 244–245
 bio-power and construction of 'x'
 subject 233–234
 comedy films 231
 use of superiority theory
 in 234–236
 findings and results
 content analysis 237–243
 humour 229–231
 literature review 231–233
 methodology
 purpose, scope and
 importance 236–237
 research, universe, sample and
 method of 237
 results and analysis 243–247
 typologies of films, distribu-
 tion of 246
 Gender Social Norms Index 110
 Gene Glass 33
 Giddens's Structuration Theory 108
Gora (2004)
 content analysis 238
 Gowon, General Yakubu 132
- H
- Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak* (1998)
 content analysis 238
Hokkabaz (2006)
 content analysis 239
Homo sapiens

- gradual evolution 173
- homosexuality 174 *see also* Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+), Queer, Transgender
 - corporate culture 182
 - explained in terms of science 181
 - importance of recognition of 181–182
 - World Bank report on 181
- Human Migration and the Marginal Man* 32
- human society 1
- humour 229
 - comedians-narrators 230
 - and laughter 230
 - physical characteristics 230
 - summary 230
- I
- identity politics 41
- immigrants and refugees
 - media, ethnic and religious minorities, portrayal of 264–265
- India
 - history of sexual orientation 174
 - homosexuality 174 *see also* Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+), Queer, Transgender
 - legalizing homosexuality 176
 - media
 - Article 19 (1)(A), 160
 - commercialization and social exclusion 162–167
 - Data LEADS and Reporters Without Borders and media ownership 158
 - laws and ethics in 160–161
 - market trends in 155–157
 - multinational media companies 158
 - need for new normative model 161–162
 - opaqueness of media companies 158–159
 - ownership and content plurality 157–160
 - rise of indigenous media 203
 - Adivasi* 205–206
 - catalyses cultural preservation 205
 - tribes, need more attention 204
 - Indian media market
 - FICCI report 156
 - TRAI 155
 - trends in 155–157
 - Indian press
 - Dalit negligence, reasons for 57
 - independent status, as 55–56
 - indigenous media 220–221
 - Adivasi* 205–206
 - community 217–218
 - issues and challenges
 - lack of infrastructure 212
 - literacy and communication of tribal community 212–213
 - power dynamics, silence and visibility of
 - hegemonic force 214
 - media silence 214–215
 - media visibility 215–216
 - Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) 129
 - Information Communication Technology (ICT) 142
 - ingroup 254–255
 - need for intergroup dominance 256
 - Inner Line System 34
 - intergroup threat 256

K

Kama Sutra 174

Katkari tribes 220

Khasi community in Bangladesh
 media, politics and marginalization
 of 77–82
 contextualizing 84–86
 Magurchhara calamity 81
 methodology 83–84
 ownership 79
 post-cold war era, during 82

L

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
 Queer, Intersex and Asexual
 (LGBTQIA+) 173
 age-old section 377 of Indian Penal
 Code (IPC) 180
 corporate culture 182
 Deep Learning (DL) approach by
 Khatua and team 178–179
 defined as social minority
 group 179–180
 discussion on rights of 180
 evolution of status, in India 175
 importance of recognition
 of 181–182
 against ‘Law of Nature,’ 179
 policy priorities, smorgasbord
 of 193–198
 questionnaire responses 189–191
 Rainbow Flagship 178
 sentiment keyword
 cloud 192
 frequency 192
 social media scanning
 exercise 191–192
 study data 183
 age demographic profile 184

gender demographic profile 184
 gender identification 184
 gender orientation 185
 methodological concerns and
 considerations 185–187
 occupation demographic
 profile 184
 proposed sentiment tracking
 algorithm 187
 survey indications 188
 World Bank report on 181

M

Magurchhara calamity
 media, politics and marginaliza-
 tion of 81
 media performance of 86–87,
 101–102
 Bangladesh Observer 87–89
 communication, political economy
 of 98–101
 comparison, dailies 96–98
Daily Ittefaq 92–94
Daily Janakantha 94–96
Daily Star 89–91
 margin and marginality
 Allen & Crittenden’s view on 4
 collateral 3
 cultural 5
 defined 2, 3
 economic 5
 embodied experience, as 5
 forms 5
 Minh-hai’s view on 4
 and Northeast India, pre and post-
 independence scenario 33–37
 political 5
 social 3
 marginalization 6–11, 77
 caste discrimination, as 9–11

- Christianity 11
- community 6
- LGBTQIA+ community 7
- media, women and 105
- minority communities 9
- women 6–7
- women and media 105
- marginalized communities
 - and new digital technologies
 - provide 142
- media
 - alternative voice, genesis of 55
 - Biafra
 - agenda-setting theory 130
 - constant depiction, struggle in 130
 - public opinion 130
 - (mis)representation in 127
 - setting the agenda* 130
 - unrest in Nigeria 129
 - commercial norms and social exclusion of 149
 - criticism of press theories 151–153
 - libertarian theory 151
 - sixteenth and seventeenth century 150
 - corporate capitalist system, manufacturing consent as 78
 - ethnic and religious minorities, portrayal of 261–267
 - immigrants and refugees 264–265
 - Muslims 265–267
 - people of colour 261–263
 - factors contribute to low representation of women in 120–122
 - choice to expand the number 122
 - men, low involvement in home duties 122
 - positive representations 121
 - gender representation in
 - digital media 118
 - English newspapers 115
 - English television news 116–117
 - Hindi newspapers 115–116
 - Hindi television news 117–118
 - magazines 119
 - radio networks 119–120
 - India, rise of indigenous 203
 - and indigenous people 206
 - margin and marginalization 12–19
 - and minorities 253
 - ingroup *vs.* outgroup 254–255
 - methodology 258
 - review 256–257
 - statement of problem 257
 - theoretical framework 258–260
 - Nigerian media landscape 134–135
 - ownership 79
 - promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusive industry in India, role in 173
 - propaganda tool as 78
 - role in transforming workplace 173
 - social identity, categorization
 - and 260–261
 - sociology of 154–155
 - status of usage among tribal people 206–207 *see also* indigenous media
 - films, documentaries 210–211
 - newspapers 207–208
 - radio 208–210
 - social media intervention 211
 - women and marginalization 105
 - women's portrayal in 112–114
 - women's role and presence 106–107
 - digital media, role 109–110
 - essential subject 109
 - feminists, Indian and Western 109
 - Gender Social Norms Index 110
 - Indian Constitution and 109
 - Muted Group Theory 107
 - research data 111–112
 - structuration theory 108
 - UN Women Report 2019–2020, 110

- WEF report on gender inequality 110
- media and marginalization
 - Crenshaw's work 165–166
- minority community
 - media representations and prejudices 267–268
- mirror of modern society 134
- Mizo Famine Front (MFF) 36
- Mizo National Front (MNF) 36–37
- Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) 138
- Muslims
 - media, ethnic and religious minorities, portrayal of 265–267
- N
- Naga National Council (NNC) 36
- National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB) 54
- Nation-State and Journalism* 159
- New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) 151
- Nigeria
 - Biafra unrest in 129
 - agenda-setting theory 130
 - constant depiction, struggle in media 130
 - public opinion 130
 - democracy 127–128
 - IPOB and New Biafra
 - Agitation 136–138
 - media and marginalization 135–136
 - media landscape 134–135
 - media representation
 - Biafra* community 140–141
 - Radio Biafra* 138–139
 - television 139–140
- Republic of Biafra, breakaway state from 131
- Northeast India
 - Bengali as official language in Assam 34
 - Bongal Kheda Movement 36
 - conflict and violence 38–41
 - constructing border 44–45
 - identity politics and ethnic nativism 41–42
 - infiltration of immigrants and identity crisis 35
 - Inner Line System 34
 - and Khasi, Jaintiaa Garo hills 37
 - marginality and, pre and post-independence scenario 33–37
 - media, representation and marginality of 31
 - media and marginality in 37–38
 - Mizo National Front (MNF) 36–37
 - Naga National Council (NNC) 36
 - National and Regional Media, media coverage by 39
 - peace-making process 42–43
 - People's Liberation Army (PLA), formation 37
 - post-colonial era and separation 36
 - representation of women 45–46
 - Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India 35
 - stereotypical representation 43–44
 - two princely states, merging with India 37
 - United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), emergence of 36
- O
- outgroup 255
 - Levinson's views 256
 - representations in media 255

P

- Pek Yakında (2014)*
 content analysis 241
 people of colour
 media, ethnic and religious minorities, portrayal of 261–263
 People's Liberation Army (PLA) 37
 political marginality 5

R

- Rabha' tribes 220
Radio Biafra 129–130

S

- Self Categorization Theory 259
 self-representation
 social media as alternatives
 to 141–143
 sexual orientation/ sexuality
 history of 174–175 *see also* Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+), Queer, Transgender
 sexual orientation/sexuality
 media take on 177
 social exclusion 177
 Social Identity Theory 258
 sociology of knowledge 163, 164

T

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) 155
 cautioned against crossmedia ownership 159

- importance of media pluralism 158
 The Times Group 162–163
 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 176
 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, 198
 Tribes
 and media, catalyses cultural preservation 205
 need more attention 204

U

- United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) 36
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 151
 United Nations (UN) Women Report 2019–2020 110

W

- women
 marginalization and media 105
 feminism and voting rights 105
 Muted Group Theory 107
 role and presence in media 106
 structuration theory 108
 World Economic Forum (WEF) 110

Y

- Yahşi Batı (2010)*
 content analysis 240–241
 Yilmaz
 narrative through dialogues with shadow side character 247

