CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Rationale

Since the 1980s, academics, media producers and policy makers have been increasingly interested in the relationship between the media and ethnic minorities, and the function of the media in a multicultural society (Devroe, 2004). It is the responsibility of the media to see how minorities feel about the media, because having the sense of being fairly portrayed in the media makes the minorities think that they are part of the society and they are no longer pushed out. They should feel that they are accepted, included and help to create the feeling of “belonging” in the society. Husband (2000) emphasizes the role of the media in creating a multi-ethnic public sphere, where diverse groups can feel they are making a contribution.

2.2 Media and Marginalised Minorities: A Global Scenario

The term “minority” is still often portrayed as one that is controversial, with many governments continuing to deny that minorities exist or pretending that there are no agreement on who or what is a minority (Khan Ali, 2010). The term ‘minority’ as used in the United Nations human rights system refers to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as laid out in the United Nations Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992). However, there is no internationally agreed definition as to which groups constitute minorities.
“Most scholars discount biological theories of race, which attempt to mark minority groups on the basis of physical features, but some attempt to differentiate between racial or ethnic minorities. Even so, the key relationship between the minority group and the dominant social group is that the former is subordinate to the latter. As a result, members of minority groups often do not enjoy the same approach to education, economic or political power, or other cultural capital as do members of the dominant social group like Access to the Media and other News Ideologies” (The International Encyclopedia of Communication, 2008).

Media Right Group held an international seminar on Minority Rights and Development in 1995 with the purpose of creating a better understanding of the causes of inter-communal conflict, and to encourage greater participation and inclusion of minorities in the development programmes of their countries. At this seminar, reports showed that minority communities were more often than not marginalized and excluded from development processes, and ignored by governments, which often led to an exacerbation of tensions and conflicts between such communities and other groups in the country.

United States Human Rights Commission (2010) in his report on Minority Rights says that International Standards and Guidance for Implementation states that in many countries, minorities are often found to be among the most marginalized groups in society and severely affected by various pandemic diseases. Therefore it is justified to say that minorities in cross-culture are the marginalized minorities.

Wherever the human race exists, there exists discrimination and marginalization. This statement is true to the fact that in almost all culture of the country some sort of discrimination is found. The people who undergo such treatments are called ‘minorities’,
‘the subaltern people’, ‘the aboriginals’ and ‘indigenous people’ In India, we have minority groups that can be identified in terms of religion, caste, creed and race. Dalits are one of them (Harris, 2013).

2.3 Representation of Minorities in the Media

Media representations have long been a matter of crucial concern for minorities as well as those interested in creating a more responsible media. In the late 1960s through the 1990s, George Gerbner and associates conducted several quantitative studies of minority representations on U.S. television (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1979; Gerbner, et al., 1993; Gerbner, et al., 1998). Conclusion of these studies narrate that although minority representations gained in quantity, they had not improved much in terms of quality.

Mahtani (2001) employs the term “minorities” throughout this paper to encompass a wide rubrick of racial, cultural and ethnic and linguistic groups, including “visible minorities,” “cultural groups,” “racialized peoples,” “non-whites,” “religious minorities” and “people of colour” in order to mirror the work of other researchers in this field. He explains in his research paper that how minorities are misinterpreted and misrepresented in the media. He postulates in his article that by purposefully excluding certain ethnic groups from representation in the media there is further devaluation of these groups as citizens in the country and the non-whites are not considered part of the society. When minorities are included in the media, they are often represented negatively or in stereotypically exotic ways, which do little to challenge the 'Eurocentric cultural hegemony'. Minorities are rarely portrayed as characters that have something significant to say, but are mainly shown in ways that reinforce the status quo. Overall, Canadian media has an 'inability to effectively hold up
a mirror in which Canadian society can see its wide array of ethnic diversity accurately depicted'.

Mahtani (2001) concludes that the under and misrepresentation of minority groups in the media affects Canadian society by upholding the stereotypical notions and ways that people perceive these groups. She goes on to state that there must be a further analysis of why these representations continue as well as an equal inclusion of minorities to show that they are an integral part of Canadian society. Wilson and Sparks (1999) show that research supports the general findings about diversity coverage by demonstrating empirically that Blacks are underrepresented and stereotyped in media messages, adding that the patterns of negative black representation are magnified for black women.

In a 1969 editorial in *Television Quarterly*, communications scholar Cedric C. Clark wrote that minorities are often subjected to predictable stages of treatment in media depictions, particularly on television. Clark’s model was developed primarily in reference to African Americans. According to Clark there are four stages of minority representations: Non-recognition, Ridicule, Regulation, and Respect.

- **Non-recognition**: A given minority group is not acknowledged by the dominant media to even exist.
- **Ridicule**: Certain minority characters are portrayed as stupid, silly, lazy, irrational, or simply laughable.
- **Regulation**: Certain minority characters are presented as enforcers or administrators of the dominant group’s norms.
- **Respect**: The minority group in question is portrayed no differently than any other group. Interracial relationships would also not appear extraordinary. (Clark, 1969)
The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, called as Kerner Commission after its chair, Governor Otto Kerner, Jr. of Illinois, was an 11-member commission constituted by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the causes of the 1967 race riots in the United States and to provide recommendations for the future. Talking on the role of media Kerner commission said that “Minorities are greatly underrepresented in the media”.

In addition to tracing the 1967 civil disorders to root causes of poverty, inequality in income and education, crime and racial injustice, The Kerner Commission singled out the media for criticism. It said "The Communications Media, Ironically, Have Failed to Communicate". Further the report stated: "We have found a significant imbalance between what actually happened in our cities and what the newspaper, radio and television coverage of the riots told us happened" and the Commission criticized the media's use of "scare" headlines, and exaggeration of the scope of the riots (The Eisenhower Foundation, 2008).

Many European and American studies have found continuous bias in the representation of ethnic minorities: negative stereotyping, broad generalizations, lack of background information, almost no attention is paid to the economical benefits of migration, and so on (Van Dijk, 2000). According to Stephen Balkaran (1999) in his research paper on Mass media and Racism explains that “the media has played a key role in perpetuating the effects of this historical oppression and in contributing to African-Americans' continuing status as second-class citizens”. He further says on commenting on the nature of the U.S media, “Media have divided the working class and stereotyped young African-American males as gangsters or drug dealers. As a result of such treatment, the media have crushed youths' prospects for future employment and advancement. The media have focused on the negative aspects of the black community”. There is a need for the Media to consider and create
alternative representations of minorities in the mainstream. The media occupy a key site and perform a crucial role in the public representation of unequal social relations and the play of cultural power (Hall, 1995; Cottle, 2000; Van Dijk, 2000). Entman (2012) states in his study that “Chicago television news programs suggest racism is still indirectly encouraged by normal crime and political coverage that depict blacks, in crime, as more physically threatening and, in politics, as more demanding than comparable white activists or leaders”.

For many women, media messages reflect the kind of attitudes that rudely confront them on a daily basis. For people who are black, Latino, Native American or of Asian ancestry, the largely white-world of the Mass media resonates with many of the prejudices that they repeatedly encounter in a white-dominated country. And for those whose sexual orientation draws them to people of the same gender, the main news media commonly leave them out or put them down (Lee & Solomon, 1990).

The Rohingya Muslims are an ethnic, linguistic and religious minority group mainly concentrated in North Arakan (or ‘Rakhine’) State in Burma, adjacent to Bangladesh, where their number is estimated at 725,000 (Lewa, 2009). These people have been neglected and discriminated over years. The media is also showing no concern for their issues. Global voice (2012), an online site observes that citizens of Myanmar opined that ethnic Rakhine who were also victims during the riots were mostly ignored and accused international news agencies including Myanmar exile media of covering the issues from a one-sided point of view. The killing of the 10 Muslim travelers in Toungop on June 3, 2012 and the Muslim riots in Maungdaw were accompanied by an unprecedented increase in biased Burmese media coverage that was in some instances openly hostile towards the Rohingya and non-Rohingya Muslims. Various state-controlled and domestic media outlets in Burma claimed
the violence in Arakan State was perpetrated solely by Rohingya against Arakan, while international media focused on violence against the Rohingya (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

The different ethnic and cultural groups in Europe are still not equally and fairly represented in the European media. Under-representation and misrepresentation of immigrant and minority groups has an impact on mainstream audiences: it confirms their often biased and ill-informed perceptions of the ‘new’ Europeans (Censis Researchers, April 2002). In Europe, in particular, little attention has been paid to audience responses within ethnic minority communities (Ross, 2001).

Subir & Sumon (2010) opine that the representation of migrant-minorities in the German media is terribly poor. It was found during their interview for the study that very rarely they found non-German associated with the media. This is what one of the non-German stated while talking about the attitude of the German media mainstream during an interview:

German media, specially the print media, is still too German, even those who think left or liberal. They are very conservative in recruitment and employment policies. They tend to promote people who have classic German middle class background – proper university education, strong command over German language (Subir & Sumon, 2010).

In France, over years, the French media has turned a blind eye to the increasing presence of minorities. When a riot broke out in 2005 in the Lanlieueat Paris, the media did not even bother to get a single voice from the black community. And the rioters were simply referred to as “youth from the suburbs”, as the French media grappled with the realisation that after decades of minority suppression, it was an outburst led by the second generation
immigrants, who refused to take things lying down unlike their parents (Sumon, 2010). In an interview with Isabelle Stassart, Photo Editor, Le Figaro, France, accepted that the “issues of the minority community are hardly discussed in their media, except when controversies happen”.

Research of 2001 (Devroe & Saeys, 2002) of the Flemish newspapers shows that news about ethnic minorities is mostly related to crime, problems and conflicts, and showed a strong generalising bias. Ethnic minorities had little opportunity to express their opinion in the press. The news media frequently construct ethnic minorities as ‘Others’, using a discourse of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’.

Another research findings on “The portrayal of ethnic minorities in the newspapers and television news in Flanders, Belgium, Ilse Devroe says that the minorities of Flanders are very much disappointed in the media, especially with the news media. Some participants believed in the supply of alternatives by diasporic media, in order to see themselves represented more fairly, and to express their opinions (Devroe, 2004).

Senadhira (2003) in his research paper articulates that majority of the newspaper establishments owned by Sinhalese show are biased towards Tamils regardless of their language medium. Although quite large numbers of Tamils live in Sri Lanka, no effort has been made to examine the news from the perspective of the Tamils or any other minority community. Furthermore, none of these Sinhala owned private mainstream media establishments publish newspapers in Tamil.

Another segment of people who are marginalised are the Muslims. In western countries, they are misinterpreted and portrayed in the poor lights. Whether they are televised or printed, it is not surprising that Western media reports maintain a constant
distorted image of Arabs and Muslims. Fabricated stereotypes of Islam are omnipresent in Western media through all means of communication. Muslims are stereotyped and derogatory word used to designate Muslims (Ridouani, 2011). Mutual contacts are based mainly on stereotypes and prejudice, which are clearly observable in the various reports in the media in which Muslims are described as fanatics, irrational, primitive, belligerent, and dangerous (Shadid & Koningsveld, 2002).

It has become common for people in the West with news both on television and in newspapers in which Muslims and Islam are talk of the topic. Research from various sources point out that the way in which Western media report about Muslims, Islam, and ethnic minorities in general leaves much to be desired (Van Dijk, 1991 & Pool, 2000). Pool (2000) in his research studied the role of the British media in spreading negative images on Islam and Muslims and concluded that the media overwhelmingly generalise about these groups. Islam is considered to be obsolete and a threat to British society. In addition, Muslims are described as divergent, irrational, and unable to integrate in society.

Tereskinas(2003) studies on the ethnic and sexual minorities in the Lithuanian Mass media throws new lights on the plight of ethnic and sexual minorities. He postulates that ethnocentrism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia remain the crucial problems in the public sphere in Lithuania. The Lithuanian media still tend to perpetuate discrimination and hostility against ethnic and sexual minorities. Minority groups share relative invisibility and one-sided stereotypical representations. By not paying nearly enough attention to ethnic and sexual minorities in the everyday situations, the Lithuanian press and television participate in their marginalization”. Further he adds on saying that the media generally plays insufficient attention to the problems encountered by ethnic and sexual minorities and
one can hardly hear terms gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender in the Lithuanian media. They are almost “invisible” in the mainstream media.

Sexual minorities are again another minority group who are looked downed upon in the society and in the media as well. Gross (1989) in his study explains that many minority groups find themselves “out of the mainstream” and “share a common fate of relative invisibility and demeaning stereotypes”. He further says that minority groups do receive attention in the media, but they are often just a reflection of all the “biases and interests of those elites who define the public agenda”. He argues that corporate media culture defines and frames sexuality in ways that marginalize gay and lesbians, and "symbolically annihilate" their lives. Stereotypic depiction of lesbians and gay men as “abnormal, and the suppression of positive or even 'unexceptional' portrayals, serve to maintain and police the boundaries of the moral order”.

2.4 Media and Minorities in India

This is the age of information and technology. The role of media today is very significant and plays a crucial role of projecting images. What they see in the media – print or visual – is widely accepted by the people as true. It is a vehicle for opinion making. Therefore the role of projecting images is very important in the modern democratic society. Unfortunately this does not happen in most of the times with the media. We can find very rarely newspaper taking efforts of doing research on minorities and publishing them in their media with positive and constructive attitude. In India, the English newspapers, though more careful, also often throw caution to the wind while reporting crucial events pertaining to the minorities. The vernacular language papers are (with honourable exceptions) much worse.
They never observe any caution and often display crude prejudice in reporting about the minorities (Engineer, 1999).

Saamana, a Marathi language newspaper, owned by the Shiv Sena, a political party in Maharashtra, India. Asghar criticizes the newspaper by calling it the mouth piece of Shiv Sena and he says it uses highly provocative language against Muslims and Christians. During Mumbai riots, saamana branded the Muslims and pro-Pakistani traitors and wrote several inflammatory editorials against them. In the north, central and western India, the Hindi, Marathi and Gujarathi papers often displayed crude prejudice in their reporting or the stories.(ibid) The newspaper clearly stereotyped minority community and treated them as homogeneous. When cricket matches took between India and Pakistan, the media deified as holy war between Muslims and Hindus and projected out of proportions despite Indian Muslim, Mohammed Azharuddin leading the Indian team (ibid).

The minorities often stereotyped as ‘fanatical’ and ‘fundamentalists’. In a controversial divorce of Shah Bhanu in 1985, the way the Indian media treated the issue, including the secular media, gave an impression that only Muslims mistreat their women and deny them the basic rights. Suddenly, the national press in India became the champion of Muslim women’ rights. In another issue of Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi, particularly, the regional press created the impression that the Hindus should build the temple. The regional media, especially the Hindi media found it ironical that Hindus cannot build in their own country (ibid).

In order to fulfill the election promise made to the Muslims, the congress government constituted a committee called “Prime Ministers’ High-Level Committee on the Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India,” to study the
status of the Muslim community to enable the state to identify areas of intervention. 1

Informally known as the Sachar Committee, named after its Chairperson, Rajendra Sachar, the Committee submitted a report in 2006. Even after the four years of its report submission not even a single move had been taken by the state and this report was largely ignored by the media. One of the reasons on why the media neglected is the report that the national media, which is mostly controlled by upper-caste northern Hindus, followed the suit of its political brethren in the Congress and the BJP in largely ignoring the Sachar Committee Report (Dossani, 2010).

Every newspaper either claims its secular antecedents by soft-peddling Muslim issues or perhaps takes a hardliner stand against the Islamic Fatwas to reclaim their allegiance to Hindutava. In 2009, there was a buzz from both the electronic media and the print media against the fatwa issued for singing national song Vande Matram to the Muslims and the media criticized the non-patriotic stance of Indian Muslims (Ahmed, 2012).

The mainstream media though has paid enough attention on the attention on the political history of Indian Muslims in the forms of movies and TV serials; it paid least coverage on the history and the contemporary social and economic conditions of ‘ordinary’ citizens. On the contrary they were charged with supporting partition of the country. In the 1990s when the Muslims initiated OBC movement for the wellbeing of their community, it could hardly find place in the mainstream media. Demolition of Babri Mosque, Mumbai blast and roits, Gujarat pogrom were the prime concerned of the media (Sikand, 1994).

In an interview with Ajit Sahi, a journalist with the weekly Tehelka, who created a storm with his investigation of cases of scores of innocent Muslims languishing in jails falsely accused by the police of being members of the outlawed Students' Islamic Movement
of India (SIMI) and of being behind a string of bomb blasts and other terror acts across India, on the anti-Muslim bias in the Indian media he says that there are only few Muslims in the so-called ‘mainstream’ media and media is willing to take the Muslims in their organization to give proper representation of their community, thinking that such stories by the minorities would impact the quality or merit. Another reason for the media to be biased towards Muslims is that many of the ‘meritorious’ people in the media have either come out of the universities or have done some media courses in some western institute. They have little idea about the Indian society and have rarely have insider’s connect with the community they report on…. Though they call themselves as liberal and unprejudiced and claim to be objective about minorities, they actually have deep-rooted prejudices about them. These subconscious biases are very much dangerous (Sikand, 2010).

Christians are another religious minority people who are often marginalised in the mainstream media. More often than not, in India Christians come under attack for one reason ‘conversion’. The Christians were also stereotyped and the media projection, particularly in the vernacular media in north and western India. These media wrote as if every Christian in this country involved in conversion, so much so that a section of regional media accused Mother Teresa of conducting conversions forcibly. Media projects as if all conversions are carried ‘coercion’, ‘fraud’, and ‘inducement’. Whatever the politicians talk about the minorities, it is treated as if an established truth by a section of print media. When the Christian institutions and churches were attacked by VHP and Bajrang Dal activits, Gujarat media openly wrote anti-Christians and published hostile news items (Engineer, 1999).
Sikand & Mishra (2010) say that the coverage of the *Sangh Parivar* violence in Orissa by the mainstream media is yet another example of the nature of the Indian press. When Sangh Parivar burnt Christians alive, nuns being raped, priests abducted, humiliated in public and killed, the Indian media did nothing better that it did to the Muslims in Gujarat. On the first day of the violence in Orissa, the leading daily in the country did not find the news worth enough to publish it in the front page. And after 25th of August 2008 violence, the Times reader could hardly find the news of violence except an editorial demanding to put an end to violence against Christians. On the first day of the violence, the leading daily in the country did not find the news worth enough to publish it in the front page.

Though majority of mainstream and prominent newspapers and TV organizations are funded/owned/controlled by Christians and foreign missionaries, they have been reporting and writing in a blatant partisan manner with scant regard for truth and justice for the majority community (Gupta, 2010).

Kuhlin (2012) in his study writes about the way in which violence and harassment against constructed in two of the largest English newspaper – *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* observes that these newspapers do not furnish detailed information of the perpetrators and are often described as belonging to Hindu groups or being Muslims and did not find any articles demanding justice for the victims.

The experience of other minority communities of India is felt by the same way by the Sikh minorities. The mainstream media remained unbiased in showing biased attitude all the minorities in the country. This is evident from what happened with regard to the Khalistan movement. Many of the newspapers wrote that Sikhs were supporting militants and stood for Khalistan.
During the 1980s, there number of communal killings that took place in various places like Moradabad, Meerut, Hashipura, Malliana and Bhagalpur, and especially against the Sikhs in November 1984. During these communal riots, one could clearly notice the open bias on Sikhs in the media, and especially in the regional press. If we look at the way in which the Sikhs, as a minority community, were demonized by the Indian media in 1980’s in the context of the Punjab agitation. The manner in which the writings of the newspaper and their identification of Sikhs with extremism and terrorism was shameful(Varadarajan, 2010).

The creation of negative stereotypes of the Sikhs through various types of media, including films, also works toward to erase their identity in the society. One of the most crucial issues that confront the Sikhs is their culture. “The notable impact of the ‘mainstream’ politics in the country and a strong onslaught of the Indian as well as the foreign media in recent years are working to dilute the Sikh culture” (Gill, 2007). Dabinderjit Singh, spokesperson for the Sikh Secretariat, criticizing the media in www.sikhe.com writes, "The Indian press and authorities are frightened and are doing their level best to ensure that Sikhs do not unite under the Sikh Agenda concept”.

Though the government of India does not mention sexual minorities in the list of minorities, they are still minorities and they are ill-treated both by the society and the media. Popular culture today - comprising organs of Mass media such as the press (regional and national), television and films - does not offer any positive role models for relationships between sexuality minorities. On January 4, 2006 national and regional newspapers reported an incident in which four homosexual men were allegedly caught having sex in public in Lucknow. The police lodged a First Information Report (FIR) charging them with an offence
under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the law that criminalizes homosexual activity in India. The Local media reports reproduced the police version of the incident. The headlines of some of the newspapers reports tell the story of the media coverage around the issue. ‘Four members of International Homosexual Club Held’ screamed the Dainik Jagran (5 January, 2006), ‘Gay Club Running on Net Unearthed—4 Arrested’ read the Times of India (5 January, 2006). Not to be left behind, ‘Cops Bust Gay Racket’ went the Hindustan Times headline (5 January, 2006). But the fact-finding team of the National Campaign for Sexual Rights (NCSR), which investigated the incident, found that the cases against the accused were fabricated by the police and that the police had no witnesses to corroborate their version of events (Rajan, 2007). This is not an isolated example of prejudiced reporting around the sexual minorities in the mainstream media.

2.5 Dalits and the Media in India

India's 4,000 daily newspapers publish in nearly 100 languages, but one voice is largely absent in the press of the world's largest democracy: that of the lower castes, which account for more than 70 percent of the country's 934 million people. Not one daily newspaper has made speaking on their behalf its role. Few daily newspaper reporters come from lower castes, and none of the nation's prominent columnists does. (Washington post, 1996, September 5)

Prasad (2006) places the Indian media in the top ranking of “India’s Hall of Shame”. He says:

There are two reasons why the Indian media is ranked number one in India's Hall of Shame. First, like any profit making enterprise, media also is an industry. Second,
unlike the rest in the Hall of Shame, the morality gowns the Indian media adorns ....

Despite all that, the media remains overwhelmed by caste apartheid.

In 21st century India, Television, Cinema and Newspaper have been extremely inaccessible media for Dalits issues and Dalit Participation (Guru, 2000). Post-independence mainstream media always bypassed the dalits and issues and the Indian media, controlled by caste Hindus, ridiculing the demands and politics of the dalits through cartoons and headlines; the present politics of the dalits through cartoons and headlines (Tirumal, 2004). In 2007, for example when Mayavati Naina Kumari was elected chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India’s largest state, the election coverage by the mainstream press was very poor. Mainstream media coverage on dalit also has helped to construct “The Dalit questions” in negative connotation and portrayed them only as the victims. The international media also showed similar attitude when it comes to reporting dalits. Kanshi Ram, disappointed with the mainstream media started his own media. He was very well aware that the mainstream media’s nature of reports on dalits. He was concerned that stories about dalit atrocities only focused on how many people were killed or injured. There was rarely follow up to illustrate that fact that the perpetrators always got away with the crime (Mehta, 2008).

When K.R. Narayanan, the first Dalit president of India visited France in April 2000, Le Monde described it in its report as “the first untouchable” president of Indian republic. When Dalits, together with tribal, make up nearly 25 percent of the country’s population, the National Human Rights Commission found that the media “provides negligible space to their plight/problems. Beyond reports of major instances of violence, there is a lack of any sustained reporting of their problems and their efforts to include their voices. Instead, these communities mostly receive attention when the discussion is focused on backwardness,
population growth, lack of entrepreneurship and productivity, thereby perpetuating caste-based stereotypes (Tirumal, 2008).

Chander (2011) writes in his blog ‘diplomatic titbits’ that Mass media is one of the important tools in bringing about empowerment and development of the society. But the Dalit community does not possess this tool on its own and have little access to Mass media which is biased reflecting caste based divisions of the society at large. One of the main reason as to why Dalit related news do not find place in the mainstream media is that the coverage it receives is filtered through a bias which is created by the peculiarities of the Indian hegemonic public sphere and bound by it limitations. A significant cause of the bias is that of the composition of the media as most of the journalists and editors are from high-caste background (Mehta, 2008).

Saint (2008) in countercurrent.org websites opines that the main newspapers are still biased and follow self centered polices and they seldom write about issues which are tarnishing the Indian society and the future of India. Furthermore, the mainstream media outrightly ignore dalits real issues.

Indian media seem to waiting for an opportunity to see only Dalits are targeted by upper castes. In July 27th 2012, Mayawathi’s statue was vandalized all over the state. When the incident was taking place the media arrived on time to cover the issue. The media was well aware about happening of the crime is acknowledged by none other than the media itself. The incident took place minutes after the national president of the group, UP Navnirman Sena told the press reporters at a press conference. Cameramen of some TV channels and a few news photographers who attended the press conference apparently had prior knowledge of such plans as they were on the spot the four of the group members
damaging the statues (The Hoot, 2012). Mayawathi was criticized by many media for ruling the state with complete disregard (Mehta, 2008).

Due to the fear of upper caste dominance in the villages, many of the crimes committed on dalits are not reported. Official police statistics averaged the crimes on dalits over the past five years says that 13 dalit women are murdered every week, 5 dalits’ homes or possessions are burnt every week, 3 dalit women are raped every day, 6 dalits are kidnapped or abducted every week, 11 dalits are beaten everyday and a crime is committed against a dalit every 18 minutes (www.superarlaviolencia.org, 2011).

Teltumbde (2010) narrates that what happened in Khairlanji is yet another incident to prove the attitude of mainstream media. Khairlanji is a village of 780 people, about 170 households, 120 km from Nagpur in the Bhandara district of Maharashtra. Bhotmange family was one of the three Dalit families in a village dominated by the OBC’s. In this village on September 29, 2006, Surekha Bhotmange (45), her daughter Priyanka (17) and two sons Roshan (21) as well as Sudhir (23) were brutally killed in a planned attack executed by a group of non Dalit villagers. The members of the family were dragged from their hut, paraded naked, tortured, maimed, sexually assaulted and killed. They were taken in a cart around the village and their bodies thrown in different parts of the village. Bhaiyalal, the head of the Bhotmange family, had witnessed the entire incident and escaped to tell the tale to a typically indifferent police. It was only when the mutilated bodies were found the next day that a formal report of the crime was recorded. The news of this massacre did not appear in the mainstream media in any significant fashion. Media started to give coverage to this issue only when violence erupted demanding justice for the victims. And it took a full month before the national media picked up the story and that too in a marginal
way ‘yes, this too happened’. When Jessica Lall and Priyadarshani Mattoo murder case was closed owing to poor witnesses, the Delhi-based electronic media, took a huge campaign and catalysed a powerful movement of protest against a corrupt police and succeeded in reopening the case, thus sending the culprit behind the bar. But the same media did little for Surekha and Priyanka Bhotmage of Khairlanji.

Mainstream portrayal of dalits in negative light has been criticized by dalit activists across the state. When dalits started protests in the form of statewide rallies, the police unleashed terror. Again media did not give the true picture. Instead it started highlighting only the ‘nuisance’ caused by the agitating dalits. When Deputy chief minister and home minister alleged that Naxalites behind the agitation, the media too sang in tune with them and sought to establish connection between dalits and Naxelites.

The anniversary of Ambedkar is observed typically in Mumbai in which millions of people would walk hundreds of miles, braving hardship and hunger. The event is known for the highly disciplined crowd who visit the consecrated ground, the Chaitya Bhhomi, in Babasaheb’s memory. In 2008, soon after the post Khairlanji incidents, the fiftieth anniversary of Ambedkar was observed. The Maharashtra government anticipated further violence on that day. Though nothing happened on that day, fear of a violent dalit mob was fueled by news media. The media predicted a siege of the city, warning that Mumbai residents could be potential victims of unruliness and random acts of violence (Rao, 2009). Mumbai’s Daily News & Analysis ran a story headlined, “Residents line on Razors’s edge” (December 5, 2006) Talking about the nature of Indian media the Keith Hebden in his book *Dalits theology and Christian Anarchism* says that the State and the media are becoming
more powerful and less accountable and Dalits are still excluded from the mainstream media.

Ambedkar, too, suffered a similar treatment from the nationalist media of his time. He criticizes:

The Press in India is an accomplice of the Congress, and believes in the dogma that the Congress is never wrong and acts on the principle of not giving any publicity to any news which is inconsistent with the Congress prestige or the Congress ideology. To the foreigner the Press is the principal medium of information about Indian political affairs. The cry of the Indian Press being what it is, there is therefore no wonder if the people in England and America know one thing and only one thing, namely, that the Congress is the only representative body in India including even the Untouchables.

The Untouchables have no Press. The Congress Press is closed to them and is determined not to give them the slightest publicity. They cannot have their own Press and for obvious reasons. No paper can survive without advertisement revenue. Advertisement revenue can come only from business and in India all business, both high and small in attached to the Congress and will not favour any non-Congress organization. The staff of the Associated Press in India, which is the main news distributing agency in India, is entirely drawn from the Madras Brahmins—indeed the whole of the Press in India is in their hands and they, for well-known reasons, are entirely pro-Congress and will not allow any news hostile to the Congress to get publicity. These are reasons beyond the control of the Untouchables” (Ambedkar, 1945).
Dr. Ambedkar (1943) in his writing on *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of Untouchables* says:

The Hindus have been opposing the political demands of the Untouchables with the tenacity of a bulldog and the perversity of a renegade. The Press is theirs and they make a systematic attempt to ignore the Untouchables. When they fail to ignore them they buy their leaders; and where they find a leader not open to purchase they systematically abuse him, misrepresent him, blackmail him, and do everything possible that lies in their power to suppress him and silence him: Any such leader who is determined to fight for the cause of the Untouchables he and his followers are condemned as anti-National.

When Ambedkar argued for a separate nation for Schedule Castes as that of Muslims, he received severe criticism from various media. His criticism of the Congress also seemed unacceptable. An editorial in the *National Herald* described his speech as a cynical outburst lacking wisdom and foresight. The editorial in *Vartman* described his speech as ‘reactionary and against the ideals of Indian nationalism. When he joined the cabinet the editorial presented him with two choices: either submit to nationalism or quit the cabinet (Anand, 2005).

Prasad (2001) in his write up says that the Indian media lays more importance and relevance when there is something takes place in Jammu & Kashmir- be it terrorist attack or Pakistan and Indian ministers’ meet for the negotiation of peace. He says “The number of Dalits killed in caste violence in India may not be less than the number of people killed in the Valley. But has the Indian media ever paid similar attention to the question of internal peace, where over 20 crore Dalits, many times more than the combined population of J&K,
are subjected to brutal violence, segregation, humiliation, exclusion and discrimination? Has the Varna media given the same attention to the forth coming UN-sponsored Durban Conference on race-based discrimination, from where the "caste" clause was omitted because of opposition from the Indian Government?

Maxine Loynd in the book *politics without television* edited by Nalin Mehta writes about why *Bhahujan Samaj Party* (BSP) head Mayawathi do not maintain good relationship with the mainstream media for several reasons. One of the reasons why the Party does not engage with the mainstream media is that the coverage it receives is filtered through bias which is created by the peculiarities of the Indian Hegemonic public sphere and bound by its limitations. Caste composition found in the mainstream media a significant cause for this bias attitude to Dalits. Mostly, all the journalists and editors come from a high-caste background. This fact, combined with the caste and socioeconomic background of the audience that satellite television, in particular, and, many newspapers have, means that mainstream media in UP, both English and Hindi, represent a hegemonic public sphere which articulates an understanding of Indian society that is generally not shared by Dalits (Loynd, 2006).

Anand’s article, “Covering caste: visible Dalit, invisible Brahmin” in the book *Practicing Journalism Values, Constraints, Implication* edited by Nalini Rajan is an important literature regarding media coverage of Dalits. This article examines the connections between the absence of Dalits in the print media and the structure and nature of ‘coverage of caste issues’ by such exclusionist media.

Observing the attitude of the press towards Ambedkar in the article Anand (2005) says that Ambedkar wanted to a separate nation for dalits as much as the Muslims. But the
Ambedkarite point of view in the mainstream ‘nationalist’ press is epitomized by an editorial in *the Hindu* following the Poona pact, which shockingly did not make a single reference to Ambedkar, but praised on Gandhi and his struggle. Such attitude of wishing away caste realities resurfaces even today in what is regarded as India’s most ‘progressive’ English language newspaper, which in its commemorative 125 year anniversary issue (13, September 2003) did not discuss Ambedkar once, used his picture nowhere, but issues an entire special supplement devoted to M.K. Gandhi.

On 30th August 2006, in an open letter to Rajdeep Sardesai, Editor-in-Chief, CNN-IBN and IBN 7, Ravikiran Shinde, a professional from USA points out the treatment dalits receive today. He points out specifically about two incidents where media failed utterly in reporting in the mainstream media. The first incident talks about is the Golden Jubilee of conversion to Buddhism at Nagpur. On this day as many as 20, 00,000 people gathered from across the world to mark the 50th year of conversion to Buddhism. He asks, “How many white collar Journalists holding Handy Cams from the leading electronic media turn up, including your own?” further he asks, “Hindu festivals like Ganesh festival or Kumbh Mela gets not only full coverage by the Media but discussions and special features running for hours” but the media ignore such event just because it belongs to Dalits. Another incident he talks about is the Khirlanji massacre. He tells, “News medium is as responsible for these inhuman crimes as the Kheranjali oppressors by just being selective and dishonest”. He concludes, “Awake the people on the gruesome caste realities in India. Telecast a half an hour program dedicated specially to Dalit atrocities every week” (Shinde, 2006). Shamefully, what Ambedkar said in 1945 remains true till date (Telumbe et al., 2010).
Ratnamala (2009) in her doctoral research on “the coverage of Dalit participation in politics in Tamilnadu by the Tamil Press” finds that Dalit politics is not at all given its due prominence by the Tamil Press and the Dalit leaders were never consulted for their opinions. Furthermore, Dalit political participation is not considered as news value. She observes:

The findings reveal that the extent of news coverage in terms of space and frequency is very low. The news concerning the Dalits which are normally covered is about crime and violence against the Dalits. The types of news which are not being covered include untouchability, PCR, manual scavenging, education and human rights violations. The data show that the Dalit news seldom appears in front page. Dalit news are often given less prominence by burying them in the inside pages of the Tamil dailies. The vocabulary and lexical choice in the text of the news being covered about Dalits are evidence for bias.

In a controversy of Ashis Nandy’s comments at the Jaipur Literary Festival against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, K Satyanarayana, Dalit scholar, activist and associate professor in the Department of Cultural Studies, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad says in his interview to the Business Standard that Dalits have been criticised, Dalits have been stereotyped and Dalits are at the receiving end of many things. They have not even been able to reply in a strong manner to the campaign. We don’t have many people to write, you don’t have the media to voice their concerns (Chakkiliyan, 2013).

2.6 Absence of Dalits in the Indian Media

Shinde (2005) in his book Dalits and Human Rights: Dalits: security and rights implication observes that Dalits community had a rich culture of their own in the history. Dalits expressed their identity through folk arts and classic arts in oral and written forms.
But these rich cultural treasures were stolen from them by the Brahmins and upper caste oppressors. The manipulation of culture to dehumanize has continued to exist even till today. If we look at those who are at the realm of communications media in India will prove that manipulation of culture continues and the Brahmins and upper class dominate today. By making use of the electronic media and print media, the upper caste has continued to preserve their dominance over the so-called low caste people.

In 1996, in New Delhi, Kanshi Ram slapped a TV journalist and BSP workers assaulted other members of the media. Copper, (2006) an African-American then the Washington Times correspondent in New Delhi was shocked by the manner in which the Indian media had reported the happenings at Kanshi Ram’s residence. Cooper, a witness, wondered: Is there no one to report the Dalit side of the story? He then asked a senior journalist B.N. Uniyal, among others, if there were no Dalits in the capital’s media. Cooper went on to write an article in Washington Times about the absence of Dalits in the Indian print media. Uniyal also searched for Dalit journalists and even published an article about his vain search in The Pioneer (Anand, 2006). Unniyal (1996) writes:

Suddenly, I realized that in all the 30 years I had worked as a journalist I had never met a fellow journalist who was a Dalit; no, not one. And, worse still was the thought that during all these years it had never occurred to me that there was something so seriously amiss in the profession, something which I should have noticed as a journalist. In all these years I have travelled through almost every district of the country in the company of numerous journalists and met hundreds of others in different cities and towns, and yet I did not remember having met any Dalit journalist.

58
Cooper (2006) also tried to find a Dalit media person in New Delhi. He wrote about his failure to do so in his article in *Washington Post Foreign Service*:

India's 4,000 daily newspapers publish in nearly 100 languages, but one voice is largely absent in the press of the world's largest democracy: that of the lower castes, which account for more than 70 percent of the country's 934 million people. Not one daily newspaper has made speaking on their behalf its role. Few daily newspaper reporters come from lower castes, and none of the nation's prominent columnists does.” Before "pundit" came to mean a political commentator, it was the Sanskrit word for a learned Brahman, and today those educated members of the upper castes predominate on the staffs of major Indian newspapers. The caste composition of the nation's newsrooms resembles the racial profile of American dailies before the Kerner Commission report three decades ago spurred efforts to recruit and train African Americans and other minorities for journalism careers.

Followed by the article on the findings of ‘no Dalit journalist in the media’, led to another research. Findings of the research by two Dalit intellectuals Chandra Bhan Prasad and Sheoraj Singh Bechain, led to the submission of memorandum/ pamphlet *End Apartheid from Indian Media: Democratize Nation’s Opinion* to the Editor’s Guild and the Press Council in 1998 demanding that the US experience of affirmative action and diversity policy be used as an example and targets be set for Dalit representation in the Indian newsrooms by the year 2005. The questions that were put forth were - why are Dalits nearly completely absent from the Indian media? What efforts you have done to attract Dalits in journalism if you thought Dalits themselves are not keen in this profession? What efforts have you made to stop discrimination against Dalits? Further in the article Prasad writes:
For whatever reasons, media tends to stereotype Dalits—often with negative connotation. For instance, if an individual Dalit made a mistake in public life, the impression goes that ‘they are like that’. The whole community gets stigmatized. But, when a Dalit outshines in public life, the impression goes that ‘he/she is an exceptional Dalit (Prasad, 2005).

Robin Jeffery (2003) Political analyst and Professor, having studying Indian-language newspapers, including twenty weeks of travel in which he stayed in twenty towns, visited dozens of newspaper and interviewed more than 250 people, he did not even find single journalist working in the mainstream media. He observes:

Almost none worked in the daily newspapers as reporters or subeditors. There were no Dalit editors and no Dalit-run dailies. Dalit periodicals where they existed were fringe publications, often with a literary emphasis and with limited influence beyond the circle that produced them.

Further Robin Jeffery adds:

The fact that no Dalits men or women worked in even minor editorial jobs on Indian-language dailies meant that reality of the lives of Dalits was neglected. And the fact that no sizeable daily in India was owned or edited by Dalits meant that stories about them were unlikely to receive the constant, sympathetic coverage of stories about, for example, the urban, consuming middle class.

This observation similar to that of Ambedkar comes after five decades not from a Dalit but from a foreigner (Tirumal, 2011).
Table: 2.1

Community-wise Media Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Community Group</th>
<th>% Share in Indian Population</th>
<th>% Share in Key Media Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Upper castes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediary Upper castes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu OBC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled castes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled tribes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Census, 2001 and National Election Study by CSDS

The table 2.1 explains clearly the nature of the India’s national media. This survey reveals that top echelons of media establishments are dominated by "Hindu upper caste men". The survey, which tracked the social profile of 315 senior journalists in 37 English and Hindi dailies, indicated the lack of social diversity found in the media. It is very obvious that Dalits and Adivasis are conspicuous by their presence among the decision makers. Not even a single of the 315 key media personnel belong to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Further, the survey divulges that the Hindu upper caste are about 8 % of India's population but among the key decision makers of the national media their share is as high as 71 %. The proportion of OBCs is abysmally low among the key decision makers in the national media: they are only 4 % compared to their population of around 43% in the country (Rana, 2008). Shukla, Lucknow correspondent of The Hindu, very emphatically says there is no question of any kind of employment discrimination, because: "An educated
Dalit prefers his reserved job in a government office rather than a hard life as an underpaid stringer”. But this statement is completely untrue and against Dalits. This statement only shows how much he is biased towards Dalits. There are instances where Dalits were denied to work in the Indian media.

Dewan, a Doordarshan reporter who is Dalit by caste, knows two cases off hand. He remembers one Yogendra Singh who committed suicide because no paper would give him a job, and how Doordarshan would not even take one Dharmendra Singh as a free apprentice. The latter, an alumus of IIMC (Indian Institute of Mass Communications, Delhi), had to forgo the electronic media and work with Rashtriya Sahara in Noida (Vij, 2004).

In another incident, Balasubramaniam (2011) in his article “Dalits and a Lack of Diversity in the Newsroom,” narrates his personal experience with one of the leading Tamil newspapers, where he was not offered a job after coming to know he is a Dalit.

Varadarajan (2006) in his article on “Caste matters in the Indian media” writes, “If television and newspaper coverage of the anti-reservation agitation was indulgent and one-sided, the lack of diversity in the newsroom is surely a major culprit”. He recommends, “India's media houses should look upon the entry of Dalit, Tribal, OBC, and Muslim journalists as an opportunity to broadcast their journalism and make it more professional and authentic.” Dalit stories not being given space in the news channels and newspapers he writes, “There are a million stories out there waiting to be told. If only we allow the storytellers to do the telling”.

According to the media report Asia media barometer (2009), Dalits get coverage only when there is a big issue involving them. These stories are labeled as ‘down market’ by the editors as well as publishers. That makes the coverage consumer-driven and publishers
often tell the journalists what their focus areas are. Dalits only make news when an FIR is registered against them. Robin Jeffery (2001) opines that newspapers were not interested in Dalit stories unless they involved spectacular violence or 'positive discrimination' - 'reservation,' as it is known in India.

Delivering a speech on the exclusion of dalits in the India Robin Jeffery observed that the situation existed a few decades ago continue to exit even now. He said, “Nothing had changed by the time I published India's Newspaper Revolution in 2000. Nothing had changed by 2006 when a survey on the 10th anniversary of the Cooper - Uniyal inquiry found not a single SC or ST among more than 300 media decision-makers”. He reminded his audience that stories from the lives of close to 25 percent of Indians (schedule castes and scheduled tribe) are unlikely to known – much less broadcast or written about because of caste composition in the newsroom” (Jeffery, 2012). Thus, the absence of representation of almost a quarter of the population means that the community is accustomed to having others speak on their behalf. As the American Society of Newspaper Editors has reported, racial and ethnic minorities make up less than 13 percent of newsroom employees. Minority ownership of television stations hovers around 3 percent, while radio station ownership is at 7 percent, despite the fact that the minority population of the U.S. is roughly 28 percent (Smith, 2011). It is pathetic to note that in India, schedule castes and scheduled tribe who form more than quarter of the population, do not even form one percent in the media room.

*St Louis American* is an African-American weekly. It has emerged as the leading voice of the African-American community of St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first issues of *St Louis American* appeared in 1928. Now this paper has grown leaps and bounds
and has attracted a large number of readers. The St. Louis American is the third largest weekly newspaper on any type, in the entire state of Missouri. The *St. Louis American* now reaches an impressive 40-45% of black households in the St. Louis metropolitan area. This paper is commercially successful as well. Again *Ebony* and *Essence* are African-American magazines which cater the African-American community in USA. So Robin Jeffery questions, “If there are similarities between the plight of African-Americans in the past (and present) and Dalits today, then why are there no Dalit-oriented media voices like *Ebony* or *Essence* magazines or the old *St Louis American* or *Chicago Defender*?” (Jeffery, 2012).

A recent study conducted by the website *the hoot* (2013) says that Dalit journalists do believe in the caste-based discrimination and antagonism against them is pervasive in the mainstream media, both print and electronic. The study says that this phenomenon is more prevalent in regional media than English. Further *the hoot* study suggests the number of Dalits in the mainstream media has grown over the last two decades, though still nowhere in proportion to their countrywide population of 15 percent; and mostly of the Dalits working in the media are from the lower hierarchy (Ashraf, 2013).

2.7 Media Owned by Dalits

Tirumal (2011) in his paper on “*India’s Dalits search for a democratic opening in the digital divide*” rightly points out, “lacking access to mainstream media over the decades, Dalits have developed their own severely limited media and practices with which to constitute their social identities”. The evolution of print media further effectuated the articulation of Dalit voices of dissent, along with the popularization of a different framework and a new analysis to understand the process of history. Print media was utilized by the Dalits to challenge the Brahminical hegemonic order; they further used it to counter the
value framework erected by the dominant power groups. In other words, the print media was being utilized by this section to subvert the ideological and cultural structure persisting since ancient times. It helped in injecting new confidence and enthusiasm and enabling greater mobilizational power. Further, the print medium gave cultural self-expression to such groups through the efforts of the organic intellectuals of the community.

Ever since the emergence of print as a medium of mass communication, it has always been used as a potent tool for sensitizing the Dalit population as it helped to transmit information to the literate section of the common Dalit population. This medium has been used by the Dalits and other marginalised communities of India. It was used to subvert the dominant narratives of Indian society that had kept them marginalised and also to help in political mobilization. Another reason which prompted the Dalits to start writing is the suppression and oppression of their community members and lack of awareness about their tradition and culture (Narayan, 2006).

In any movement, magazines and journals have played significant role in Dalit writing, although some have had a very short life. Magazines and journals such as Prabuddha Bharat, Asmitadarsha, Magova, Amhi, Satyakatha and Vidroha have been vital to the publication and dissemination of Dalit writing among Maharashtrian readers. Asmitadarsha is still widely distributed and read by Maharashtrians. Maitarani should be mentioned as a new venture by Dalit and Buddhist women who started their quarterly publication dedicated to Phule and Ambedkar, celebrating Ambedkar’s birth centenary
Table 2.2  
*Important Dalit newspapers and magazine*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Year of Commencement</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Achhut</em> (newspaper)</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Swami Achhutananda</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Adi Hindu</em> (newspaper)</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Swami Achhutananda</td>
<td>Kanpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Samata</em> (weekly magazine)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Hari Prasad Tamta</td>
<td>Almora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parivartan</em> (magazine)</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Swami Ajudyanath Dandi</td>
<td>Aligarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zamin Ke Tare</em> (magazine)</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Bulandshahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shoshit Pukar</em> (Newspaper)</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Sewaran Mahashaya</td>
<td>Aligarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Samta Shakti</em> (weekly newspaper)</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Mohandas Naimisharary</td>
<td>Meerut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nirnayak Bheem</em> (monthly magazine)</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Dr. Kawaldhari</td>
<td>Kanpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lok Chinta</em> (weekly newspaper)</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>D.R.S Azad</td>
<td>Bulandshahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bahujan Adhikar</em> (fortnightly magazine)</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Mohandas Naimisharay</td>
<td>Meerut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bheem Bhumi</em> (weekly newspaper)</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>R.K. Goutam</td>
<td>Bulandshahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pragya Sahitya</em> (magazine)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>O.P. Valmiki</td>
<td>Farookhabad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1990-91. The Downtrodden India: Journal of Dalit and Bahujan Studies published at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, was an attempt to initiate dalit scholars and their writing across regions and countries. Its first volume was published in 1994.

The Dalit movement started in Maharashtra around 1877 through the efforts of Jyotiba Phule, Gopal Baba Balankar and Ambedkar. And from the very beginning,
publication and propaganda received top priority. Phule started a Dalit newspaper called *Deenbandhu* on 1st January 1877, which subsequently, proved to be quite influential. Between 1910 and 1930 there were nearly 50 newspapers published by Dalits all over Maharashtra of which Bital Vidhwansham, Son Vanshiya Mitra, Nirashrit, Hind, Nagrik etc., are well-known examples. Dr. Ambedkar himself edited important Dalit newspapers like *Janata* and *Mooknayak*. In the Hindi region, Swami Acchutananda was the first to publish a Hindi newspaper called *Achhut* in 1917. In 1928 he launched another newspaper called *Adi Hindu Mahasabha*. In 1934, a Hindi weekly newspaper called *Samata* was launched from Almora by Munshi Hariprasad Tamta.

Various newspapers were started for Dalit upliftment during pre- independence and post-independence era. Following are the some of the newspapers and magazines started in various parts of north India.

In Tamilnadu, Rettimalai Srinivasan started the magazine *Parayan*. It was started as monthly with four pages for 2 annas. It is noteworthy to say that four hundred copies of the first issue of *Parayan* were sold out in just two days, bearing testimony to the literacy rate among the untouchables in Madras city. The first edition’s sale was five times higher than that of the *Hindu’s* which printed only 80 copies with 10 times investment (Rajan, 2007).

On 19 June 1907 Iyothee Thass Pandithar launched a weekly, *Oru Paisa Tamilan*, from Royapettah, Chennai. It was printed at the Buddhist Press of Adimoolam, a Buddhist. Iyothee Thass Pandit was the pioneer of Dalit media in Tamil Nadu. Later, the name was changed into Tamilan. After his death, his son A.Pattabiraman ran this magazine till 1915. Pandit G. Appadorai ran this magazine from 1926 to 1934 at Neyveli.

In 1918, a magazine called *Valikattuvone* was published from Nagapattinam. The front page was bilingual and the flag contained ‘Valikattuvone, The Guide and Organ of the South Indian oppressed classes Union’. The editor of this magazine was S.A.S. Thangamuthu. This bilingual magazine was published by the South Indian oppressed classes union. Only three of the issues were available in British Archives. The content illustrated the emergence of political attitude even in the beginning of 20th century. The magazine named *Samathuvam* which was assumed to be published from 1945 was a weekly. P.Muthusamy is the editor of this weekly magazine (Rathnamala, 2009).

*Dalit Murasu* is another Dalit magazine Launched in 1997 by Punitha Pandian. The objective of the magazine was “to give voice to the people, who could not find adequate space in the mainstream media.” This is probably the longest surviving Dalit magazine after *Oru Paisa Taman* run by Pundit Iyothee Thass. Unfortunately, this magazine is reeling under financial crisis and it is on the verge of extinction. It was sustained by regular subscription and the magazine sold around 10,000 copies (*The Hindu* 15 October, 2012).
2.8 Alternative Media

The terminology ‘alternative media’ has been researched by different scholars for decades and it is evident from the proliferation of its scholarly works (Haas, 2004). Owing to the fact that the mainstream media is in hands of ruling party, voices of the other civil society, opposition parties and other pro-democracy movements are suppressed and restricted to access the public sphere. So, these voices are increasingly turning to the alternative communicative spaces (Ndlela, 2009).

Alternative media is generally considered to be a media that is not under the control of a business operation or syndicate, or a government agency. This form of media may involve several traditional outlets such as newspapers and magazines, or radio, television, and movies. Alternative media may also include the new technology like web sites, e-books and e-magazines, streamed audio and video, or other media outlets that are found online (ibid).

Alternative media is used here to denote any media which fall outside the formal corporate mainstream media, and for media to be considered "alternative," they must embody the Gramscian notion of the counter-hegemonic. Alternative media can be expressed in different forms, both printed and electronic, creative writing, art, music, and video( ibid). In the words of Park (2002), the term “alternative” means a continuous movement to counter mainstream and existing systems across politics, culture, and society.

James Hamilton who has contributed enormously to the field of communication argues that alternative media as “…maximizing audiences by appealing to safe, conventional formulas, and alternative media foregoing the comfortable, depoliticizing formulas to advocate programs of social change”. It would not be easy to define alternative
media because they in general employ unique news value, news formats, and organizations. Although many researchers have used the term “alternative media”, there is not yet an agreement on its definition (*ibid*).

The concept of alternative media emerged as a response to the problems posed by a profit-driven media industry in which only a few corporations decided on what type media content to produced, which topic will be discussed, which form of expression will be seen/heard, and whose voice will be intimately silenced (Furness, 2007).

The concept of alternative media has been evolving for more than a couple of decades. The potential or the need for having a media which is community oriented was insisted by many communication scholars. The notion of alternative media was spoken and written during the domination of the media. For example Brecht (1983) envisaged the democratic potential of radio broadcasting and pointed out the need for having two-way communication.

Brecht (1983) says, ‘Radio should be converted from a distribution system to a communication system…. it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak, not of isolating him but of connecting him. This means that radio would have to give up being a purveyor and organise the listener as purveyor’. Thus, Brecht pronounced that the broadcasting system can be utilized effectively to showcase various cultural forms.

Another scholar Benjamin recognized motion picture film production as a political tool having the potential to effectively mobilize people. He had an optimistic attitude toward the emancipatory potential of popular art and technological innovation. He says, “the detachment of the reproduced object from the domain of tradition, and then the reactivation
of the object reproduced in the particular terms of each receiver’s situation’ (Vatikiotis, 2005).

Enzensberger also purposed a media that can that will emancipate the people. Further, he characterized the emancipator media where ‘interactivity is initiated between audience and creators, involves collective production and very much has concern about the ordinary needs of the people in their day-to-day life’ (Atton, 2000). In 1976, Enzensberger stressed about the emancipatory use of media – decentralised, linking many to many, fostering interactivity, collectively produced and actively used, and promoting collective mobilization (ibid).

Vatikiotis (2005) says that McQuail, based on the conception of emancipatory use of the media, proposed a new normative theory called ‘democratic participant theory’ In this context, the democratic-participant theory points out the failure of the Mass media to meet the needs that arise from the daily experience of citizens, to offer space to individual and minority expressions. Overall, the theory rejects both the centralism and bureaucratisation of public broadcasting (‘elitist’, ‘paternalist’) and the commercialisation and monopolization of privately owned media (‘professionalized’, ‘monolithic’) that prevent media systems from assisting ‘in the long process of social improvement and democratic change’.

In 1970 when a general meeting was convened by UNESCO, it addressed the issue of the constitution of alternatives to mass communication and pointed out the need for horizontal communication. Accordingly, the discussion laid emphasis on the need for people and communities who had traditionally been excluded from the production and distribution of media messages to gain access in electronic media.
Howley (2010) explains that in the past, many attempts were made to theorize alternative media, the researcher termed the concept in various ways: radical media (Downing, 1984), alternative media (Atton, 2002), citizens’ media (Rodriguez, 2001), underground press (Glessing, 1970), dissident press (Kessler, 1984; Streitmatter, 2001), community media (Halleck, 2003), indymedia journalism (Platon & Deuze, 2003), grassroots media (Traber, 1985) and public journalism (Merrit, 1995; Rosen, 1996). As seen from the above terms, each medium has its unique characteristics. For instance, community media was called for open access and participation of community members (Atton, 2002). Grassroots media focus on alternative news values represented in the gatherings of ordinary people (Atton, 2002). The dissident press seeks social changes by voicing the interests of social minorities (Streitmatter, 2001). The underground press attempts to establish a counterculture that estranges from the mainstream America (Lewes, 2000). Indymedia reshapes the relationship between the readers and news production (Platon & Deuze, 2003). The internet, through alternative media such as blogs, chat rooms, twitter and social-net working sites, political movement (Kenix, 2000).

In the environment where a few major newspapers and television networks dominate the media market, Internet portals allow their users to exchange their own opinions and to produce their own news information. Also, Internet users can adopt news and untraditional values, often introducing unusual topics and their own daily experiences (Atton, 2002).

2.9 Internet as an Alternative Media

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

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

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

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

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

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

74
2.10 Internet and the Voice of the Marginalized

The Internet is a medium that enables everyone to have their say; everyone with access to a computer and an Internet connection. The birth of the internet gave rise to much-hyped claims that it facilitated democratic participation like never before. Gerhards and Schafer (2009) in their article postulate that normative theorists of the public sphere, such as Jürgen Habermas, have been very critical of the ‘old’ Mass media, which were seen as unable to promote free and plural societal communication. The advent of the internet, in contrast, gave rise to hopes that it would make previously marginalized actors and arguments more visible to a broader public.

Ethnic minorities are hardly heard in the traditional media and they struggle to be heard in it. This situation is due the power of the dominant discourse which purposely ignores marginal voices. Now, with the emergence of internet, marginalized groups can become powerful by creating a web page, or posting a message on a discussion board, and the ability “to speak” can be more important than to be “heard” (Mitra, 2004). As is normally the case in authoritarian environments, the internet in Zimbabwe thus became the platform through which most of these subaltern or anti-state discourses are articulated and exerted (Moyo, 2011).

As we witness rapid proliferation and availability of internet, many marginal groups are creating their presence of in cyberspace. This phenomenon of ‘presence’ which the internet is producing is providing a unique forum for the dispossessed to find a voice in the public sphere that might have been otherwise denied to them in the ‘real world’ (Mitra, 2004).
Mikula (2003) opines, “Regardless, internet has proved a powerful tool of empowerment for minority nationalities with access to the web since it represents a *terra nullius* where readily accessible “virtual archives” of alternative histories can be constructed and maintained”. Rusciano (2001) points out that the internet endows marginalized groups “the ability to tell one’s story” and paves way for a plural positioning in which many different voices, especially the marginalized and repressed, can express themselves.

Explaining the situation of the post-civil right movement in America, Brown (2011) in his website writes, “The internet has provided a welcomed platform for minority viewpoints and opinions that had all but fallen silent after the civil rights movement”. He further says that internet gives voice to stories and feature issues that might otherwise be ignored by the other news organizations or given not much more than the occasional glance *(ibid)*.

Internet serves as a medium where marginalized individuals can exercise discursive power, and resist damaging representations. Socially marginalized groups speak to one another as they speak against authority. “ On the Internet, the marginalized can call on the dominant and put the dominant in the difficult position of acknowledging the marginalized, or further distance the dispossessed by ignoring the call” (Mitra, 2001). The Internet also affords marginalized people a place to discuss and debate amongst themselves, which facilitates the process of individual and collective identity (re)construction. “identity is never a finished product, it is dynamic and fluid and constituted in interactions… identity and ethnicity are both co-created in communication, which means that ethnic identity is constantly re-created, it is flexible and evolving rather than static and fixed” (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998).
Mitra (1997) argues that online spaces provide a sense of “comfort” for immigrants to express themselves in ways that they would not feel comfortable doing in their physical contexts. In that regard, the Internet can serve as a democratic space of dialogue and response with multiple perspectives.

Kwok (1999) has argued that the Internet may enable migrant communities to react, communicate, and mobilize in reaction to global events. Marginalized discourses can be published without having to enter into the traditional hierarchies of power. Diaspora can introduce websites to present marginalized perspectives, but can also create electronic systems to present their culture and ideas to visitors and virtual tourists (Srinivasan & Shilton, 2006). Pyati (2007) quoting Mitra’s findings on the use of internet by immigrants says that the diasporic groups are interested in identifying with those with similar cultural ancestry. Immigrant users of information systems bring these priorities and patterns with them when they enter the Internet.

One of the most noteworthy effects of the development of the Internet is the formation of an arena for marginalized groups to contact one another, exchange and provide access to group-related information, and create a community among people who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream culture (Naughton, 1999). The marginalized peoples are finding collective voices through communicating and networking with others who are engaged in similar causes and concerns and the Internet in its present form provides unprecedented opportunities for collective alternative and marginalized voices to be heard (Kutner, 2010).

Linda Jean Kenix after examining academic and professional literature concerning the Internet comes out with six conceptual categories to describe internet as utopian,
democratic and egalitarian and one of which is - “internet as a space for marginalized voices”.

In an attempt to step outside simple digital divide categories to understand how marginalized members of society incorporate computers and the internet into their daily lives in ways that are meaningful to them Mehra in his article says that the Internet has almost limitless potential to “achieve greater social equity and empowerment and improve everyday life for those on the margins of society” (Mehra et al., 2004). This inclusive utopia could be realized through the enhanced, wide-ranging capacity for discourse on the Internet, which allows for “a more full expression and exchange of experiences” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001). For the first time in the history of mediated technology, those with little political influence could find more equality and greater communicative power online (Schultz, 2000).

It is also reportedly said that internet has given a voice to the most marginalized groups in the same region, who are mostly women and minorities of various kinds, such as religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities as they have always been marginalized from the various levels of discourse, and have been rarely found in mainstream media. With internet, they finally have a place to express themselves (Yamamichi, 2011).

Mitra(2001) in his article demonstrates the importance having voice in the internet by using the examples from South-Asian women. His findings suggest that there is increasing evidence that the group has gained ‘presence’ in the virtual where they present a voice for and about themselves. New technologies like internet are transforming the sense of “silence” by providing expressive space for the traditionally invisible groups to find a new
avenue in which they can voice themselves and make their presence visible and felt by others.

Mehra (2004) contends that the internet has tremendous potential to improve everyday life for those on the margins of society, and to achieve greater social equality and empowerment. He finds that the marginalized members of the society incorporate computers and the internet into their daily life in ways meaningful to them.

Minority Internet users could play any social role they liked and transform themselves into fantasy selves, free of all physical and natural constraints. Meanwhile, the Internet continues to surprise us by creating previously undreamt of opportunities for communication. Internet allows socially isolated or stigmatized individuals to share experiences in relative anonymity, in an apparent safe haven. Newsgroups – lists of individuals with a shared interest – were among the earliest on-line communities and have increasingly served as discursive spaces for marginalized or stigmatized social groups (McKenna & Bargh, 1998).

Sexual minorities who are marginalized by the society owing to their nature searched for an alternative place for their expression and social identity. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community face oppression, marginalization and exclusion because of their social orientation. (Nardi, 1992). Now, the social vacuum of anonymity provided by the internet has contributed to the current position of its popularity among sexual minorities. Findings of the study conducted by Mehra (2004) on how sexual minorities use internet for social change convey that it to promote the participation of LGBT individuals in making a political statement to the heterosexual community about the ‘out’ presence of LGBT individuals, to generate the participation of LGBT individuals in order to provide social and
psychological support to themselves and other closeted members in the community and to provide LGBT members with a place to socialize and bond with other members (Mehra, 2004.)

Kvasny & Hales (2008) in their research paper talk about how internet can be effectively used to enable and advance the interests of people who have historically been marginalized and silenced and to find Black Identity in African Diaspora. According to Mitra (2001) the process of renegotiating an identity is crucial for marginalized groups, such as diasporic Africans, for whom a persistent set of identity narratives has systematically constructed this group as the ‘Other’. The construction of an African diasporic identity that resists these negative portrayals is a painful yet urgent necessity.

In another study on the use of internet Black African women reveals that the Black women use the content and service of internet to meet their needs and goals and are gaining the necessary expertise to participate in creating their own suite of digital tools and information resources (Mehra, 2004).

We find in the western mainstream media continued to have negative distorted images where the African Americans have been portrayed as less educated, from broken homes and possessing lower status jobs than whites (Greenberg & Brand, 1994). Media such as television and film have constantly stereotyped the marginal groups that have produced a common way thinking of the other (Mitra, 2001). Since the popularization of the internet in the early 90s, African Americans have had ways to talk back to these negative stereotypes by using various forms of internet – blogs, videos, editorial websites and social media communities to combat negative image and to create new societal norms for African Americans (Dewalt, 2010). There has never before been as much opportunity for
conversation found in internet, where the marginal not only speak, but can expect a response as well (Mitra, 2001).

Crenshaw (1991) argues in their research paper that internet as a tool for black women to challenge violence against violence. He opines that Black women use internet as a tool for explicitly challenging the dominant and to have their experiences and voices heard. Black women, through the Internet, are challenging the idea that Black women must choose their race over their own protection from gendered violence.

Ramos (2001) writing about the Islamic woman’s self expression via the Internet says that they talk about their children, perfecting their relationship with Allah, the obligation of motherhood and being good women. They also speak about the matawhah (religious police), driving restrictions, and limitations on worship in the mosque etc., on the internet. As Illingworth (2001) and Mitra (2001) explained, the Internet is an effective tool, that can uncover the invisible voice of marginal groups, particularly women. The Internet provides a new social space for those who are marginalized and lack social power in daily life (Wheeler, 2001& Mitra, 2001).

Brouwer (2006) in his findings on the role of internet in giving voice to the Ductch Moroccan girls who are marginalized Muslims tells that internet gives them a chance to express their views as active agents able to make individual choices, without disputing Islam as a belief. He further cites that internet is providing them with a uniquely flexible tool with which to exchange ideas and allow themselves to be “heard” (Brouwer, 2006).
2.11 Blogs and Marginalized Communities

Roth (2004) quotes one of journalists in his article:

Most professional news organizations have become overly cautious about sharing information that isn't provided by official voices in on-the-record contexts. Furthermore, marginalized voices -- the poor, the radical and even everyday people -- are given little if any voice in Mass media news coverage. Blogs offer a chance for these voices and stories to be heard.

Marginalised groups with diverse claims based on recognition include women, ethnic/religious minorities, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) caste, and the socio-economically disadvantaged to mention a few (Daoudi, 2010).

Balit (2004) explaining the potential of Communication technologies that can play a significant role for the marginalized says, “Social movements representing minority and disadvantaged groups make use of new communication networks and information flows to express their concerns, share common interests, and promote social change and action for collective rights”.

Researchers conducted to study the marginalized black bloggers throws light on the participation and presence of black in blogosphere. McKenna and Pole studying the presence of blacks tell that blogosphere is largely dominated by white, well-educated males in their thirties. Blacks comprise 13 percent of the US population (McKenna & Pole 2006).

Two possible explanations were given by the researchers for the meager percent of black bloggers presence in the blogosphere. One reason could be that the minorities might have a smaller presence in the blogosphere because they are late adopters of new
technologies and another reason there may be few black bloggers has to do with discrimination. Blacks may be reluctant to blog, fearing reprisal by whites (ibid).

Pole (2006) conducted another research again in detail on the role of black bloggers in the blogosphere and on how bloggers of color use their medium for purposes related to politics. This was based on the in-depth interview with 20 black bloggers. This was the first of scholarly research examining the role of black bloggers in the blogosphere. His research was based on the hypothesis - Black bloggers will blog about issues related specifically to race, Black bloggers will use their blogs to engage in and to encourage their readers to engage in various forms of political participation that occur both online and offline and Black bloggers will report that they face discrimination by other bloggers.

In another research conducted by Bernardi (2010) attempts to explore the use of blogs by marginalized Saudi women and to see if and how those same issues are comparably articulated by non-governmental organizations, international government organizations, and media outlets. The findings of the research prove that the women blogging community in Saudi Arabia openly discusses women's issues, including issues which challenge religious norms.

Another observation relates to the relationship between 'women’s issues' as seen by international organizations on the one hand and as seen by bloggers and regional NGOs on the other tells that international organizations articulate 'women’s issues' more broadly and generally, in order to be representative of many conditions and situations (Bernardi, 2010).

In Egypt, women bloggers do not have the freedom to write in blogs. Though they agree that the Internet has given them unparalleled freedom to express themselves, female bloggers in Egypt know there may be consequences for what they write. There are criminal
penalties for writing openly even in informal publications like weblogs. Woman blogger Asmaa Ali was arrested whose political blog tafseel.blogspot.com, after having written about the plights of women in Egypt. Her crime was protesting the detention of campaigners who took part in a sit-in supporting greater independence for Egypt’s judiciary. She was kept in prison for just under a month. Eye witnesses say that she was specifically targeted by security personals while they let other go (Otterman, 2007).

Another female bloggers named Aliaa Magda Elmahdy, first posted on her blog “A rebel’s diary,” was viewed by over one million people after it was tweeted with the hash tag nudephotorevolutionary, and Elmahdy’s "Followers" jumped from a few hundred to over 14,000. The incident generated widespread controversy. She drew lots attack over the issue. She even received thousands of threats from individuals, unions and Islamists. Finally she had to go into hiding (Ferber, 2011).

In the thesis on “Women Bloggers in the Arab World”, Ayish points out that more women tend to present themselves in modern contexts rather than traditional ones. The study concludes that by presenting themselves as “engagers” in different issues in society, women bloggers pave the way for other representation of identity dimensions, such as: independence, competence, and gender equality. The study also shows that women discuss different issues that deal with their surroundings through the technique of storytelling. It was also found that blogs written by women receive a lot of audience feedback, which helps in evolving new perspectives for them to pursue. This virtual interaction between the blogger and her readers also proves that women are able, through blogs, to present a new identity and role for themselves (Ayish, 2010).
Varisco (2009) in his research on “Muslims and the media in the blogosphere” contends “Cyberspace is a safe haven for marginalized Muslims. Blogging seems to be especially important for recent converts, particularly those who may not have fellow Muslims nearby. While some older Muslims use blogs to educate or draw attention to past interpretation of doctrinal issues, the trend is for younger Muslims to express their views on multiple subjects, which are not exclusively about religion”.

2.12 Dalit and Internet

India's Information & Technology has been always hailed as a great hope for the country's future development. The IT industry is one of India's fastest-growing sectors, its software analysts have become a prestigious export in themselves and India is a centre for overseas data processing from accounts to customer calls. However, just a small proportion of educated people have access to IT - but the vast majority of Indians, about 70% of the population, still live in villages and the challenge is to make sure they don't get left behind. (BBC, 25th May 2003) According to National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) report on expenditure in 2009-10 only about 0.4% of rural households had access to Internet at home when compared with about 6% of urban population. (iGovernment Bureau, July 5, 2012) Asha Roa in her article argues that information poverty largely belong to the underserved and marginalized individual (Roa, 2011). Thus it is obvious that Dalits who are marginalized in India fall in the category of lacking access to information via internet.

Dalits are not only discriminated and stigmatized in socio-cultural aspect but they are also discriminated in the information and Technology field. Omvedt (2001) speaks of ‘the upper-caste dominance in the professions, business, culture and the world of Information Technology’. Dalits are near invisible at the Indian Institutes of Technology, India’s premier
technological institutions. Pointing out that private sector IT firms in India have been reluctant in adopting affirmative action policies to increase Dalit presence, Omvedt wryly notes that Indian cyberspace seems particularly populated by the Indian elite. ‘If upper caste Brahmans have always seemed to live in a world of philosophy and abstraction’, she argues, ‘the electronic “virtual” realm of IT seems somehow especially appropriate for them’ (Omvedt, 2001). Tirumal consents with Omvedt in this regard and writes that in India the digital technology is confined only to the three upper castes in Hinduism, the Brahmans and two other “twice born”, so-called Aryan castes that compose the national elite” (Tirumal 2011). In an interview in The Times of India with Anoop Kumar, a Dalit social worker from Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, who started Insight, a Dalit student magazine, in 2004 with friends says, “Most of the information on education is available online, but most Dalit students lack access to internet.” (The Times of India, 20 June, 2010) This statement is true and in agreement with what Raja Shekar Vundru says, “Millions of Dalits ‘have very little access’ to the medium of the internet” (Vundru, 2001).

2.13 Dalit’s Presence in Internet

Researchers have conducted only a few studies specifically on Dalits and their access to internet and the digital divide Dalits face in the rural India. A recent report from Internet and mobile Association of India (IAMAI), says that the number of rural internet users has increased from 29 million as of December 2011 to 38 million at the end of June, and is expected to reach 45 million by the end of December this year. This statistics is against the 150 million total users to by the end of December 2012. (Internet and mobile Association of India, September 2012). The census of India 2011 report shows that rural population in India is 68.84% and the urban population is 31.16%. Since the arrival of internet in India till
now, the percent of internet user in rural India always remained low. The report on the usage of rural and urban internet usage make the point crystal clear: digital divide persists in India. Dalit who are mostly residing in villages are succumbed to digital divide.

Tiruamal and Tartakov (2011) in their research paper on “India’s Dalit search for a democratic opening in the digital divide” talk about the existence of significant opportunity that information technology and the internet in particular, available even to Dalits, the most marginalised community of India to take part in the national discourse of civil society and to have discourse among themselves. Further they say:

It is our contention here that the Internet has opened spaces in the walls of the caste system, and so the class system, that Dalits in India and similarly stigmatized classes in other countries, can use to the advantage of those seeking an end to the super-discrimination they presently endure. Through these openings a small but vigorous group of Dalits are using information technologies to transcend barriers of caste in ways not possible before, and thus to take advantage of democratic opportunities that can lead to breaking through caste and the ritual walls to share understandings and interests with each other and from those who have previously been beyond their reach.

Chopra (2006) his study on virtual identity in online Dalit discourse, talks about the technology i.e internet which has enabled the emergence of a new mode of representing collective identity which he calls it as “Global Primordiality”. One of the main reasons as to why the number of Dalits found in online remains very low is the domination of upper caste in the digital technology. (Omvedl, 2001, Chopra, 2006, Tirumal & Tartakov, 2011) Vandru writing about the caste bias in the electronic world narrates an incident where
Chandrasekharan, an expert with computers and integrated product development, was denied to enter into the computer room of Hindustan Aeronauticals Ltd, Bangalore for having walked inside once (Vandru, 2001). “Upper-caste dominance in the profession, business, culture and the world of computer technology.” writes Omvedt. He continues that private sectors in IT firms are reluctant in adopting affirmative action policies to increase dalit presence and Indian cyberspace is populated with Indian elite (Omvedt, 2001). Castells in his book the rise of network society contends that privileged groups in a network society are comprised of a spatial grid of transnational elites whose decisions dictate the flows of different resources (Castells, 2000). Chopra quoting Castells says that in addition to the particularities of the cultural and technological fields in India, the dynamics and mechanics of flows of information on the internet also contribute to the shaping of the mode of global primordiality as a paradigm of representing identity (Chopra, 2006).

Though there exists digital divide among those at the bottom of the class system, there is significant number of individuals, social and transcendental (religious) – of the few thousand mostly, if not exclusively, male Dalits from this population who have acquired access to internet (Tirumal & Tartakov, 2011).

Internet has made possible for the transnational subaltern project, seeking and establishing links with sympathizers, activists, NGOs, transnational organizations as well as the other histories of oppressions – the blacks, especially with the African-Americans (Nayer, 2011).

Tirumal & Tartakov (2011) discuss the potential of internet to Dalits as it makes visible of their plight to “other castes” from dalit point of view as they never could before, while some Dalits have been allowed to see and learn from the ruling classes heretofore
beyond their view. More important, Dalits have found a means of communicating with each other beyond the control of others. Chopra concludes in his article, “Dalit websites stand for a democratization of the production of historical knowledge and the tools of representation.” (Chopra, 2006).

Among other factors such as shelter, economic livelihood, basic education, and unemployment; lack of knowledge in English prevents Dalits to access internet. Only a fraction of this vast socially disenfranchised urban and rural community has little presence in the public sphere. They are composed of almost exclusively of college-educated men with government job. As most of the dalits speak only local language, this small segment of dalits has taken up the English language for the discourse over the internet.

Thus internet creates a platform for the disenfranchised to communicate with the people in the world and to have negotiation with the global capitalist regime. We find Dalit websites though few, have been very powerful in defending the rights of Dalits and articulating the discriminatory practices based on caste. Most of these sites are either run by dalit activists or Dalit organization (Tirumal, 2008).

The issues of Untouchability and atrocities perpetrated on Dalits can be articulated and it can pave way for mobilizing campaign against such heinous acts with the help of internet. In 2003, in a village in Andra Pradesh a Dalit worker (“untouchable”) employee allegedly was beaten by a Brahmin executive of an NGO. When the matter was raised by fellow dalits, he categorically denied the charges saying the dalit was his own bother like. An anti-caste, leftist group KNPS (Kula Nirmoolana Porata Samiti) sent e-mail to all NGOs in Andhra Pradesh propelling the online campaign calling for a public investigation into the incident, belongs to political society. When another meeting was held, the Brahmin
vehemently denied the allegation. Since a campaign was carried out, the NGO reluctantly agrees to face a fact-finding committee of national human rights leaders, which subsequently indicts the executive, demands his apology and seeks reforms within the organization, including the appointing of a Dalit representative on the NGO’s board of directors (Tirumal, 2008).

Tirumal & Tartakov (2011) argues Internet provides an opportunity to dalits to explore with other dalits as to who they are and what they want to become. With those beyond the world of dalits they can explore the actual experience and the reconstruction of the world they share in ways never before possible. Meena Kandaswamy, a Dalit activist and writer writes in her websites:

But, the democracy to speak up and speak out ensured that I was back to blogging again. Big media houses which own the major publications rarely give opportunity to Dalit (ex-untouchable) writers, and there’s an absence of Dalit/anti-caste writers who write in English. The elitist writers want to write the feel-good stuff, India Shining myths, and that’s the work that gets into print. So, I wanted to tap the power and enormous outreach of the internet: how anyone can write and be read/ heard in the virtual space. I was not writing because anyone was commissioning me, I didn’t have to follow other people’s diktats, I could speak my mind. Google and tagging ensure that I can get heard without having my own column in any newspaper. Sometimes it helped me bring some happenings to light—such as the recent inside story of Dalit students being beaten up at a law university in Chennai (the mainstream media merely reported it as a “clash” at first) and so on.
Tirumal (2008) concludes in his paper that Dalit elites with the help of English language and internet are trying to mobilize the dalit population who are disenfranchised in search of jobs within restricted rural geographies or engaged in migration to metropolitan cities. Though the hurdle remains in connecting the whole dispersed dalits, efforts are being taken by activists to make use of information technology in significant ways to communicate with each other and to reach out to the upper caste that have until now been largely if not entirely beyond their sphere of communication.

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

A poll to determine the Greatest Indian after Gandhi was conducted in conjunction with CNN-IBN and History18 Channels with BBC in 2012. People were invited to vote online at thegreatestindian.in or through a missed call for their favourite. In the poll Dr B.R.Ambedkar was voted as the greatest Indian after Gandhi. Citing one of the reasons for Ambedkar’s win Anand of Outlook says that the “victory” for Ambedkar is most likely a result of the presence of a burgeoning internet-savvy, mobile-wielding, dedicated Dalit middle class that is almost invisibly making its presence felt. Still largely kept away from mainstream media, the private sector and our universities—which have undisguised disdain for Ambedkar’s greatest weapon, reservation— “the Dalits, in India and abroad, have fashioned their own websites, mailing lists and blogs such as Round Table Conference, Dalit
& Adivasi Students’ Portal and Savari, a YouTube channel called Dalit Camera, besides scores of Facebook groups. They no longer depend on corporate media that takes one month to report, if at all, the 2006 murders and rapes of Khairlanji; a media that found the lynching of five Dalits in Lakshmipeta, Srikakulam district, in June 2012 banal. It is on the worldwide web that new ways of negotiating citizenship are being forged” (Anand, 2012).

2.14 Summary

Majority of the minorities across the globe undergo the same kind of treatment and sometimes the situation is still worst. Minorities are discriminated and marginalised without being granted with basic rights of a human being. It is deplorable to witness that the media which is supposed to take the mantle of protecting them and which is the custodian of their rights and dignity, found lashing out along with rest of the populace. The review of literature proves this perspective and singles out how the minorities in different parts of the world are treated by the mainstream media. In India too this situation is not an exceptional. It is found that minorities are shunned away and stereotyped by the mainstream media.

In this scenario, the arrival of internet has heaved a sigh of relief to minorities who wanted to express and write to the rest of the world. Internet has made possible to create a network among minorities to gather together and fight for their rights. In other words, internet has been used as an alternative media to speak and respond their issues. The review of literature throws light on how this medium-internet has been widely used as an alternative media by the minorities across the world.

The literature shows how in India, Dalits especially the educated Dalits are beginning to adopt internet to as an alternative media to speak out their trials and
tribulations. The findings of the research too confirm that internet is used moderately as an alternative media by Dalits in India.