



Journalism of Dr. Ambedkar and Contemporary Independent Online Journalism

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Abstract: Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, "Bharat Ratan", is the father of the Indian constitution. He has fought for many social evils present in society, especially untouchability and caste differences. Dr. Ambedkar began educating and raising public awareness through journalism. In this regard, he started his first newspaper when he was only 29 years old and named it *Mooknayak* on January 31, 1920, with the help of the Maharaja of Kolhapur. It was only open for three years, ending in April 1923. Later, he founded three more newspapers: *Bahishkrit Bharat* (1927–1929), *Samta* (later called *Janata*) (1928–56), and *Prabuddha Bharat* (later renamed *Janata*) (1956). Earlier, journalism was only available in offline and print media formats, but in the current scenario, it is noticed that online journalism is a growing field shared between old media (traditional media) and the growing online blogs and web portal community. In recent times, online journalism has become the fastest growing field, as earlier it was print journalism that was there during Dr. Ambedkar's time. Today, the electronic era has changed the nature of journalism. Now, a person can also do this journalism and publish their letters on a digital platform. It also reduces costs and eases management. At present, journalism has a wider field in comparison to the previous one. It is seen that now news and journals have covered too many areas of society, but Dr. Ambedkar was focused on the eradication of social evil from Indian society. Bharat Ratan, Dr. Ambedkar was always devoted towards society and fought for the better growth and development of the Indian people. Dr. Ambedkar wrote on several contemporary issues in many forms. According to Bhimrao Ambedkar, the objective of journalism should be enlightenment and the development of the scientific temperament of people.

Keyword: Dr. Ambedkar, Journalism, Online Journalism, independent Journalism

Introduction

Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar made great efforts to lay the foundation for India to become a modern nation by waging a struggle against social slavery. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a great thinker, prolific writer, orator, philosopher, scholar, jurist, economist, campaigner for the rights of untouchables and women, and the "chief architect of the Indian Constitution as well as a high-quality journalist."

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, fought relentlessly against the prevailing caste differences and untouchability in Indian society. Throughout his life, Ambedkar made innumerable efforts to provide equal status, respect, and rights in society to the Dalits, the underprivileged, the exploited, the workers, and women. He made good and meaningful experiments in untouchable works, social reform, and women's emancipation journalism. Dr. Ambedkar stayed and studied in America for several years. He was aware of the media industry. As he was conscious



that Indian mass media would reflect only the upper caste Hindu ideology, he chose a separate newspaper for the oppressed people and so he started publishing newspapers. ' [Ratnamala, 2012].

Journalism by Dr. Ambedkar

In 1920, Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar started his first newspaper when he was only 29 years old and named it *Mooknayak* on January 31, 1920, with the help of the Maharaja of Kolhapur. It ran for three years before being closed in April 1923. " Later on, he went on to establish three more newspapers – *Bahishkrit Bharat* (1927-1929), *Samta*, which was later renamed as *Janata* (1928-56), and *Prabuddha Bharat* (1956). Both *Bahishkrit Bharat* and *Janata* were fortnightly, while *Prabuddha Bharat* was a weekly. "He was directly involved in the editorial management of the first two newspapers, *Mooknayak* and *Bahishkrit Bharat*. From 1930 onwards, he delegated the task to his most important colleagues, such as Devrao Naik, B.R. Kadrekar, G.N. Sahastrabudhe, R.D. Bhandare, and B.C. Kamble. The names chosen by Ambedkar for his newspapers evidently confirmed the aim of his newspapers. *Mooknayak* (the leader of the dumb), *Bahishkrit Bharat* (the excluded India), and *Janata* (the people) were directly related to the oppressed people.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was convinced that if Dalits were to be awakened and empowered, they needed to have publications of their own. It was with this objective in mind that he began publishing the Marathi fortnightly *Mooknayak* on 31 January 1920. "Mooknayak" means the hero of the voiceless. Explaining the logic behind its publication, Ambedkar wrote in the editorial of *Mooknayak*'s inaugural issue, "There is no better source than a newspaper to suggest the remedy against the injustice that is being done to our people in the present and will be done in the future, and also to discuss the ways and means for our progress in the future." In the same editorial, he wrote, "Hindu society is just like a tower which has several stories without a ladder or entrance." The man who is born in the lower strata cannot enter the upper strata, however worthy he may be, and the man who is born in the upper strata cannot be driven out into the lower strata, however unworthy he may be. The alienation produced by the absence of inter-dining and inter-caste marriages has fostered the feelings of touchable and untouchables so much that these touchable and untouchable castes, though a part of Hindu society, are in reality living worlds apart. " [www.forwardpress.in]

When *Mooknayak* started, Ambedkar was a professor at Sidneyham College, Bombay, and was in a government job. Because of this, he could not be the editor, hence he named Pandurang Nandram Bhatkar, an educated youth from Dalit society, as editor. Ambedkar always advocated due representation for the Dalits, not only in the media but in all walks of life. In the editorial titled "This is not self-rule but rule over us" in the third issue of *Mooknayak* dated February 28, 1920, Ambedkar clearly said that if Swaraj materialized, Dalits should have a share in it. Ambedkar continued to reflect on Swaraj. The title of the editorial in the fifth issue of *Mooknayak* dated March 27, 1920, was "Our ascent to Swaraj, its evidence and its method." [www.forwardpress.in]

Dr. Ambedkar and Independent Online Journalism

The Independent Online journalism is a growing field shared between old media (traditional media) and the growing online blogs, web portal community. Today many of growing group of dedicated bloggers and journalists are providing an independent voice like Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. If we look at the progress of previous years, then it is proved that the business letters which were present have developed a lot and only few rival letters can be released. But after 90s, the paradigm of journalism has changed. This was made possible by the information revolution and the advent of computers in the field of journalism. A combination of technology and media means web-journalism.

Today, independent online journalism has become the fastest growing side of media with



help of web journalism. It is dynamic and instant information medium. Its greatest feature is the interaction with the readers and the viewers. Today, the computer revolution has changed the nature of journalism. Today, a person can also do this journalism and publish his letter on the digital platform. It also reduces costs and ease of management.

In two years, 22 editions of *Bahishkrit Bharat* were published. This was a landmark and masterpiece in history of journalism for rights of underprivileged.

‘Moreover, writing in the fifth issue of *Bahishkrit Bharat* dated 3 June 1927, Ambedkar, in the column “Aajkal KePrashna”, reacted strongly to the discrimination against Indian students in Edinburgh. He said, “Those who go to England to study are sons of the rich. For them, studies are just play and there is no reason to have excessive sympathy for them. Who will be worried about complaints of caste discrimination made by those who live off caste discrimination? They are themselves so steeped in caste discrimination that the Untouchables have no place in any establishment of the touchable.” Ambedkar wrote an editorial titled “Mahars and their country” in four parts in *Bahishkrit Bharat*. The title of the editorial of *Bahishkrit Bharat* dated 23 December 1927 is “Basis of progress of Untouchables”. In short, Babasaheb’s journalism was devoted to the struggle for the growth of Untouchables.’ [www.forwardpress.in]

Advertising also has an effective contribution in keeping a letter alive with its content. Dr. Ambedkar was very much affected by this advertising problem with his newsletters, but today there is no such situation, today easy to get advertisements on online platform and low cost of publishing letters on digital platform is a sign that the person can express his views and intellectual dialogue can be done with the help of independent online journalism.

‘Dr. Ambedkar found the reasons for the under representation and the discrimination of the oppressed people in the media. He notified that “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.” [Dr. Ambedkar’s Book collection: Volume 17, 1993] In the independent online journalism, there is one problem that still exists today is the problem of language. Since, English is dominated in online journalism, there is no equal place for regional language. Dr Ambedkar did all his work of journalism in the regional language so that the people of that time could listen to the voice of his writings. But today it is becoming difficult for the regional languages to survive on the web journalism or independent online journalism. There is no denying that the readership of independent online journalism is the elite class and other population can not to able access online journalism/web journalism. In such situation, the choice of language is challenge in front of all the currently running web portals, web sites and other online platforms.

Dr. Ambedkar has given the highest importance to moral values in journalism. At the same time, in independent online journalism, the highest laughter of values has occurred. Although, this is not the case with all forums, but it is still a problem that requires some concerns and reflection. By looking at DrAmbedkar’s journalism and current independent online journalism, it is known that journalism of Dr. Ambedkar had a periphery, its area of influence was fixed, whereas today the influence and reach of independent online journalism is wide.

Here we tabulated currently running independent online journalism –



Name of the portal/website	Founder/ Editor	Started from	Daily/ Monthly/ Quarterly
Dalit Dastak	Ashok Das	27 may 2012	Monthly
National Dastak	AnkushBhagat	2014	Daily
Forward Press	Ivan Kostka	June 2009	Monthly
The Shudra	Sumit Chauhan	2020	Daily
Mooknayak Media	Prof. Ramlakhan Meena	2020	--

These independent online journalisms are only few examples of the new era of Journalism. The strength for this type journalism is coming from journalism of DrAmbedkar which already done by a century ago. Each of the editorials of Dr. Ambedkar was thought-provoking. ‘The editorial he wrote in the first issue of *Bahishkrit Bharat* titled "Punahshch Hari Om" is very important for those working in the field of journalism.’

‘The incisive editorial comments of Ambedkar in *Mooknayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat* and *Janta* can be seen as symbolic of his confrontation with the Indian social system. Ambedkar was not content being a neutral observer. He was an interventionist who wanted to alter the status quo.’ [www.forwardpress.in]

The 'Janta' weekly continued throughout the year of 1928. However, in between, it used to skip some editions due to several reasons. On 4 February 1956, the name of the letter 'Janta' was changed, and started coming out as "*Prabuddha Bharat*". From February 4, 1956 to December 6, 1956, he saw "*Prabuddha Bharat*" emanating regularly, wrote continuously in some of its issues.

‘Ambedkar understood that another source for discrimination in the media was due to the upper caste domination. He said that the staff of the Associated Press of India, which is the main news distributing agency in India, is entirely drawn from Madras Brahmins – indeed the whole of the press in their hands and, who for well-known reasons for 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.’ [Dr. Ambedkar’s Book collection: Volume 2, 1993]

‘Furthermore Dr. Ambedkar was aware about the media ownership and the social composition of the media. Most of the newspapers during the freedom movement were under the ownership of congressmen and caste Hindus. So obviously they were against any views which oppose Hinduism and Congress party. The very same newspapers which represented Dhandiyatra of Gandhi as a satyagraha refused to accept Ambedkar’s Mahad struggle as a satyagraha. Moreover, they derided that struggle as a betrayal. As it was not possible to rely on the pro congress mass media to publish his news and views, Ambedkar decided to run newspapers.’ [Ratnamala, 2012]

The journey of Dr. Ambedkar’s journalism from *Mooknayak* to *Prabuddha Bharat* is an extraordinary struggle for his social, economic and political life. This journey also has a unique and exceptional significance in the history of the Dalit movement. In fact, these magazines were the need of that period. These magazines tried to give a new vision to the society. Babasaheb through his



writings spread the sparks of revolution in the entire Hindu society and every corner of the country. Not only were Dalits writing in all these magazines, but Savarnas were writing too. Dr. Ambedkar considered journalism to be a powerful medium of social change and today the independent online journalism is relate to all this Ambedkar's Journalism. Dr. Ambedkar done a remarkable work in the field of Journalism. Dr. Ambedkar aimed at eradicating many social evils that prevailed in the society and to establish an equalitarian Indian society. He was the editor of many publications. In the history of journalism, Ambedkar's journalism is a milestone. Dr. Ambedkar wrote on several contemporary issues in many forms. He used to Journalism as medium of social change and inculcate democratic values of Justice, liberty and equality enshrined in Indian constitution. Dr. Ambedkar believed that the objective of journalism should be to make the readers more enlightened, to inculcate new thinking in them, to develop scientific vision in them.

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