
Representation of Dalit in Social Media and Censorship

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Abstract

The relationship between social media and its affect on social marginalization is a relatively unexamined area in new media studies. Our case study of various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in India, examines how historically unfavored Dalits, or “the Untouchables,” are stopped from leveraging digital tools to narrate their oppressive past to the outside world due to the rise of political censorship in Indian Media. In the name of its censorship process, the Indian new media is repressing the voice of Dalit resistance against social privilege and domination by caste Hindus. Through their biased algorithm that is favoring prominent political figures and suspending Dalit users, today’s new media, although accessible to everyone, fails to give the Dalits an equal say. The Prevalence of casteist advertisements, anti-reservation and anti-Ambedkar content puts the representation of The Dalit community at stake. Which can also be traced further to caste-based discrimination and violence today? Our article provides the examination of Dalits and the content about them on social media as a function of A Dalit social movement for equality and justice. But it also focuses on the bias and discrimination faced by them on the same platforms.

Keywords: Caste, Dalit, Reservation, social media, Discrimination, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.

Introduction

Many ideas exist to explain the origins of the Indian caste system. According to religious views, the primal man, Purush, destroyed himself to form a human civilization, and the separate portions of his body created the four different varnas, according to the Rig Veda (Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, Hymn 10.90), an ancient Hindu text. Brahmins came from his head, Kshatriyas came from his hands, Vaishyas came from his thighs, and Shudras came from his feet. (Deshpande, 2010)

It introduced a system of social strata which pre-defined the type of work that a man would perform. As per the work, he/she was assigned the social hierarchy. In the social hierarchy, Brahmanas stood first, followed by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and at the bottom fell the

untouchables or Dalits. This varna system became a symbol of oppression for the Dalit community as they were denied education, a basic social standard and livelihood. This went on and on.

Today we are in 21st century India where even the slightest voice is heard by the international system. Someone as young as Greta Thunberg is heard by the world leaders but in India, it is still felt that the voice of the Dalit community is suppressed under a thick shroud of casteism. Thus, this article tries to study how the dalit community is being represented in the most popular social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. While, new media has provided the platform to express the views of adverse section of people, the new media giants like these social media sites are found at the realm of exploiting the freedom given to people. Twitter 'temporarily suspended' a verified account of a Dalit professor who posted a pro-dalit tweet. Similarly, Facebook which is infamous for its political advertisements is surprisingly using casteist measures to advertise products while Instagrams meme pages were under heavy criticism for posting anti-Ambedkar and anti-reservation posts. This brings forth the debate of censorship on both ends- from the side of social media giants as well as the users. In this tug-of-war of likes, re-tweets, stories, the one at stake is the dalit community.

Hence, in a world of growing interaction between communities, it is necessary to analyze whether the interactions are detrimental for the growth of a nation and its various entities. How far the freedom of speech is actually granted to the Dalits is also a question that is under review.

Review of Literature

Social Media as an Alternative Media for the Dalit Community

Dalit is ranked at the bottom of the Indian societal hierarchy mentioned by Manu in his Manu smriti around 1250 BCE. Although there are numerous identities in India, caste Identity dominates all identity (Judge and BAI, 2008). Among the various caste hierarchy in the Indian societal structure, the Dalits community (204 million) falls in the bottom and are designated as untouchables (Ambedkar, 1925/1989; Pick and Dayaram 2006). Their identity, social space, language, culture as well as their rights is restricted and not given any importance by the privileged upper class. Most of the Dalits have internalized as well as accepted this dominance (Moffat, 1989). Dhyan Singh suggests that social media is trying to give voice to at least half of the dalit population in India and that the coming of new media in India has given them a new platform to express themselves freely to the world. He further expands that the activism in social media by the dalit community is putting the issue of their social identity in question which went unnoticed by the caste Hindus in mass media.

However, censorship is increasingly affecting the way the Dalit community is presenting itself. The case is especially stark with Twitter. Twitter allegedly temporarily disabled the verified account of Dilip Mandal, an academician and very known Journalist in India. Twitter reportedly suspended Mandal's account in March 2019 after he tweeted about a booklet called 'Bahujan Agenda' and posted its details and the author's contact. (Online, 2019). This was seen as the violation of twitter's terms of services. While at the same time, Jay Shah (the son of Union Home Minister and the President of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party, Amit Shah) on Twitter was verified although it had 0 tweets and 27 followers, suggesting no activity in that account (Bureau, 2019)

This brutal censorship has not only happened once but had been a repeated case with people like senior Supreme Court advocate Sanjay Hegde who also found his twitter account disabled after he posted a 1936 photograph of Nazi Germany in which German National August Landmasses is refusing to salute to Nazi leader Adolf Hitle (thehindu, 2020). The casteist nature of an open platform like that of Twitter shows how a democratic space like that of internet can also exploit the fundamental rights of people based upon their caste. Twitter had no response to this which resulted into a campaign #CastiestTwitter, #BrahmanicalTwitter and #TwitterhatesSCSTOBCMuslims.

Therefore, Dhyan Singh's claim that internet has become a space for interaction of the Dalit community becomes problematic especially when their content is highly censored by internet itself. (Singh, 2019) This article, hence tries to juxtapose the other face of internet being a space for self-expression for the Dalit community in India.

S. Venkateswarlu, I. Tarakeswara Rao mention how social networking sites have proven as a virtual meeting space for Dalit peer groups across the world to interact and share their common concerns and philosophical as well as sociological questions against casteist discrimination. (Rao, 2017). They further mention that social media has provided a platform to discuss and debate with a theoretical approach with the backing of relevant data. Social media, as per the aforementioned scholars, has immense potential than the mainstream media in the representation of the Dalit community.

However, the study examines that social media platform have more and more become a platform for abuse, hate speech against the community as well as fake news.

Prospects and Challenges for Dalits in Social Media

With the advent of media taking up new forms every day, internet since its emergence has always been the key to social media platforms, where voices that are lesser expressed and minuscule in the mainstream media, find a place. With a population of more than 200 million, Dalits and their issues, be it economic, social or political have Seldom been represented in the mainstream media. Hence, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as

well as personal blogs give Dalits, particularly the educated a platform to bring up and highlight issues that actually affect their community. Dalit newspapers that were started along the same time with some mainstream newspapers like 'The Hindu' have lost their existence far back due to politics in the media industry that they could not withstand (Kumar,2007)

But all these faces a certain barrier when the use of such platforms is limited only to Dalits who occupy urban spaces. The reason exists cause of the digital divide persistent in the country. More than two-thirds of the population of Dalits live in rural India and the statistics of rural internet users as of December 2020 is 299 million (IMAI 2021). Even then, using these digitally available platforms as opportunities, a small but active group of Dalits are transcending casteist boundaries that existed before and are reaching out to many others who previously had no way to share similar feelings and interests (Tartakov, 2011). However, the indulgence of Dalits in social media is way too little because of the dominance of the upper caste in the digital world. IT firms are quite reluctant in adopting affirmative action policies to increase Dalit presence (Omvedt, 2001). The other factor that stops Dalits to express themselves in social media is the lack of knowledge of proper English since most of them use local language to communicate. Hence, to represent them all, a small proportion of Dalits, particularly, the educated and government employees are connecting with the world by using English as a medium in such platforms. Hugo Gorrige a senior lecturer in Sociology, University of Edinburgh and author of 'Untouchable Citizens: The Dalit Panthers and Democratization of Tamil Nadu writes about the role of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media: *'It is quite common to see an article circulated through Facebook, on blog and websites together with an analysis that highlights the bias within that piece or offers an alternate reading. In that sense Dalit blogs and sites act as a sort of counter-public.'* (Hugo Gorrige). Not to stay behind, YouTube also has certain sites that hosts videos on Dalits. For instance, Dalit Camera is a popular YouTube Channel dedicated to Dalits in India. It has around 78.4K subscribers and is viewed more than 14 million times (Camera, 2021) Vanya Mehta, an independent journalist who reports for BBC says. 'Dalit Camera is an attempt at a historical documentation of the realities of life in India "through the eyes of the untouchable'. (Vanya,2014).

There have been constant challenges faced by Dalit communities on social media handles, particularly Twitter which seems to come up with its own caste discrimination systems. Twitter is recently found to deliberately exclude verified accounts belonging to people from Dalit communities or those supporting the same. In fact, controversies broke out after the accounts of senior Supreme Court advocate Sanjay Hegde and Journalist Dilip Mandal, were suspended by Twitter cause apparently their content were seen as a violation of Twitter's Terms of Service. Hashtags like #CancelAllBlueTicksinIndia (Online, 2019) and #CasteistTwitter (Online, 2019) were all over the media. Controversies and challenges like this continue, to take place but people like Sanjay Hegde continue to write against these policies of Twitter.

Dalit Goes Online: The Construction of Identity and Social Space

On the ground of caste superiority, the privileged groups foist their identity over Dalit and stigmatize theirs (Mahalingam, 2002) and promulgate themselves as a caste living with higher moral values and standards as compared to underprivileged caste. As a result of persistent caste praxis, Dalit identity has flooded with negative connotations and approaches that contribute to the inferiority in Dalits. Further, these ideas are internalized and Dalits develop an inferiority complex (Sukhdev, 2016). Dhyan Singh believes that the superiority of Caste Hindus in every sphere makes the Dalit community fear voicing their opinions openly against the discrimination they face and forces them to capitulate to the upper caste. Singh derives Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory which states that a person's race, caste, the social group plays a significant role in his/her social performances and achievements.

In recent years, social media are increasingly developing new social contexts (Levy, 2002), that is reshaping the culture and social identity of community and people (Johnson, 2013). Dhyan Singh suggests that social media is providing the ideal platform for the Dalit community to express themselves and be able to unite people of the community to try change the perception of their historical identity. The mainstream media does not cover issues related to the Dalit community especially when it is based on discrimination from the upper castes. This is a hard truth that Indian press do not address Dalit issues and voice of Dalit community remained largely absent in the press of the world's largest democracy (Jaffrey, 2012). Through social media, members of the community are able to voice out their grievances and are able to reach a large audience from within the community and outside of it.

Dhyan Singh then says that this new platform of freedom of expression has made "Dalit start seeing themselves as superior in any essential sense", (Singh, 2019). Which is problematic and contradicts the very cause they stand for which is abolition of the caste system in India. Apart from this, barely 1/3rd of the Dalit population in the country may have access to social media, which means majority of the community still have their voices go unheard. An analysis done by Lokniti and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) found that the Upper castes dominate social media presence while only 8% Dalits were found to have high social media usage on the two most popular sites, WhatsApp and Facebook (CSDS, 2019). This only poses the question of whether social media is really playing the role of the catalyst to bring in adequate representation of the Dalit community and creating a change in the way the upper castes view them.

Representation of Adivasis in Indian Media

Media is responsible for many injustices and atrocities done to Dalits in our country which contradicts the fact that the media is considered the fourth pillar of democratic society. In article by Dilip Xalxo and Dr. Deepa Viswam mentions about the discrimination and exclusion that the dalit community faces (Viswam, 2018). B.R. Ambedkar said in 1945 that

the untouchables have no press and this remains the same after 72 years of independence (Moon, 2014). For an instance in 2006, when the farmers committed suicide in ‘Vidharbha’, there were only a handful of authorized journalists that were present to cover the issue whereas at the same time ‘Lakme Fashion Week’ in Mumbai had been covered by 612 renowned journalists. (Viswam, 2018) The world knows India is a land of diversity but this diversity has not been reflected where Dalits are concerned. The first newspaper in India, Bengal Gazette that started in 1780 (De, 2020) during the colonial period still is incomplete in its ethics, responsibility and democracy which is alarming. In 2016, there was a Delhi based survey by the center for the study of developing societies to evaluate the top decision makers in media and it was found that there was not even a single person from the Dalit community (António, 2019). According to a 2012 Hindu study, among the top 300 journalists, there is not a single Dalit, whereas Hindu upper caste males hold 71 percent of the top professions. (Viswam, 2018)

‘Meme yahi Banayenge’ with many followers, a page on Instagram has many offensive memes targeting dalits, Muslims, Adivasis and Dr. BR Ambedkar. ‘Sweeper’ the hero of all dalits’, one of the many possible examples. Campaigns on all social media platforms were launched requesting people to report this feed. All these years, the marginalized people have been suffering from atrocities from different sections in different forms. They have been voiceless. They have been helpless. They have been segregated from the very beginning of the British rule.

Censorship of Dalits in Media Platforms

It is important while conducting the research to understand the root cause of Dalits not getting the censorship and right in media platforms be it digital media or print media. Even after the implementation of democratic ideals like the Universal suffrage and equality in the 1950’s Dalits remain at the bottom of the caste system which is the mode of bringing in social stratification (Rao and Mudgal 2015). The fact that even after having special law and legislation for the marginalised section of the society, there are barely any mainstream media platforms that has special law or regulation that promotes or suggests the censorship of dalits. Hence the aim of this article is to provide a transparent picture about how in the last twelve years censorship has been exercised with respect to representation of dalit community. It also questions the need of censorship for dalits in social media platforms. One of the major aspects that this article provides is how politics is related in providing censorship as Schulz S.L has mentioned how the censorship of the Dalit community was dependent on the politics and the UPA led government (Schulz, 2015).

When it comes to censorship, the dalit community in India have been silenced and neglected by the Media houses (Schulz, 2015). In 2011 after the release of a film named Aarakshan which was considered to be an anti-dalit movie is an example on how the filmmakers used the digital media as a tool to portray dalits. In 2011 the UPA led government in Uttar Pradesh

by Mayawati had questioned the representation of the dalit community in the movie which led to protests by the Bahujan Samaj Party and Dalits community in the streets of Lucknow (Schulz, 2015) In 2008, Mayawati, the BSP leader and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh objected the repeated focus of media outlets on Dalit oppression and reservation which were supposedly point of views from people outside the dalit community (Jefferey, 2001; Doron, 2012; Loynd, 2008). The censorship about Dalits are questioned in the above case as it shows how politics affects the functioning of the structuralism that is being followed in the country when it comes to Dalit community.

It is said that Indian culture has the disease of having oppression and marginalisation against the lower caste, especially the Dalit community (Savigny, 2015). In 2013, two Dalit individuals were killed at a district in Tamil Nadu which was a fight among the upper caste that had politics involved(The Hindu,2013). This also calls into question the Dalit community's political censorship, as media sources frequently depict Dalits as oppressed as a result of the absence of censorship. While caste politics and discrimination against Dalits have long been a part of life for those in that group, the Indian media continues to ignore the community's issues (Wasserman ,2015). which is what becoming problematic because certain perceptions are made about the community which is based on the coverage that the dalit community is being entitled and this is where censorship comes into place.

Internet as an Alternative Media for Dalits in India

Dalits have been subjected to numerous atrocities and injustice for centuries. It's been 72 years since India attained its freedom; still the practice of caste system prevails in most part of it. The political rhetoric and constitutional protection have failed in eradicating caste cruelties and Dalits continue to bear the brunt of caste violence and discrimination. According to the census 2011, in India Dalits including Scheduled Tribes comprised 25 percent of total Indian population and the by now the percentage would have gone much higher (census, 2001). Dalit empowerment and upliftment from the current status quo is much needed only from the constitution and politicians but from the mass media as well as they have great potential to achieve this phenomenon.

Mass media can create awareness and empower Dalits as they have the capability as prime mover of change in the society. Unfortunately, the mass media which supposed to present unbiased social reality and resort balanced position, has shifted its focus as profit-making Corporation. Thus are the emergence of alternative media coming into being. Alternative media helps the marginalized and the minority communities to speak against the oppression at the gross root level. To call a media an alternative media, it should have characteristics of an alternative media. (Bailey et al., 2008) in their book understanding, alternative media propose four basic approaches to alternative media which make a medium as an alternative media. One of the approaches is that an alternative media should 'serve the community'. This article focuses on how Dalits in India have begun using internet as the alternative media for

sharing information and how Dalits websites and social networking sites such as blogs fits into the approach ‘serve the community’

At this juncture, the mass media in India is expected to play a pivotal role in eradication of caste system and bring justice to all the Dalits affected and suffered under the caste system. But there is a hue and cry from the Dalits activists and academicians that mainstream media has time and again let them down. That is the reason as to why they have resorted to other forms of alternative media to speak for themselves. Internet has proved a powerful tool of empowerment for minority nationalities with access to the web since it represents terra nullius where readily accessible “virtual archives” of alternative histories can be constructed and maintained (Mitra 2001) articulates that 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. He says “*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).

Internet as an alternative media emerged when the mainstream media failed to speak for the marginal and minority communities. In an effort to provide a platform for such people, alternative media found its existence. Hence, various forms of alternative media mushroomed in all parts of the world.

Tirumala in his extensive study on the presence of Dalits in the cyberspace found that educated Dalits are beginning to use the internet as a platform to discuss issues concerning their community and to mobilize for their just place in the wider public sphere. This statement is proved again by the current research which reiterates that Dalits websites and blogs are participatory media (Thirumal, 2008).

Methodology

This dissertation makes use of qualitative research strategy where the research approach implemented is that of multiple case studies and ethnography. Ethnographic study refers to taking a cultural lens to the study of people’s life within their communities (Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010). In this type of study, the research tries to immerse itself in the lives, cultures, challenges, themes and motivation of people. This article will study the Dalit community’s social representation in the internet through the qualitative analysis of their posts, tweets, blogs and social activism. Interviews shall also be conducted with people as per their activity in social media platforms. Plenty of existing sources shall be looked into and analyzed. Such sources include posts which have garnered eyeballs and events that are of importance on the given topic. The research study is also taking use of four case studies. First, is the ‘temporary suspension’ of a Dalit professor’s twitter account. Second is the case study of a young man been beaten up by the caste hindu mob for keeping moustache. Third

case study is about Facebook's casteist advertising in India and finally the fourth one is about the Dalit community in Telengana launching a campaign against an offensive Instagram page.

The study will mostly involve the use of content analysis approach. The pictures, blog posts and tweets will be closely studied for their proper interpretation and meaning. The interviews will be transcribed and a thematic analysis will be conducted. Each theme will be analyzed as per the participant's understanding and perceptions.

An age-old oppressed community cannot be entirely studied basing upon close-ended survey questions. To understand the full context, it is necessary for a study to look into the background, the current situation as well as the future prospects and ideals of the community, which can only be analyzed by the help of qualitative analysis. Hence, the interviews and content analysis will provide an in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences, perceptions, motivations and emotions.

Research Questions

In this present study, the researchers investigate the following questions:

RQ 1. How are the rights and needs of the Dalit community being represented in social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook through posts, memes and blogs, especially emphasizing on the issue of reservation.

RQ 2. To analyze qualitatively the extent to which the voice of the Dalit community is being censored in social media platforms.

Analysis

While caste discrimination in real-world is possible to tackle with by the use of law and Public Litigations, the same in an online forum most of the times remains shadowed under the influence of social media giants like facebook, twitter and Instagram. It is true that social media serves as one of the fastest means of communication and spreading thoughts across the globe in a click, it cannot be always beneficial for all groups of people. In the case of SC/ ST/ Dalits, although it has empowered the community, it has also become a platform where they are constantly facing discrimination. Social media has no proven that effective for the dalits to express their opinions and make use of their rights.

In the past few decades, social media has engaged in censoring the dalit voices in three forms. First, by influencing public opinion against the logic of affirmative action or the policy of reservation. Second, by discriminating content through the means of advertisements and last but not the least, by taking away authentication and legitimacy from poplar dalit voices.

Explanation

Facebook

Caste based discrimination in social media is mostly centered around reservation policy of the government enshrined in the Article 15 (4) of the Indian Constitution (The Constitution of India). The upper class feels that there is a lack of opportunity given to them because they form a very small population in the country which is only 4.3% of the total population (census, 2001). The SC, ST and OBCs form around 70% of the total population of India. Hence, reservation policy is itself discriminatory as it in fact takes away opportunities from 'able and deserving' candidates. That is the main reason why the so-called upper castes young people are now taking up to creative platforms to express their discontent towards the policy of reservation.

One of the most commonly used means of expressing discontent towards reservation is memes, especially (according American Civil Society Research, 2019)) in social media platforms like Facebook, 40% of posts on Facebook has an anti-reservation slant (Soundararajan, 2019). These kinds of posts include derogatory references to caste-based occupations such as manual scavenging, caste-based slurs, anti- Ambedkar posts like Vandalizing his face onto memes and inter-caste marriage and love union posts.

A facebook group called 'Anti-Chamaar group' (Chamaar is the name of a dalit caste community who are found mostly and throughout the Northern states in India and they work with leather), the group has maintained its presence since 2016, actively posting casteist memes and posts among its group members. After three years of repeated complaints and 'reports' on that group, finally it was taken down by Facebook India in 2020. However, the effect it had generated was that now many other pages and groups have come up with anti-reservation and anti-ambedkar related posts. For example, one post reads, "Dalits favorite super-man: Sweeper man" showing a morphed image of Dr. Ambedkar in a superman costume holding a broom. Another post shows an image of Dr Ambedkar on one side with 280 comments, 1500 likes and 970 reposts and a western style toilet on the other side which shows 0 comments, 0 likes, 0 reposts, both under the banner of 'We live in a society'.

One can always say that hate content will always be there on platforms where diverse section of people with differing opinion exists. The question arises that while the content creators and content consumers, create and view hatred and casteism almost everyday and in huge amount, does the platform itself has any responsibility to control or the least sensitize its users on such content? In fact, it becomes dangerous when this kind of content is spread in the form of advertisements.

The advertisement policy of facebook thus becomes problematic. Facebook's user targeted advertisement allows casteist advertising in India. In Chennai, in 2016, Kiran Chandra an IT

consultant did a little experiment in this regard where he made a fake product and named it “Brahmin Bags” and created an ad for it on facebook. Shockingly, facebook allowed him to target a select indian community based on caste, that is, he was able to micro target ‘Iyengers’. Apart from that the social media giant also allowed him to exclude ‘Dalits’ from the ad. Moreover, criteria’s such as affinity, mid-high value goods, low class goods were present to exclude certain community people to even access those products. (MK, 2019)

Facebook clearly states that, “Ads must not discriminate or encourage discrimination against people based on personal attributes such as race, ethnicity, colour, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, disability, medical or genetic condition.” Apart from that, under the advertisement policy 7.1 of targeting, facebook further states that, “You must not use targeting options to discriminate against, harass, provoke or disparage users; or to engage in predatory advertising practices.” (Facebook, 2021)

However, until 2016, facebook allowed targeted advertising based on caste religion and economic status. The feature has been disabled but facebook still allows advertisers to choose “interests” of the users that they want to advertise to. Interestingly, these so called “Interests” still have caste markers. While representation of dalits in social media remains bleak, the shadowed discrimination that they as a community are facing is not only making them vulnerable but also creating a situation where they are targeted by a whole lot business model of a multi-million company (Majhi 2020). Real-world discrimination and online-discrimination has only made it difficult for the under represented community. Discrimination in social media happens in the background and are mostly shadowed, ignored and pushed away under the banner of free expression. The question is how much expression of thought must be free. Does discrimination and casteism is the cost that dalit community is paying for freedom of expression?

Twitter

In 2019 an entire row of dalit activists were enraged by twitter’s casteist action. On 2nd october twitter “temporarily disabled” the account of academician dilip mandal’s account over a tweet in which Mandal was talking about a book called “Bahujan Agenda” and has included the name and contact information of the author so that those interested could contact him. He also had the author’s consent. But even after that his account was suspended due to violation of privacy (Of Blue Ticks and Caste Pride, News18, Nov 8, 2019). Just after this action, the anger from discrimination and casteism had taken to Mandal’s the surface and twitter was trending with hashtags like #CasteistTwitter #RestoreDilipMandal. As a result, twitter had to reinstate Dilip Mandal’s account and moreover, verifying it with a blue tick. However, this did not go well since twitter quietly verified accounts of various other dalit activists like Chandrasekhar Azad and Kush Ambedkarwadi overnight. This action of twitter aggravated the boiling anger of the community and they demanded to cancel all blue ticks from Twitter to make it more representative and egalitarian platform.

This is one example from many such similar incidents that keep happening on twitter. Either their voices are shut down or their cause is used to fulfil someone's personal ambitions. Mainstream media also plays an equivalent role in creating a perception that casteism remains a thing of the past through its mention in the history texts books. In movies also casteism is represented as a practice which only happens with the poor and in the rural areas.

This act of the twitter is often termed as the 'Blue Janeu'. One of the most problematic issue is that twitter outrightly denies its casteist actions. It fails to have uniform rules for all kinds of people (Debbarma, 2020). In response to the allegations faced by twitter regarding its casteism, one of the spokespersons responded that, *"We have ongoing efforts to provide local context when developing and enforcing our global policies. We extensively cover gender and religion (including caste) in our trainings, to provide reviewers with local context they need to evaluate content. Our Hateful Conduct Policy prohibits behavior that targets individuals based on protected categories (including caste)"* (outlookindia, 2019). This statement does not truly reflect the business model of twitter on which it thrives. Twitter has not even verified the official account of India's Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Jack Dorsey is yet to answer what kind of local context do they need to verify the official account of this ministry of the Government of India.

Instagram

Instagram is a fairly new social media platform in India, launched just 8 years ago in 2012. Although there has not been an outrage as such onInstagram, the platform has increasingly become a target of casteist pages, which continuously post discriminatory and casteist content to millions of viewers. Instagram is in fact the most vulnerable platform since it provides more reach to posts than any other platform by the means of hashtags. There isnot much privacy involved in Instagrams case.

The dank meme culture in instagram, directly imported from the United States through pages like 9GAG, GIPHY and 4chan are now inspiring many popular Instagram meme pages to post the so called "dank" memes. These instagram dank meme pages are-Laughing Colours, RVCJ Media, Sarcasm and All India Bakchod. The problem with these meme pages is that they become to offensive to be considered "Dank" (Laxmipriya,2021). While another set of people think that India's sarcasm tolerance is quite low and people do not take humour with the kind of light attitude that these content creators expect people to take. (Das, 2020).

Conclusion

Studying the given cases, and taking perspectives from multiple personalities who have lived the discrimination and are still facing it in social media platforms, it is clear that with increasing influence of social media, dalits are exposed to different forms of discrimination. The newest way has turned out to be in the form of business models of social media giants

like Facebook and Twitter which do it intentionally, unapologetically. The worrisome part of which is that these platforms are not being accountable to the rights of dalits. The government as well has not taken any solid step to protect them from this online discrimination.

Censorship has played a major role recently in silencing the voices of dalit activists and those who support dalit rights. Social media has taken away legitimacy and authenticity from popular dalit personalities. The ‘Blue Janeu’ movement where dalit are asking twitter to remove the verification badge of twitter entirely has recently been debated.

However, social media as a tool has also empowered the masses in some way. In the least, as one respondent puts it, at least a few dalits are getting access to internet and speak about their brothers.

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