PANEL I: STAKING CLAIMS: MILLENNIALS IN DIGITAL INDIA

PAPER 1: Internet activism - Site of protest or means of protest: A critical study of 'Why Loiter?' and 'Girls at Dhabas'

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The last decade has seen the rise of several feminist protests that have either been conducted virtually or have at least mobilised masses on social media. The rise of Western digital media outlets focusing on gender such as VICE, Mic, Feministing and Bitch media have brought to South Asian computer screens examples of how the Internet could be mobilised as a safe, feminist space. In the context of South Asia, feminist struggles have been foregrounded within the feudal mindsets operating in a neo-liberal political economy and they have largely centred on institutions like family and marriage. The feminisation of the marketplace and subsequently the workplace added the elements of feminist response to the market and the cityspace. The rise of the Internet where individuals put out mediated responses and forms of themselves on a supposedly collective medium that creates connections have once again brought to the forefront tensions between the individual and collective.

What the Internet has also done is that while creating a new digital divide, it has blurred traditional boundaries between the individual and society while also re-orienting conventional institutions like family. For instance, on social media like Facebook and Twitter, every connection is a friend and follower respectively even though they may outside the realm of Internet be family or professional acquaintances. In strangely creative ways, the Internet has not just forged new connections and new definitions; it is also credited with creating newer forms of hierarchy giving greater credence and authority to certain voices over others.

It is in this context, that we seek to examine how the Internet has transformed feminist activism in South Asia through two key online movements, Why Loiter and Girls at Dhabas. The two movements, broadly, espouse the cause of women and other marginalised identities reclaiming public space by using the digital space as a platform for not just mobilisation but also as a site of performance. This has brought our attention back to what Marxist and feminist geographers have articulated earlier that space is never just an abstract backdrop but an active site of contestation and

power politics. Through staging protests online, the attempts to reclaim physical space has shifted to a different spatial domain, and the two are not as disconnected as they seem.

For instance, Girls at Dhabas started as a Tumblr blog by a groups of girls sharing selfies at physical spaces like dhabas, traditionally considered male bastions, and today is a Facebook page receiving submissions from girls across Pakistan engaging in 'unlady-like behaviour.' The page has graduated from being just a site for sharing photos to a digital collective that discusses various aspects of misogyny beyond just the issue of reclaiming public space. In an interview, the founders stated that they found inspiration from several Indian digital initiatives such as Why Loiter. The 'Why Loiter' project examines how women's use of public space is largely characterised in terms of purpose and utility and how this is used as a means to critique their consumption of the public space. So while men occupy streets as a matter of right, women must be on the streets only if they really need to be there to perform a socially sanctioned function. This argument is extended to raise questions on what was a woman doing at a certain time at a certain place in case of a rape or harassment incident. The authors argue, "Most debates on public space are disproportionately focused on danger rather than pleasure… Pleasure or fun is seen as threatening because it fundamentally questions the idea that women's presence in public space is acceptable only when they have a purpose."

Juxtaposing this with the dynamics of the protest culture on the Internet, one can identify that the key tools of digital protests are hashtags and trends, pictures (mostly selfies), banners or frames for images (often released by Facebook or Twitter to commemorate a day) and the creation of events which may be physical or virtual. The algorithm of social media platform disadvantages text over images and even within text, privileges certain text over the other. There is an inherent aesthetic and performative element to protests online as visuals are the mainstay of digital protests.

In the Indian context, particularly, physical protests too have been accompanied by song-and-poetry sequences, banners and slogans. When physical protests are beamed 'live' on social media or simultaneous protests across cities are called for - their simultaneity attested to by live broadcasts on social media - the Internet adds a new layer to protest as it goes beyond being just a means of protest. In being the medium of amplification, it also becomes a parallel site of protest as the non-protesting audience witnesses the embodied performance of the protest on the medium.

In terms of impact, it then becomes pertinent to ask how to gauge the impact of a protest – do likes and re-tweets suggest behaviour change? Political protests are often measured by the regimes overthrown (such as Arab Spring) or policy changes (such as garment worker protest against PF

rules[1]). But how does one examine the sustainability of these protests and their impact on everyday life? Since the attention span of internet users is limited, not all posts draw equal attention and even if they do, they may not have a lasting impact. The internet system is characterised by (not necessarily long lasting) dynamic trends and the possibility of a feminist protest turning into a short term trend appropriated by capitalist forces is real concern.

In this sense, we seek to critically examine the two protests, one Indian, one Pakistani, both mobilised digitally to see who is included and who is excluded by digital protests. A key question to examine is how the structure of social media is central to digital protest and whether protests can be conducted online minus the usage of social media platforms' architecture. Several feminist cyberculture scholars have drawn our attention to the nature of the medium used for the protest, reminding us time and again that often technical platforms are not created with the intent of being a site of liberation for those on the margins. Using their own norms of appropriateness, these platforms attempt to silent dissenting voices on grounds of violation of community guidelines[2]. This shows that, ultimately, everything that goes on the Internet, is content which is created to be consumed which renders even protest-related image and text content for consumption.

Increasingly, as audiences outside the two countries also engage with these movements, we wish to understand if the Internet could replace translocal and transnational feminism with a global feminism. South Asian patriarchy is characterised by a pointed demarcation of physical spaces where women must use only specific spaces, those which are socially sanctioned. In this sense, how do digital feminist protests then impact the reorientation of spatial dynamics between genders both physically and virtually. As cities become more global and the Internet renders the world a global village (McLuhan), a key question that comes to mind is if the Internet is also creating a homogeneity of protests?

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[1] http://profit.ndtv.com/news/tax/article-after- protests-government- withdraws-new- provident-fund- rules-1397193
[2] See debate on Facebook's response to images of women's breasts here: https://www.theverge.com/2016/10/12/13241486/facebook-censorship- breast-cancer- nipple-mammogram

PAPER 2: <u>This Wall was too Clean for Rebellion</u>. <u>Student Activism in Digital India: Three Case Studies</u>

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Student agitation in India never followed any directive -- political or social. Divided at its origin by class and caste factions, 'resistance' has a complex meaning, often self-questioning and sometime self-defeating. This has further been complicated by the emergence of the New Media, which during the course of the last few years has radically altered the logistics of politics, on the one hand, and changed our dispositions thereof, on the other. In an globalized world, transnational politics achieved through the intervention of the digital is increasingly impacting our subjectivity. This paper aims to study how students perceive the 'digital turn' with reference to the 'new' supply of politics. While it is now a cliché to say that we live in a media-saturated world – that we are always 'connected', that we embody, in danah boyd's (2009) words, an 'always on lifestyle' – we seldom realize that this media-saturation, this very pervasiveness of media characterizes the 'New Media'. In other words, the qualitative difference in interactivity of the 'New Media' characterizes its newness. In that case, this paper engages in sustained, critical questioning of what differences the digital -- its ubiquity and outreach -- makes in terms of the perception and performativity of student activism in India. What 'new' is being brought in and afforded by the digital as a platform? How does digital activism differ from or conform to the 'traditional' theories of resistance and that of subjectivity?

This however is beset by the task to understand the genealogy of student activism: how the 'political' and the 'organizational' have conciliated with the mediascape. While 'networks' rather than organizational emancipations characterize our political behaviour (Castells 1996; Rheingold 2002; Wellman 2001), this paper seeks to understand the students' perception on how the organization-based structure of 'traditional' activism gives way to new network-based politics in the context what Mark Zuckerberg calls an 'open' and 'connected' world. Through focus group with a small but diverse sample, this paper demonstrates how students often perceive 'radical' activism on the 'new' media -- that, among other things, fosters 'digital divide' based along classist ideologies -- to be elitist and enclavist, and therefore, symbolic of what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital'. In fact, the student activists -- who have themselves taken recourse to digital activism,

often question the liberatory aspects, in Judith Butler's (1997) words, the 'postliberatory' subjectivity purportedly characterized by the New Media.

This paper analytically studies three recent incidents -- student agitations following: (1) Mudassir Kamran's 'suicide' at the English and Foreign Languages (EFL) University, Hyderabad in 2013; (2) an incident of alleged molestation at Jadavpur University (JU), Kolkata in 2014, which triggered the unprecedented #hokkolorob hastavism; and (3) the statist crack-down upon 'anti-national' sloganeering in 2016 at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi condemning Afzal Guru's capital punishment -- as case studies to illustrate the leverage of the digital onto the organizational. Three incidents, in principle, point to the myriad effects -- in terms of outreach and digital divide -- of the social media on student politics. Social media posts highlighting Kamran's 'victimization' as an ethnic minority instigated intense agitation in Kashmir, 2000 kms off Hyderabad. Social media helped recast a particular molestation at Jadavpur -- though never redressed -- into a mouthpiece for 'radical' student politics in general. At JNU, social media posts 'blew up' an incident rife with purportedly fabricated 'evidences'. Nevertheless, the extent of virality the events has achieved in and for a very short time – Google Trends attests to this -- characterizes what Bill Wasik (2009) calls 'nanostory'.

> We allow ourselves to believe that a narrative is larger than itself, that it holds some portent for the long-term future; but soon enough we come to our senses, and the story, which cannot bear the weight of what we have heaped upon it, dies almost as suddenly as it emerged (Wasik, 2009: 3).

What do the rise and fall of these events -- the implications of 'nanostories' -- then tell us of our networked and tweeted mediascape? How does the ubiquity of the digital enterprise speak to the anonymity of the digital persona? What is the 'tipping point' (Gladwell, 2014) that endows the 'critical mass' for an incident to become an 'event'? What constitutes digital activism? What are its causes and mechanisms? How do revolutionary, cultural and intellectual changes relate to political change? To what extent can the traditional-organizational aspect of the 'political' be translated onto the digital? How do new media change our understanding of these mechanisms and the prospects for future unrests?

Using snowball technique and focus-group with the eighteen respondents, who have directly participated in digital activism, this study seeks to understand the very contexts that render the digital media ubiquitous only at certain times: the political intent for participating in unrests and the ideological stakes and the emancipatory interests involved herein. Indeed, the motivation for

participatory behavior of the students varies on the contexts and demography. The question then is: for students involved in digital activism, how does the 'digital' mobilize them? For those who are not, why does the 'digital' fail to mobilize them? Shifting away from the existing studies, mostly focussing on single event of activism, this paper takes cues from the methodological underpinnings of what van Stekelenburg et al. (2012) calls 'contextualizing contestation'. Thinking in these terms, this study is not so much about student activism as it is about the (mobilizing) contexts and patterns of the participatory behaviour. To this end, this paper invokes two conceptual apparatuses: 'newness' and 'digital divide' with reference to what is referred to as the New Media, which is made sense of by reflecting on two questions:

1. How does digital student activism differ, if at all, from traditional student activism?

2. How does 'digital divide' impact student activism on the digital platform?

PAPER 3: <u>Ambiguous politics, partisan laughter: Memes as political articulation in millennial India</u>

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Abstract: This working paper is based on an ongoing research being conducted as a part of the

ONLINERPOL project 'For Digital Dignity'. The paper attempts to develop an understanding of the novel forms of political articulations and conversations that are being conducted in social media through memetic media content and memes, especially around the highly contested subjects of secularism, nationalism, religious pluralism and national belonging by drawing upon Indian Facebook pages that host regular updates and content on these subjects, often in the form of meme images. By grounding the discussion in Limor Shifman's definition of memes, the paper attempts to place memes at the intersections of popular culture, online cultures of banal and everyday expressions and political articulation, in the process exploring Ethan Zuckerman's thesis linking 'digital activism' with technological affordances that enable deployment of popular cultural discourses vis-à- vis memes. The paper locates the potential for partisan political articulation of memes as well as their humour in the 'multi-modal' constitution of memes, with popular culture usually providing key compositional elements. Cognizance of such compositional sources of the memes under study here emerges as an important determinant of participation during their production, circulation and reception, as does the 'stance' of the meme. Humour too appears to have links to the 'multi-modality' of memes, and emerges as another determinant of participation with political implications involved due to its ambiguous nature.

Keywords: popular culture, meta-mediation, multimodality, sub-culture, irony, stance

PAPER 4: <u>Insider's Insights: Strategies and learnings that Change.org India uses to support, strengthen and increase women campaigners in the digital ecosystem</u>

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Introduction:

As a leader in online campaigning and organising, Change.org has created a unique digital space where anyone, anywhere can mobilise people on a cause and create impact.

As the head of Campaigns at Change.org India, I am constantly surprised by the power the internet can give to an ordinary citizen. However, there is a significant gap. In India, the disparity in the Human Development Index between men and women is extremely high. The social, cultural and political situation in India continues to reinforce this disparity. This disparity also shows in the representation of women on the internet, and by default, on Change.org. In India, women represented only 21% of our 6-million users in 2016.

What was interesting, was that most of the impactful and iconic campaigns were those led by women. Data showed that these iconic campaigns had better storytelling, mobilisation and built better communities around them. The conclusion from our experience was that there were several women leaders with ideas to address the inequalities they faced, but were hampered by insufficient resources, support and motivation to make the change they wanted to see.

We decided to change this in early 2017. We set up an experiment to increase the salience of women-driven campaigns in India. The hypothesis was that this would be possible with the right kind of campaign support and proactive intervention from us.

Learning at Change.org before 2017 was heavily focussed on data as a sole driver for setting goals. We wanted to exponentially grow women leaders in the online campaigning space and realised that we would have to change our approach. Instead of focussing on just numbers and data, we decided to ask these questions:

● How can we put the focus on women and empower them to become leaders in the digital campaigning space?

● Can we design a learning agenda that gives prominence to the experience of women campaigners?

● Can we model campaigns that can encourage other women users to start and win their own campaigns?

● And by learning through this process, can we shift the gender balance not just on the internet but also in how social problems are addressed?

We are in the process of collecting data to draw conclusive results from our experiment this year. But I would like to share our learnings through this paper on how women can be encouraged to use and own the internet by creating a dent in the digital campaigning space.

I will talk in-depth about one of the learning projects that we have undertaken to better understand how women can become better social change champions. The first project focused on building a 'Champions' Index', a qualitative score to measure the capacity of petition starters to drive focussed, successful campaigns. We developed this through listening to women's experience in running petitions on change.org, and improving it as we discovered the key drivers to becoming a 'Champion'.

My paper will look at the data from successful campaigns, and examples of these women who started their campaigns without any support or confidence in themselves. Their journeys in overcoming their inhibitions and self-doubt to become 'champions' of their causes, highlight a number of common key ingredients to running a successful campaign.

Like Priyanka Gupta, who started a petition on Change.org asking the government to simplify the passport rules to make it easier for single women to get passport for their children. When I first spoke to Priyanka, she was unsure about the impact her petition would have. She was shy about talking to the media and could never imagine that government could be moved by her personal story. But when over a lakh people supported her petition, I saw Priyanka transform, she became more and more confident and started speaking to the media and decision makers, putting her case more strongly every time. Her campaign led to a joint ministerial meeting being set up between the MEA and the WCD ministry and the passport rules were eased. Priyanka is our champion!

Through the learning project, we are trying to identify champions like Priyanka, learn from their experiences of using the platform, how they ran their campaign, what knowledge they gained through this process and what specific support they need to overcome the challenges. The concept of 'Collective Efficacy' (a person's belief in the power of a group to achieve it's goals) is emerging as a key driver of campaign success.

Take the case of Subarna Ghosh for example. She was forced to undergo a caesarean section when she delivered her first baby. The unnecessary surgery left her scarred for life, both physically and emotionally. She quit her job as a journalist and started researching on women's child birth experiences. She soon realised that India has a very high caesarean section rate and many hospitals and gynaecologists were making money off unsuspecting pregnant women. When I first spoke to Subarna, she wanted to do something about the issue but was unclear on what would be a good strategy to both create awareness and also bring about a policy level change. We decided that in order to hold the hospitals accountable and to make it easy for women to make an informed choice, the petition would ask the Health Minister to make it mandatory for all hospitals to declare their caesarean section rates publicly.

As we ideated through the campaign, her knowledge on the subject shone through. But she was unsure about 'collective efficacy'. But as her petition grew and reached over 3 lakh signatures, Subarna's confidence in her ability to create change grew exponentially. She met the Women and Child Development Minister and handed over the petition to her. Because of Subarna's campaign, the Health Ministry send a directive to all the states to curb down unnecessary caesareans. The Health Ministry also mandated that all hospitals empanelled under the CGHS have to declare their caesarean section rates to the public. With 3 lakh people supporting her, Subarna is not stopping her fight. She is now meeting the Maharashtra Chief Minister to make sure the rule is imposed in her state.

Subarana's case presented a big learning opportunity for us. We know that many petition starters go on a journey of empowerment. When they begin their campaign, they often lack confidence, skills and knowledge. In this case, Subarna had the knowledge but lacked confidence in collective efficacy. As the campaign progressed however, Subarna become a more empowered 'champion' and achieved impact milestones with strategic support from the Change.org team. What also helped was that people left thousands of responses and comments on her petition and shared their personal stories. This boosted Subarna's belief in 'collective efficacy', and this transition was an incredible moment of learning for me and my team. Because once Subarna started to believe that she was not alone in this fight, she became unstoppable!

We wanted to develop a way of measuring 'Champion-ness' as a way to understand and improve this journey so that we can scale it to create more and more women leaders.

Conclusion: In this paper, I would like to answer the question- "Is it possible to develop qualitative ways of assessing women's experience on Change.org to shape the way we approach, train and

build other women leaders on our platform? I would like to end by asking a provocative questions -

Can we create a feminist internet by providing strategic support to women and creating a space for

them to shine in the digital space?

PANEL II: CIVIL SOCIETY AND COUNTERPUBLICS

PAPER 1: <u>The performative periphery: visibilising civic engagement on social media</u>

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Social media offer us a variety of possibilities of linking the intensely personal with the public, the civic, and the political, and therefore we have seen in recent times a burgeoning of citizen engagement that has been visibilised on these platforms. There has also been much conversation about the value of online activism, both in the popular media and in academic spaces. High profile writers like Gladwell (2010) have dismissed online engagement in civic causes as the easy way out, and not translating/contributing to "real", on-the-ground engagement or change. The term "slacktivism" has been revived and used by critics such as Morozov (2009) and White (2010) to negatively compare online civic activism as mere posturing, and in fact detracting from 'on the street' activism such as those that characterized the Arab Spring protests (Zuckerman, 2014).

However, it is our opinion that the debate over the efficacy of one or the other kind of activism is moot, as online civic engagement, what Zuckerman (2014) calls "participatory civics" has become a reality of our times. Further, treating online and offline activity as mutually exclusive would be misleading, as in today's media environment, content flows from one media platform to another and audiences access multiple platforms, often simultaneously. Jenkins (2006) describes this merging of content and platforms as "convergence culture", and shows how participatory culture – as opposed to older models of media spectatorship – is an integral aspect of this.

There have been concerns that millennials have moved away from conventional models of citizenship that emphasized civic participation primarily through volunteering and voting. This notion of 'informed citizenship' trusted the political process and believed that political affiliation and responsible, informed engagement through established channels contributed to change and maintained the democratic process. But today there is an increasing move away from politics, with young people seeking to affect change in more direct ways – either by mobilizing around specific, issue-based grassroots concerns, or through the courts for rights-based activism (Zuckerman, 2014). Given the media saturated environment we live in, and the prevalence of social media, this "monitorial citizen" (Schudsen, 1998) model uses new media technology to inform, organize, and affect change on the ground, in (hopefully) visible, impactful ways.

Consequently, a new form of civic engagement that utilizes social media platforms (either partially or exclusively) has also emerged. The popularity and prevalence of these platforms, ease of access and specifically, the performative aspects of social media, have all contributed to the growth of online activism. In this paper, we examine three online campaigns that allow for multimodal means of engagement in order to build visibility and participation among urban networked publics. Our central question concerns degrees of engagement – what makes people feel engaged and what do they do about it--either as part of or prompted by these social media campaigns?

In the Indian context, the popular criticism against online activism has been that social media and related new media technologies tend to be concentrated among the urban middle class, and that online campaigns are focused on issues that concern them rather than focus on "real" problems faced by the larger population. However, one could argue that online activism has broadened the scope of civic engagement, allowing people, previously unable or unwilling to participate in such activity, to do so (Raman and Mukhpalkar 2014). One can make the case that online campaigns have helped increase civic participation among the urban middle class, allowing for a range of activity from the minimal to the heavily engaged. This continuum of possible engagement allows for a greater number of citizens to participate, and in turn may create greater visibility, and thereby mobilization for a chosen cause. Additionally, it specifically allows people who are otherwise marginalized from physically participating (due to economic-socio-cultural constraints) to engage in this process (e.g. Barbèra et al, 2015).

The three Indian online campaigns we have selected range from the hyper-local to the general, and emerged out of three different societal contexts.

First, the recent mobilization of support for preserving the Bison Polo Grounds in Secunderabad from the State Government's plan to use the open space to build a new Secretariat building. This is framed by the campaign as reducing valuable open spaces for recreation, exercise, and green cover in a city already choking with unplanned development.

Second, the "Rice Bucket" challenge started by a city journalist as a way to combat hunger among the urban poor. It came about as a response to the "ice bucket" ALS challenge that went viral a few years ago. In this case, the inspiration was triggered by the idea of the effectiveness of a short term 'challenge' that rode on the success of a familiar term, and soon was mimicked by groups in other locations.

Third, the current campaign "Rally for Rivers" that is nationwide and endorsed by a celebrity new age guru. The campaign frames the cause as one that is of relevance to every citizen around the country. The range of possible activities for initial engagement range from a simple 'missed call' or 'click' to actual 'feet on the ground' participation in walks, speeches, and rallies.

With markedly different goals and varied calls to action, each of these campaigns nevertheless have provided multiple options for civic engagement for participants. In this article, we propose a typology of roles that we play as netizen-citizens, moving from expressions of caring through degrees of performance to active participation.

Through our analysis, we argue that social media promotes a range of civic engagement because it allows us to participate in complex political conversations with relative ease and little danger of embarrassment. In this network, we produce ourselves—as social, economic, and political beings. We produce our selves by *performing* our selves. We *show* ourselves (Couldry 2012) through the discrete actions demanded by the network, and *position* ourselves—politically, culturally, socially—through these same mechanisms. These specific processes are embedded within a data space that could potentially lead to a better-informed, more nuanced politics. As we engage in these online communities, the "Semantic Web" (Berners Lee, 2010) points us to information and opinions that may give our own ideas depth, and illumine our conversations, stimulate our participation and finally, our civic actions.

PAPER 2: <u>Digital Politics in the Diaspora:</u> *<u>Aam Aadmi</u>* <u>Party UK supporters online</u>

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In this paper I draw upon research carried out with supporters of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the UK Indian Diaspora. In recent years support for the AAP from Non Resident Indians (NRIs), particularly in America and Europe has played a significant role in the AAP's, sometimes spectacularly successful, election campaigns. These people, many of them professionals working in sectors such as IT and web design, have had significant influence on the growth and success of the party's online and social media campaigns and have been contributors to movement funds. Alongside travel to and from India to volunteer on the ground Diasporic party activists remain connected to, and perform volunteer labour for, the party through digital means across different platforms.

Here I will focus on three aspects of the activist experience of digital participation in party activities. The first aspect involves what I call a 'Digital Darshan'. These are public events through which party supporters can experience an online connection to party leaders or particular election candidates by interacting with them through conference calling apps such as Skype or Google hangouts. Often organised as large gatherings in spaces such as banqueting halls in neighbourhoods and cities with significant diasporic populations these events are also moments in which activists from different parts of the UK can gather offline. Here through activities partly oriented to drawing in new members and pledges of voluntary and financial support they experience the party as physical collective and perhaps receive thanks and mutual appreciation for the voluntary labour that they have performed on behalf of the party.

The second aspect involves the work of activists, particularly during election campaigns, who participate both alone and in networked teams in the everyday tasks of monitoring and responding to mainstream and social media coverage of the party, producing and sharing content about their activities and participating in the party's global calling campaigns. Here activists see their voluntary work as an essential counter to the well-funded and organised social media campaigns of the opposition parties, in particular the BJP. During these periods rebutting attacks in the comments sections of online news reports and sharing videos of speeches by party leaders via Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp become part of everyday mobile phone and home computer usage. Accounts of the time and effort devoted to this work reveal how activists bring ethnic, class and

religious identities into play as part of their online and offline projects to prefigure an inclusive and secular form citizenship in India and within the Diaspora.

The third aspect explores a case in which a publicly committed activist's faith in the party fails. Regretting the time and resources that they have expended, both their own and that of less committed family members, their digital engagement with the party at first provides an avenue through which to express disillusionment and critique. The inevitable social media backlash from party supporters follows however and the personal commitment to transparency, openness and building networks that they have sustained over their years of activism is quickly transformed into a wish for anonymity and disconnection. Where in the other aspects highlighted the digital was a means of connecting and drawing together, here it is a means of persecution and casting out.

By exploring these different aspects of AAP activists' engagement with digital campaigning we can learn something about both contemporary Indian political formations and how digital technologies impact the terrain of Diasporic political engagement. Attention to the rise of the AAP in the Indian Diaspora builds on an existing literature on Diasporic politics but provides a counterpoint to work that focuses on, for example, forms of 'Yankee Hindutva' identified by earlier scholars of the Indian Diaspora, transnationalism and globalisation[3]. Drawing from this literature we might think about the ways in which NRIs play a part in political projects to save or revive the Indian nation, and about a globalised Indian middle class which is concerned with the preservation of Indian 'Culture' and national integrity. But we can then move on to examine how people in the Diaspora imagine a secular concept of the nation framed on the one hand by a moral politics of self-sacrifice and activist commitment which deploys the iconography of the freedom struggle against colonial domination, and on the other by the inclusive idea of the nation framed in the Indian constitution. This progressive and inclusive imagining of the nation contains within it a secular narrative concerning corruption and the disintegration of the post-independence national development project, and the possibility of change through active citizenship – The Aam Aadmi is reimagined as an active citizen, an individual who can effect wider change through personal action rather than as a suffering victim. The digital Aam Aadmi perhaps then is imagined as an active citizen with a global reach, able to participate in remaking the nation from beyond its borders.

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[3] for example see: Biju Mathew and Vijay Prashad, "The Protean Forms of Yankee Hindutva," Ethnic and Racial Studies 23, no. 3 (2000): 516–34, doi:10.1080/014198700328971; Arvind Rajagopal, "Hindu Nationalism in the US: Changing Configurations of Political Practice," Ethnic and Racial Studies 23 (January 2000): 467–96, doi:10.1080/014198700328953; Parita Mukta, "The Public Face of Hindu Nationalism," Ethnic and Racial Studies 23, no. 3 (2000): 442–66, doi:10.1080/014198700328944; Sujata Moorti, "Uses of the Diaspora," South Asian Popular Culture 3, no. 1 (2005): 49–62, doi:10.1080/14746680500118368; Catarina Kinnvall and Ted Svensson, "Hindu Nationalism, Diaspora Politics and Nation-Building in India," Australian Journal of International Affairs 64, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 274–92, doi:10.1080/10357711003736451.

The research process leading to this paper was itself inevitably structured by the digitally mediated nature of these forms of activism. Due to the dispersed locations of my Diasporic interlocutors some interactions, including interviews, were carried out online, in particular using Skype. Despite the feeling of distance from the 'field' and the, perhaps idealised, practice of participant observation this engendered, skype turned out to be a strangely intimate platform over which to interview. By allowing my interlocutors to send text and relevant weblinks alongside our spoken conversation the digital platform produced a multi-layered mix of both recorded sound and text data. Most of the research however was carried out through visits to public meetings and other events organised by party supporters in London and Leicester and through meetings with activists in restaurants, cafes and their homes. The digital archive of public Youtube videos and Facebook posts relating to the work of the UK AAP endures for the most part allowing a rich layer of background data against which to set the events described here.

PAPER 3: <u>Digital Citizenship and Democratic Participation in India</u>: <u>A Case Study of the 'Grassroots Comics' Initiative</u>

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If the quality and resilience of the democratic system seeks to be understood in terms of the permeability of the system of news production, then digital citizenship, the process of participation of citizens in public affairs digitally, becomes a central analytical category. Acknowledging the vital role of the digital media for the functioning of a transparent and accountable political system, a stake in the digital discourse has increasingly become a benchmark for a stake in the larger political system: if, following Benedict Anderson (1983), the nation is an 'imagined community' created through media discourse, then one can only become a part of that community by shaping the discourse through active participation.

The concept of 'digital democracy', often paired with notions of 'citizen' or 'participatory journalism' thus reflects the new emphasis on the citizen as an active member of the political community. In the process, the citizen is transformed from a recipient to a producer of news content, which raises an array of interesting questions relating to the role that digital citizenship has in the system of checks and balances in a democratic polity. Considering the interventionist character of that particular journalistic sphere, it will have to be asked whether the share in the digital discourse provides a parallel-, a supplementary- or a counterview to the content of the established media. Above all, the field of negotiation between state institutions, non-state actors and mainstream media that digital democracy opens up will have to be outlined, and it will have to be seen what the role of digitally generated citizen news for the democratic process is, and to what extent a share in the digital sphere impacts on the democratic consciousness of the citizen, as well as on the democratic quality of the polity.

The paper explores digitization from a strategic angle of democratizing the media (i.e. to make them accessible, participatory and transparent), and asks who the agents behind these processes are, especially in a country with a deep digital divide, such as India. On a theoretical level, the paper also contributes to strengthening research on discursive 'border crossing'. If discourse is understood as a system of shared symbols, through which social and political systems are expressed, then crossing, as an interventionist strategy is a means of identity affirmation and a way of strengthening collective consciousness. Intervention in the

creative discourse is essentially contestation. 'Crossing' with its parameters of power, space and asymmetry can be seen as a practice with the potential for theory-building across region and discipline.

PAPER 4: <u>New Media Mobilization and Rise of Dalit Counter Public Sphere</u>

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Abstract:

Recent surge of Dalit mobilization online is a remarkable trend in political communication process and situates new undercurrent of Internet activism and political engagement in India. This paper problematizes the issue of 'new wave of subalternity' on digital media and hypothesizes that social media are becoming contested sites for identity formation and assertion of marginalized groups. As discursive social space networked media permeates everyday symbolic communicative practices, and configured with historical and cultural account it unravel new set of contestation with constructed imagery. This paper argues that with technological affordances and distinct cultural practices on digital landscape, certain sections of Dalits in India are resisting the dominant narrative. Approaching towards online ethnography, this paper analyzes mobilization with several case studies from India articulated through Dalit-led new medium as a repertoire of representation and deployment of rhetorical devices. While also attempting to see its resemblance with *Black Lives Matter* movement of the US; the paper bases argument drawn from theoretical premise on 'Counter Public Sphere' emanating from cross disciplinary scholarship. At various nodes, Dalit-led subaltern public sphere and counter publicity in socio-political realms posits a new set of rupture, complexities and fault lines in India.

Objectives and Methodological approach:

The main objective of this paper is to illustrate the assertion of Dalits in the larger periphery of digital mobilization and activism. It attempts to investigate the factors shaping representational spaces for marginalized groups on social media and function of Dalit based online mediums. The main research questions explore why Dalits are resorting to online mediums for expressing their grievances and contesting the subordination; and how interplay of actors, structure and process are configured on digital technologies. Adhering to qualitative online ethnographic approach, it follows interpretive case study approach drawing upon three events (agitation over Rohith Vemula suicide case and protest in Una in the year 2016, and agitation over Bhima-Koregaon in January, 2018) in analytical and explorative form while basing theoretical framework on **Counter Public Sphere**. It further follows macroscopic view of content with non-participant observation of leading *Facebook* pages, *Twitter* handles

and online forums in Hindi & English run by Dalit community in two phases, during April to December 2016 and August, 2017 to January, 2018. Observations are supplemented with semi-structured interviews of nine activists, bloggers and users under purposive sampling method done at online and offline mode.

This paper is informed through the literature on several dimension of internet based activism and social media led political mobilization (Bennett & Segerzberg, 2012; Castells, 2015; Dahlberg, 2007; Dahlgren, 2005; Howard & Parks, 2012; Paparachissi, 2002; Mitra, 2004; Chadwick, 2013; Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015). While analyzing Public Sphere (Habermas, 1989), critical approach of Fraser (1992), Warner (2002) and Fenton & Downey (2003) have placed the importance of 'Counter Publics' and parallel public spheres. Hence subsequently these works have imprint on variety of scholarships of Palczewski (2001), Asen (2000) and Weisser (2008) on facets of Subaltern Public Sphere and also on Black Public Sphere (Squires, 2002, Sharma, 2013; Goodridge, 2016; Freelon et al, 2016).

Connecting with this thread, questions of Dalit have been framed through the scholarships on perspectives of movement (Omvedt, 2001; Zelliot, 1992; Pai, 2013) and contemporary media practices (Jeffrey, 2001; Loynd, 2009; Thirumal & Tartakov, 2011; Kumar & Subramani, 2014; Nayar, 2011; deKruijf, 2015; Kujat 2016; Garrett, 2009; Neyazi, 2018) while analyzing the 'Counter Public Sphere' from India. Since online medium provide techno-cultural discourse on lived experiences of systematic injustice, thus another node of analysis deals with duel between structure and agency, where mediated Dalit activists articulate in counter meaning making approach. These oppositional communications have been framed through the discussions of Chopra (2006) and Udupa (2015).

Dalit fills in the categorization of Counter-publics due to their subordinated status, a sense of community with shared experiences of oppression; and unique mode of resistance with democratizing potentials. Internet enabled media have become preferred outlet to verbalize and valorize Dalit issues and it reflects Dalits' alienation towards traditional mass medium and new found hope in new media culture. Dalit activists are largely urbane and well educated millennial relatively easy to mobilize through social networking sites. Likewise Black public sphere (Squires, 2002; Freelon et al, 2016); everyday sociality at popular spaces is configured with techno-politics approach in civil society realms encouraging individuals to collectivize and organize for meaningful transformation.

Coinciding with critical events many media formats are run by individuals, volunteers and civil society without profit motives presenting an enduring 'cultural encyclopedia' in multilingual media productions e.g. *Roundtable India*, *Dalit Nation*, *Ambedkar Caravan*, *Dalit History Month*, *Dalit Web*, *Dalit Camera*, *Velivada etc*. Facebook pages e.g. *Ambedkar Quotes*, *Just Savarna Thing*, *Dalit History Month* etc. and Twitter handles such as *Dalit Voice*, *Savari*, *Dalit Diva*, *Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle*, *Savarna Fat Cat*, *Everyday Casteism* have been tools of solidarity during agitations. The subtext of these genres contain rich corpus of emotion and anger countering 'erasure' from history, treatise of social policies, anti-caste debate culture and radical project of emancipation through annihilation of systematic injustice. In a deliberate strategy, ideological and political deployment of commentaries, storytelling and sloganeering as meaning-making process with often anonymity and pseudonym have been mode of inter-communicative practice. Captivating nomenclatures and semiotic and sociological reading of these sites offer several connotations of galvanizing subaltern subjectivities through digital platform representing new forms of agency, power and politics.

Tentative conclusion:

Resembling a glimpse of fractured urban modernity, social media becomes a contested site on religious debates from history that often branded with contemporary political hues on asymmetrical power relation. In a critique of larger Hindu narrative and its' polemics, Dalit as digital commons pursue to legitimize certain form of knowledge through online practices of historicizing (Chopra, 2006 & Udupa, 2015) and adoption of populist approaches. Through symbolic ritualistic communicative practices they challenge prevailing social-religious code and provide alternative vision and radical ideological tenets of Buddhism, Atheism and Ambedkarism approach. However, there exists a complex array on online Dalit activism, which is also made up of likeminded forces (OBCs & minorities), but not ideologically monolithic and witnesses interplay of competing interests (at macro level) making it a contested terrain. Here the idea of multiple and intricate system of overlapped and interlocked publics (Palczewski, 2001; Asen, 2000) confronts with singular Dalit fold (which has inherent paradoxes at micro level on idea of action) representing politics of difference making counter narrative complex.

Although 'Dalit agency online' places important consequences for politics in India, however discussion of Chadwick (2013) on hybrid media system, and Neyazi, Kumar & Semetko

(2016) provide a cautious note that convergence of mainstream and new media along with grassroot politics is necessary for putting message across. Conversely currently there is lesser symbiosis of mediums as mainstream journalism culture intersects and interacts at minuscule level with subaltern voices/media.

Taking view of political economic dimension (Papacharissi, 2002), internet is not free from critical enquiry as it faces several structural problems with millions of downtrodden are outside its' discursive use. As online media's ritual and cultural mediations have re-ignited the triad of caste, class and religion that often configure political upheavals in India; Udupa (2015) has also suggested that celebration over new media's potential of transcending social divide is untenable. Indeed online engagement and mobilization does not inevitably translate into offline action and electoral-political participation is non-linear process since they shape through multiple socio-cultural structures and organizational factors attributing with critical events. However this subaltern project may be of immense importance in taking account of multiplicity of publics and their overlapping pluralizing public spheres with rainbow coalitions coming with all unpredictability and paradoxes in a complex society. These salient features may be entry points for contested digital politics.

PANEL III: DATAFICATION: USE AND MISUSE

PAPER 1: <u>Big Data in Indian politics: Ethical reflections</u>

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Big Data increasingly shapes Indian politics. Prime minister Narendra Modi's success is attributed by some to his strong social media following. Political parties supplement their manual vote-bank guesstimates with advanced linguistic algorithms. Activists use similar technologies to hold candidates accountable during election campaigns. State governments often dump huge datasets with personal information on the web in rushed attempts to lead on e-governance and transparency. Newsrooms in turn advertise positions for data journalists to be able to convert these dumps into new kinds of visual stories. And in a historical first, the Supreme Court recently declared a fundamental right to privacy in its decision on the Aadhaar scheme, the world's largest biometric database.

Over the past years, my own research took me in midst of this brave new world: I wrote algorithms, scraped data, intervened in charged debates – but also watched election campaigns up close using more traditional ethnographic methods, which not least gave me a sense of the substantial continuities to earlier ways of doing politics. My presentation thus attempts both an initial description of an emerging field (including its limits) and an ethical reflection about scholars' participation therein. What happens to democracy if political decisions are increasingly outsourced to IT consultants as the boundaries between journalism, academia and politics are re-negotiated? Do we need to update our research ethics guidelines if unstructured data in the public domain suddenly becomes an electoral asset? Is openness and data transparency always warranted? Who gets to use the powerful new tools that data science provides, both within India and across global, postcolonial knowledge hierarchies? And last but not least: how is the Indian data science community – both its open part and its for-profit part – debating these questions?

Rather than answering these questions, I'd like to throw them up for discussion; Big Data is still a new phenomenon, and the workshop seems a good sounding board to come to grips with its ethical implications for both Indian politics and global academia.

PAPER 2: <u>Fictional political publics? Bots and communal representation in digital India</u>

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Introduction:

It is well known that mass media is a critical tool for the government to communicate with their political audiences. The advantage of social media however is the ability to tailor make political messages for diverse audiences simultaneously and to track responses and sentiments via big data. Given the omnipresence of mobile phones and the exponential rise of mobile internet in India, one would assume that political communication has shifted from the television to the mobile and has opened up to diverse political views.

However, this paper argues that the so-called old Indian media systems continue to exist, thrive and extend themselves onto the digital sphere. Communal and language politics play a key role in the shaping of political communication, both online and offline. Audience segmentation, while undergoing new forms of categorization through the politics of algorithms and bot-making, continue to be ruled by caste politics. Furthermore, colonial legacies resurface in the way regulation is shaped for digital political communication, compelling us to rethink how far we have arrived from the days of the British Empire.

Political audiences in the big data era:

Big data has disrupted the traditional conceptualization of political audiences. A popular perspective is that big data fosters new ways of entrenching political group membership through algorithmic isolation. Pariser (2011) calls this the 'information bubble' – a continuous exposure to like-minded worldviews envisioned to create a monolithic and even more divisive political public. Few studies however point to how social media disrupts conventional channels of audience interaction with political agencies. For instance, Maireder, Weeks and Zuniga (2015) empirically analyzed the extent to which political actors connect with diverse audiences on these digital networks. They found that language, geo-identity and political orientation are key factors influencing such connective action. Also, non-governmental organizations and activists were the most likely to reach diverse audiences as

compared to conventional political organizations. So, what is the extent to which the digital sphere deters diversity in political networks, particularly in India.

Take for instance the digitization efforts of people into clusters and caste politics in India. The 'dalits,' the so-called lower castes have faced historical and insurmountable prejudice compared to other member groups in the Indian society. The dilemma posed here is to continue to digitally cluster them with other low-income groups through state digitization projects like Aadhaar or to give them special privileges due to historically discriminatory practices. These decisions influence how we digitize these publics, consolidating their identity online for online governance.

Influence of political bots:

Bots are web robots that serve as automated scripts to perform repetitive action that allows for an unprecedented degree of synthesis in compiling, sorting and analyzing data on the internet. In other words, they are "amalgamations of code that mimic users and produce content" (Woolley & Howard, 2016, para. 1) In the political sphere, the rise of political bots have created a new layer of computational propaganda on social life, gaining newfound influence on the shaping of public opinion. This has shifted conversations over the last two decades about datafication, challenging assumptions of algorithmic neutrality and authenticity of citizen representation online.

For instance, Modi with his "Obama style" social media campaigns broke ground in the way politics in India play out in the digital sphere, successfully reaching India's remote and vast political audiences (Pal, 2015). On Twitter, Modi has the largest twitter following among political actors, even more than any mainstream news media channel or journalist in India. While undoubtedly Modi is ingenious in extending his charisma online through such communication strategies, he does not leave much to chance. He harnessed an army of bots to connect with his constituency and simulate vibrant political communication and participation. For instance, there is legitimate concern that many of his twitter followers are fake (Bhagchandani, 2013). Almost half of them do not have a profile picture, many of them have never tweeted and their twitter IDs carry five or so numerals, all indicators that they are spam bots to create the illusion of political popularity. This has serious consequences today in the field of journalism. Conventional mass media industries are shaping their political news by what is trending on twitter. Twitter trends are seen as proxies for public interest. The practice known as astroturfing, the creation of fake grassroots support is now a growing problem as

politicians compete with one another in this new information battlefield. This blurs the genuine with the fake political audiences, and puts the power more in the hands of those who control bot armies best.

Political balkanization – old and new media systems along communal lines

Indian media broadcast networks in concert with political parties have launched special channels to propagate particular communal ideologies. For instance, the fundamentalist Hindu party Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Marxists of Kerala, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu, the Congress Party, and even the Catholic Church have their own TV channels (p.85). Hence, diversity here is not necessarily conducive to socio-political inclusion as would be commonly perceived. Given all these networks have a growing and competitive online presence, they foster the continuity of political balkanization within the digital media sphere.

In just the first three months of 2016, there have been 17 cases of censorship within the 'old' media system and 8 cases of digital censorship including Google, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (Jha, 2016). For instance, a 'Pakistan Ki Jai' WhatsApp message expressing sympathy towards Pakistan resulted in the jailing of two Mangalore-based students. An Instagram picture with the caption "Kashmir hearts beats only for Pakistan," was removed instantly from the site. Another incident involved the blocking of internet services and social media sites in the state of Haryana to deter the spread of the Jat community's protest marches demanding special reservations within the state institutions. Hence, this crafting of media politics along communal, caste, and religious lines is not just reforming the old media system but also the digital realm. In other words, with social media, communal politics extends to data politics.

Conclusion:

Datafication of political communication in India should take heed of both the old and new media to gain a more comprehensive picture of the influence of mass media on emerging political audiences. The Indian mass media empire appears to not just stand, but also expand into an archipelago of communal interests. The trend of communal politics seeping into traditional and digital media channels further fragments political audiences. Both systems work in concert to fragment the political sphere. It appears that the information or filter bubble comes to fruition not just within the social media sphere but also within the traditional

channels of mass media such as the television. In other words, media diversity does not necessarily result in political inclusion.

PAPER 3: <u>Privacy and Citizenship in India: Exploring Constitutional Morality in the Internet Era</u>

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Historically, the regulation of social content generated by citizens in the form of speech, writing, electronic was the sole prerogative of the State. This was much like the Weberian State's monopoly over legitimate violence. Content regulation by the state was legitimized in order to address unwanted social harms like child pornography, sexual abuse, terrorism and defamation. With the coming of the internet age, the terrain has been radically altered in terms of the rapid expansion of the ISP's (Internet Service Providers) capacity in exercising control over the content on the internet, thereby exposing the limits to the State's technical competence to regulate content. This is further exacerbated by internet users relatively weakened position by the limits placed on their constitutional rights through contractual means. The State's increasing reliance on private internet platforms and its commitment towards large scale data collection and identity verification projects like aadhaar also means that State itself is predominantly an interested party on the issue of content regulation and privacy.

June 25: No more crocodile tears. An experiment with privacy has paid off for a pair of grateful marsh crocodiles and gifted Alipore zoo its first hatchlings in at least a decade

In the past two days, seven hatchlings have been spotted in the isolated enclosure that has been the mating pair's home since 2016. The zoo authorities are elated, convinced that this crocodilian feat would not have been possible without their deciding to provide some privacy to the pair.

(Croc-a-hoop at the zoo – Privacy begets first hatchlings in a decade, News report by Debraj Mitra in The Telegraph, June 26, 2017).

It seems not only humans but others in the animal kingdom also value their privacy and can therefore expect to secure privacy through human intervention if their privacy can result in certain "productive activities". The more interesting question is of course whether the individual right to privacy should hinge on the productiveness of the activities that are undertaken in privacy. State intervention and interruption of this privacy has long been justified in the case of social harms that may result from the practice of privacy, however that is a negative condition. Privacy as a positive obligation for the performative denudes the very idea of individual autonomy. However such

debasement has crept into privacy discussions in the digital world, as we have unthinkingly recast this debate as merely a contractual issue.

Privacy though has increasingly become an exception rather than the norm in everyday life. It is increasingly a scare commodity and therefore only available to those who have the financial resources as well as the technical knowledge to secure it. Privacy is now more than in the nature of a priviledge rather than a right. Nowhere is this more keenly felt than in the digital world.

There is a material difference between how privacy is both imagined and practiced in the digital world as compared to our physical world. While defending expanded powers of the State to police private behavior on the internet, Additional Solicitor General, Mr. Tushar Mehta relied on the argument on the increasing propensity of the internet as a medium of communication to violate privacy of individual users.

"In case of media like print media, television and films, it is broadly not possible to invade the privacy of unwilling persons. While in the case of an internet, it is very easy to invade upon the privacy of an individual and thereby violating his right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India."

(Para 30 of the Judgement of Supreme Court in Shreya Singhal vs UOI (2015) 5 SCC 1).

This is of course the core of the argument for treating internet different medium, but as I will show this internet is not just another medium. It is a medium that is designed to enhance certain human proclivities and allows for extremely intrusive and far reaching data gathering of user information. These proclivities are further exacerbated with the rapid expansion of internet usage in India not only by private citizens pursuing their own ends but also it is increasingly a tool of governance itself and therefore in ordering relationships between citizens and the State.

India has one of the fastest growing markets in terms of internet access and connectivity in the world. This expansion has been primarily led by the growth in mobile telephony. The mobile telephony market has been fiercely competitive with new players like Jio Telecom entering the market thereby further driving down prices in an already highly price sensitive market. Nevertheless internet penetration still continues to be limited to not more than 17% of the Indian population. This is an important figure to keep in mind while discussing the issue of privacy on the internet in the context of India. Often discussions of privacy in India and the lack of protection thereof is assailed by charges of elitism and privilege but as our discussion will show this is a fig leaf because privacy is not just a public policy issue for those Indians who have access to the

internet but should be of concern for everybody else as well. One way to address this issue is to provide a descriptive analysis of internet usage in terms of typologies of relationships: citizen- other non-state actors – state.

These typologies can be categorized into three categories. First, is the increasing usage of government agencies and ministers of private platforms to communicate and also undertake public services delivery and grievance redressal. Instances of this include the Minister of External Affairs rescuing of immigrant Indians in foreign countries through her twitter account, ministers taking cognizance of change.org petitions to push for policy changes and has also resulted in conflict resulting from Governors of States bypassing the Chief Minister's office to issue executive commands directly to bureaucrats.

Second, is that there has been a trend of excessive reliance on intermediaries (both internet service providers (ISPs) and content providers like Google, Facebook and Twitter) by the government agencies seeking to regulate unlawful content over the internet. The third set of relationships is between users in this case citizens of India and the intermediaries, wherein the latter is in a contractual relationship of usage of certain services that allow it to access and use the internet for a number of functions. Arguably this category is amongst the most private in nature in terms of the legal relationship between the parties but as we shall see that it is critical that all these relationships are seen in concomitance with each other and therefore necessarily also their implications on citizen's rights and responsibilities are manifold. This will become clear in the following discussion on each of these three relationships.

Flagging these three typologies is necessary not only to provide a conceptual structure to relationships on the internet in order to frame the regulatory debates relating to privacy therein, but also to underline the critical linkages between these framings. These critical linkages are reflected not only in law and policy but also in explaining executive actions and judicial interventions in this context. With this brief overview on typologies, I begin my explorations on the idea of privacy in the digital era.

This paper charts the current landscape in terms of the nature and scale of these developments through relationship typologies between citizens, private ISPs and the State. It explores the domain of constitutional rights like freedom of speech and expression and privacy as well as Constitutional principles such as democracy and human dignity to establish a legal argument and concomitant institutional arrangements for securing civil liberties in the internet era.

This paper is divided into five parts. Second part explores the jurisprudence on privacy in India. It is critical to appreciate the fact that courts will play a formative role in regulating of the internet more generally and specifically on the issue of privacy in the digital world. Indeed this is being widely recognized by academicians across disciplines. The third part reflects on the Indian legislative conceptualizations of privacy and its impact in shaping relationships in the digital world. Part four brings these two previous discussions on privacy together in the context of the constitutional objectives of dignity and democracy. Finally in the fifth section I make some concluding remarks on the privacy as a principle of constitutional morality and the institutional mechanisms which can be considered for securing privacy in India. However before embarking on such an exploration, it is important to make a caveat. I am well aware that there are cognitive uncertainties in delving into jurisdictional ideas of privacy in the digital world, however I am defend this as a necessary endeavour given that digital relationships will impact our offline relationships and in the process recast the relationship between the citizen and the state.

PAPER 4: <u>Infrastructure as digital politics: Media practices and the Assam NRC Citizen Identification Project</u>

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Database politics represent new forms of categorizations – who is a citizen, who is a resident and who is a welfare beneficiary. It creates new conditions of possibility for circulation of identity, access to welfare and benefits, as is evident in the implementation of the UID/Aadhaar Project. In this regard, the notion of 'legality/ illegality' of citizens/non-citizens has always been central to the constitution of nation states. Databases represent new sociotechnical imaginaries of information infrastructures that mediate state-citizen relationships in the political regime of public-private partnerships. It also enables a system of classifications and identification that was unimaginable in a paper-based bureaucracy. Political practices can now rely entirely on computing an identifiable body of a citizen/non- citizen, which changes the very nature of politics symbolized through state-sponsored digital interventions and by extension, the contours of political aspirations and practices enacted on social media platforms.

This proposal is a part of a research project[4] which investigates the update of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process in Assam as a case study to map the emergent changes in one of the core modalities of Indian governance: the unique identification of citizens. The NRC, as a part of the National Population Register (NPR), is a list of only Indian citizens, and is currently in the process of being updated only in Assam. Thus, the question of who is an Indian citizen is central to its design and implementation. The research project aims to trace the bureaucratic process of NRC update from its conceptualization and design to its current deployment, while closely attending to the current on-the-ground reactions to its implementation. It will document and discuss the various challenges in its implementation, emerging from concerns around illegal immigration from Bangladesh, the history of identity politics in Assam, and the constitutional and legislative rules and provisions, which define the nature of citizenship in India.

Within the legal procedures of establishing citizenship, the Citizenship Act 1955, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 1986, and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules 2003, detail the changing definitions of citizenship and the process for citizen

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[4] The project *Life of a Tuple: Mapping the Assam NRC as an Infrastructure of Reform in Citizen Identification* is being hosted by the Researchers at Work programme in Centre for Internet and Society (CIS), and is being supported by a research grant from Azim Premji University (APU).

identification. These legislations offer a starting point to bureaucratically rationalize how the process of NRC update should be operationalized. Furthermore, the identification and deportation of illegal foreigners from Assam has been one of the core demands in the Assam Accord, signed in 1985, between the Central government, the State government, AASU (All Assam Students Union) and the AAGSP (All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad). Taking these interventions in defining Indian citizenship in Assam into account, the Office of the State Coordinator (NRC) Assam prescribed specific procedures and documents for citizenship claims, as per the Constitutional Act, Citizenship Rules 2003, Assam Accord, and recent Supreme Court orders. This included drawing lineage from legacy data, which combines the NRC of 1951, and electoral rolls till the midnight of March 24, 1971, and providing a set of secondary admissible documents as necessary conditions for making a citizenship claim.

Thus, the NRC in Assam, as an infrastructures based on the aggregation and categorization of individuals, is what one could call 'technology as politics' (Winner, 1998). It has emerged within a political landscape, which is increasingly embedded in the binary of inclusion/exclusion and has created and redefined mechanisms of technologically categorizing the nature of citizenship. While such digital practices have created ruptures in practices of securing rights, access, benefits and citizenship, it has also consolidated citizenship as aggregation of information and data that allows the state to know its citizens. These interventions influence complex processes of citizen-making, which are often historical, socio-cultural and specific to a demography, as in the case of Assam.

Drawing on this ongoing project, this proposed paper specifically deals with the crucial processes of media management as a state practice in the update of NRC, both in terms of mainstream as well as online media. We will document the media outreach techniques used during the project for public awareness, information dissemination, and as an image building exercise. Specifically, the paper will focus on media practices that are an integral part of the NRC update process, as they sustain and circumscribe 'the sociotechnical building and maintenance' (Star and Bowker, 1999; Star and Ruhleder, 1996) of NRC as an information infrastructure. These practices drive a 'digital circulation' (Beer, 2013) of public opinion, political aspirations, anxieties and tensions online; thus reflecting a materiality of media, not only through state policy, but also as an 'inverse infrastructure' (Egyedi et al. 2012) of users' opinions, articulations and contestations.

Through discourse analysis of media content on Facebook and Twitter as well as news reports and responses on the NRC website, the paper will analyse the various factors that influence and concretize the 'sociotechnical imaginaries' (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015) embedded in the NRC update

process. These factors include, but are not limited to, nature of targeted media practices by the government, users' opinions, offshoot webpages, legal and identity based concerns in the public discourse and media responses. Our fieldwork suggests that these imaginaries have also had an impact on design considerations, and the final actualization of the infrastructure in its entirety. In this regard, the paper articulates these media practices as bureaucratic narratives of efficiency, transparency, and trust management.

Information infrastructures, such as the NRC, have normalized and legitimized technological categorizations, and wired it into various rationales of resolving governance as a problem. The NRC update illustrates how information, data, and media practices become central to certain imaginations and aspirations of political representation and participation. Thus, this paper is an effort to understand the meaning of contemporary politics in situations where information and data become the norms for accomplishing state practices. Situated at the intersection of Science and Technology Studies, Infrastructure Studies, and New Media Studies, this paper analyses the media practices of the state and user agency through online social networking sites to present the story of an infrastructure that mobilizes and attempts to actualize the concerns and debates around the legality/ illegality of Indian citizens.

PANEL IV: NEGOTIATING FROM THE MARGINS

PAPER 1: Changing nature of labour action in Delhi NCR
Faiz Ullah, TISS

My ongoing work is interdisciplinary in nature and falls broadly in the realms of Media and Labour Studies. It is broadly concerned with the emerging political and representational strategies of industrial workers in northern India. My objective is to analyze workers' media praxis and texts, within the vibrant context of proliferation of digital and online technologies, and develop an understanding of the ways in which they are thinking about, and negotiating with, changes unfolding in their life worlds.

With a conservative government at the helm, the neo-liberal tendencies of the Indian State have acquired a new vigor. Precarious nature of employment, poor working conditions, violence, wage-theft, and a near absence of social security net have placed an overwhelmingly young and mobile workforce under a lot of duress. Forms of organization, like political party-affiliated central trade unions, and modes of resistance, like strikes, that were thought to be effective so far are now increasingly being found to be wanting when pitted against the speed and complexity that characterize the contemporary production processes.

Exigencies of the times, though, are forcing the workers to devise commensurate responses. For illustration, in ongoing conversations among workers, concepts and practices that coalesce in terms like ekta, or unity, and sangathan, or organisation, are being debated in various publications like the Faridabad Majdoor Samachar, and sought to be replaced by taalmel, or coordinated rhythms, suggesting action that is scattered, yet in some ways connected. The idea of taalmel in this context could be thought of as energies whose rise, fall and propagation is contingent on each and every actor as opposed to whims and orders of those who do leadery (sic), according to the workers. These conversations are now focusing on how taalmel could be variously articulated in more potent and pervasive political forms and practices. Instances of recent labour action, from Maruti Suzuki to Honda Motorcycles, do suggest that the workers no longer wait for the politics but actively initiate and shape it according to their specific circumstances. They have particularly turned precariousness, one of the defining features of their working life and seen as a disempowering condition by a scholars and activists, into a strategic political resource. This shift makes today's worker, in my analysis, not only difficult to manage but rather unmanageable. So far the State and

employer managements have met such strategies with a mix of criminal intimidation and brute force but given the marked increase in the instances of labour action they seem, to some extent, to be working.

In the proposed presentation, I would like to discuss some of newer ideas and strategies of resistance from a rapidly developing repertoire gaining prominence among the workers, especially as they are mediated through the Internet and mobile media, and argue that to counter contemporary challenges we need to creatively embrace some of their uncomfortable realities.

PAPER 2: <u>Talking about gender on Facebook: Kerala women's experience of cyber space</u>

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Kerala has always been known for its remarkable development in medical and educational sectors and has also witnessed many social reform movements. Paradoxically patriarchal forces are still prominent in the state despite aspirations towards modern 'western' lifestyles, and this is an issue that demands to be explored in detail. In recent years, social media has become an important platform for discussions about gender issues, especially among youth. Educated women in Kerala have started writing their opinions and experiences on Facebook about gender inequalities. Such online engagement has often led to offline activism, resulting in mass mobilization in protest of social atrocities and gender bias. "Kiss of Love", a campaign protesting against moral policing, which began in Kerala and later spread to other states, is one of many examples of spontaneous protests that happened through social media activism.

While gender bias is an important component of study in the social sciences, "gender talk/discourse" itself has not been explored much in the discipline of psychology. This study finds its relevance by locating itself at the intersection of the interdisciplinary field of gender studies and the emerging perspective of critical social psychology. Critical psychology is an alternate paradigm which challenges mainstream psychology and tries to employ psychological findings to further the cause of social justice. It focuses on the psychological and social factors related to disempowering and repressive circumstances rather than only on individual and internal factors. Despite the rising importance for social media among the youth, studies on gender and social media in India are lacking in psychology. This study also draws on the theoretical framework of discursive psychology, which studies what people do with language and how people attain different interpersonal objectives such as disclaiming an undesirable social identity or attributing blame in social interactions (Willig, 2008).

Based on a larger study to map the qualitative shifts in the social media landscape of Kerala, this paper delves into the gender-related discussions on Facebook, wherein men and women from Kerala participate. I have carried out online ethnography, following discussions on gender-related topics on Facebook and conducted in-depth interviews with seven women who actively engage in online discussions and real-world initiatives on gender issues.

In analysis, I have focused on how participants construct their identities when talking about gender and how they use the social space to achieve their interpersonal objectives. I have also looked at how men and women differently navigate the social space to understand what the comments reveal about gender relations in Kerala. Specifically, I have focused on women's experience of cyber space to explore how even while talking about issues of gender sensitization participants are implicitly 'doing' gender.

The duration of the ethnography was four months. The mapping of the field was done from May 1st – July 30th 2016 with Facebook as the field site by observing various gender-related discussions in individual as well as public groups. Then I narrowed down my field site to one public news channel page for one month (October, 2016) where considerable discussion takes place. Most of these posts, comments, and discussions are in Malayalam. The topics of discussion vary from rape, domestic violence, child abuse, marriage, love, homosexuality, religious rules that suppress women and different protests on gender-related topics. The spontaneous discussions in numerous issues each day in the virtual world made it conducive for the collection of a large amount of data in the time allotted by the study. I also interviewed people who engage with gender related topics online and offline to understand the current context and issues in Kerala to know their experience in both virtual and real world.

During the month that I observed, 2,787,937 number of people from different religious, educational and social backgrounds were following the news channel page. The number of followers kept increasing each day. The different kinds of posts that came in the page in that one month depended on the kinds of news and incidents that were happening during that time. 150 posts and the comments below each posts were collected and analyzed by capturing screenshots of the same. The number of comments ranges from 0 to 1000, approximately depending upon the sensitivity of the issue and many other factors.

While there are mixed response, in most of the posts the comments favor one side of the argument. When there are comments which support gender equality explaining its relevance, there are also comments which explain – and also justify – the reasons for the prevalence of patriarchy in society.

The findings show that women are being excluded from online public spaces and public groups in Facebook and it is largely men who discuss about gender topics. Eighty percent of the people in the discussions on gender related topics were men. When men talk about gender, they focus less on gender issues and more on religion and politics. In the present political scenario, the discussion on gender is also taking place in the context of nationalism and patriotism. People explicitly identify

themselves with particular political and religious categories/ideologies (e.g. 'liberal', 'atheist', 'religious', etc.) and seek to demonstrate that the category or community they belong to is 'progressive'. An important strategy for illustrating the progressiveness of one's nation/ religion/ political party/ community etc. is 'blame game', i.e., pointing out the discriminative norms in other religions.

With regard to women's experience of cyber space, women who actively engage with gender issues online and offline claim that Facebook gives them voice and they can reach out to more people. However, they also say that people react to these issues emotionally and only sensational topics such as domestic violence, rape are discussed. Rape is approached as a criminal activity engaged in by strangers, hence closing the discussions on incestuous rape and day to day sexism. They also say that Dalit woman face double the problems online and offline compared to others.

There is also a casual and reductive approach towards these issues, which makes the online space more vulnerable to bullying. Most of the women say that there are changes in the way they get responses from people on Facebook now, but massive bullying and attack still exist. As is evident from the observations of the comments, it is men who make various claims and try to assert their power in the society and community. One of the most common ways of doing it is to claim the ownership of the women in their community. A woman's body is considered as a symbol of the community's honor which is to be protected and controlled by men. Hence the threat of attacking a woman is an insinuation for shaming the men of the other community. There is less space for women's perspectives, and their presence in such public online discussion platforms is mostly passive. Even when discussing about gender in the virtual world women and men are still confined to their predefined gender roles. Discussions are not from a gender-neutral context, they encompass the gender identity of the participants even as they deliberate on the topic.

PANEL V: REGIONAL POLITICS AND DIGITAL POWER

PAPER 1: Media Politics after Cinema in Tamil Nadu

Dr. Francis Cody

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As a result of the proliferation of digital media, democratic politics that had already come to resemble the culture industry more and more are now upended in unexpected ways along with that very industry. In Tamil Nadu, where every Chief Minister for the past fifty years had come from the world of popular cinema, this revolution in media is allowing new forms of mobilization and leadership to claim space. Politics in this state has long been dominated by Dravidian nationalist leaders who used film to build a form of populism in which commodity value was fused to the project projecting the non-Brahmin castes of the region as the true bearers of an ancient Tamil culture. But this style of politics appears to have been unable to reproduce itself. With the passing of the cinema-star-turned Chief Minister, J. Jayalalithaa in December of 2016 and the frail health of her longtime nemesis in this dual-party system, the 94-year old scriptwriter and litterateur, M. Karunanidhi, the collapse of a binary has produced a vacuum. This is a political space that will be shaped more by those who wield contemporary digital infrastructures with skill than by the world of single-screen theatres that allowed for the emergence of what has been termed "cine-politics" as the hegemonic political form. This paper asks questions about what comes after cinematic populism, focusing in particular on popular protests enabled by digital diasporas, to develop an understanding of changes in the mediation of political community.

PAPER 2: <u>Local Language Outreach by Politicians in India: Audience, Branding, and Message</u>

Dr. Joyojeet Pal

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On October 9, 2017, Congress party leader sent out what would soon become a viral message, widely retweeted, but also covered on the mainstream media. In a glibly worded jibe at the prime minister, Gandhi winked at Narendra Modi's own involvement in the scandal surrounding the BJP party president's son, Jay Shah. Gandhi was a late arrival to the social media scene, but while Modi was still dominant on social media, the Congress scion had seemingly picked up the mechanics of online populism well from his rival who had long made an art form of using a mix of the vernacular with English in crafted taunts aimed at his rival (Pal, Chandra et al. 2018). Rahul Gandhi's tweeting in the last year shows that the use of Hindi, or 'Hinglish' has been an indicator of higher retweet or favorite rates.

Social media engagement by politicians is increasingly used in both local and regional elections throughout India as politicians from across parties, regions, and electoral demographics have invested in online campaigns using a range of social networking tools (Neyazi, Kumar et al. 2016). Narendra Modi's 2014 campaign is frequently cited as a landmark case in the use of Twitter because of his use of social media both for building a brand image prior to the election (Ohm 2015), in active public outreach during and following the 2014 campaign, and subsequently, post-election, for publicizing programs (Rodrigues and Niemann 2017), for conducting official business (Sachdeva 2017), but also more generally for a combination of all these -- communicating directly with the public bypassing mainstream media (Sinha 2018).

The 2017 state elections saw a dramatic expansion of the use of social media, as parties were credited with going past elite publics and reaching the masses through massive coordinated WhatsApp campaigns (Bhardwaj 2017). In Uttar Pradesh, in particular, much of the social media outreach took place in the vernacular and was coordinated into the broader campaign strategy down to voting blocks (Verma 2017). Thus while social media on the 2014 election was primarily seen as an elite stakeholder phenomenon transacted primarily in English, the 2017 election saw a shift towards greater use of the popular vernacular.

On a politician's feed, use of the vernacular can at once be seen from the lens of demographic outreach, of a politician's symbolic brand representation, but also from the nuances of linguistic

style that drives the intent of the messages. In this work, we examine the use of language on Twitter using a database of historical archives of Twitter activity by over 200 Indian politicians (with 50,000 followers or more followers). Using qualitative coding, we study various politicians' feed on the frequency and valence of tweets, and identify the instances of aggressive language. We highlight a small number of representative tweets for deep analysis.

The work builds on prior research that shows the use of Hindi or Hinglish over English is related to the expression of emotion, particularly negative emotion, which is in turn also highly gendered (Rudra, Rijhwani et al. 2016). Political tweets play the dual role of making a statement and providing the starting point for a "conversation" including incitement of online action. The interchanging use of language is relevant in its use for signaling confrontation – ranging from sarcasm, direct insult, and abuse, in what has been referred to as 'Gaali Culture' (Udupa 2017), and which natural language processing studies have shown is the preferred means for abusive language on social media (Agarwal, Sharma et al. 2017).

We examine the relationship of language with the valence and content of political tweeting, and discuss the differences between various Indian politicians and their use of online style. We consider the role of language in emphasizing emotion, masculinity, and affinity. Our work considers the future of political communication on social media with specific attention to the evolving use of language.

PAPER 3: <u>Digital cultures and Dalit mobilization in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh</u>

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The last decade has witnessed a great diffusion of information communication technology (ICT). Developments in telecommunication and satellite communication have opened new ways for communication, computer mediated communication, internet, mobile technology and digital communication platforms have come into existence. The production, consumption and distribution mechanisms of media have changed significantly. The new channels of information have changed the media environment. Digital media platforms, internet, computer, mobile communications have opened new possibilities, SMS (Short Message Service), telecommunication, Blogs, Websites, Social Networking, Advanced instant messaging services. Dalits in India have been discriminated and deprived of education, public spaces and entitlement of property. They have negligible presence in mass media institutions, Television, Newspaper and Radio. The explosive reach of digital media and the new channels of communication opened new ways of participation in politics and democracy. The digital media doesn't have a uniform presence, but it has trickled into lowest sections of society. The technological advancement has made the participation little easy for the less literate person and the vernacularization of the digital platforms also increased the participation levels in the digital world.

The changes in dalit's social conditions, accessibility of digital technology and the advancement in communication have opened new ways of social interaction and participation. The digital media offered new possibilities for the dalits unlike mainstream media which has a selective concern for the dalit subject but the digital media also comes as an extension to the mainstream media institutions which are already established in the market. The new and alternative media practices and networks of dalits have to compete the traditional and hegemonic media and information networks.

The new media offered space and opened ways for the ignored and neglected voices by the mainstream media, dalits, adivasi, women, minority and other oppressed groups. The new media, internet, texting, mobile communication has provided opportunity to communicate

with external world, for most of these sections the new media has offered first ever mediated form of communication technology.

The Telugu states Telengana and Andhra Pradesh situated in southern part of the Country, it consist 1,38,78,078 Scheduled Caste population i.e. 16.43% of state population, according to 2011 census data of Government of India. The 'Scheduled Castes' consists of 59 sub castes, the predominant communities are Mala and Madiga caste, which occupy 40 and 50 percent population respectively, followed by Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra to three percent and the rest of the communities occupy the remaining proportion. There is no homogenous distribution of these communities in all the districts and regions, Telangana, Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra. The Coastal Andhra has greater Mala population where as Telangana consist more Madiga population. Indian constitution guarantees fifteen percent reservation in public sector, education and employment opportunities for all fifty-nine scheduled castes. The implementation of the reservation policy for these groups has become a site of conflict among the sub castes. Madiga, Relli, Sindhi, Dakkali and other sub castes of dalits have been organizing themselves under the banner name MRPS (Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi) also popularly identified as 'Dandora' are raising the demand to sub-categorize the reservations on proportional basis and rationalise the distribution of reservation benefits to Scheduled castes. The diffusion of communication technology, explosive reach of wireless communication, changes in living condition of the Dalits has given scope for an interaction between the subaltern groups and the digital communications.

The present study is part of my doctoral thesis of Ph.D. and is based on the ethnography in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states, to study the penetration of the digital technology in the lowest sections and their usage in everyday life. What are the different digital forms which succeeded to reach the subaltern groups, how they have adopted it and which technological form gained more acceptability and what ways they employed.

The paper aims to explore the digital cultures evolved with the interaction of dalits with various digital channels, as they increasingly employing and exploring the digital media platforms in a new way to mobilize the dalits, who are considered as the most marginalised in the society. This study also aim to understand the innovative forms of resistance through various new media forms- social media, blogs, websites, online groups, online magazines,

mobile based communication system (short-message- service, voice calls), multimedia forms (audio-video content)- to mobilize dalits.

PANEL VI: POLICING AND VIOLENCE

PAPER 1: <u>Ringing Revolution : Caste Resistance and Digital Culture in Maharashtra</u>

Shiva Thorat

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Among the recent cases of caste atrocities in Maharashtra, Ahmednagar district near Pune holds an infamous position. This is the same place where 24 year old Sagar Shejwal was beaten to death for his mobile phone ringtone, *Bhimacha Killa*, a song denoting Babasaheb Ambedkar. That lyrics of the song, '*Tumhi kiti bhi lawa shakti, tumhi kiti bhi ladawa yukti, tumhi kara re kiti hi halla, layi majbut Bhimacha killa[5]* " translates of to 'you (exploiters) can 1 put in all that you have, you can try all your trickery, you can attack all you want, but our Babasaheb's fort is unbreakable'. After the incident, the police said that, Sagar Shejwal, who was then a nursing student, was beaten to death at a liquor shop in pilgrimage Shirdi of Maharashtra by seven men belonging to Maratha caste and other Backward Classes communities.

Sagar's phone rang, and the song was about Babasaheb Ambedkar clearly. No one beats anybody to death just for a song. Songs, as a tool, have continuously proved their resistance against any exploitative regime. Babasaheb had once said, 'One song is comparable to ten of my speeches'. *Layi Majbut Bhimacha Killa* is a song that makes people who hate "Dalits" uncomfortable. Vishal Kote, one of the lynchers, hated the song so much that he continued beating Sagar's dead body. 'The mob dragged Sagar's body on the street, tied it to a bike and dragged him far away. Bikes were run over Sagar's body several times', Vivek Patil, Superintendent Police, Shirdi declared later.

Dalits[6] are among the many groups who faced oppression by the growing capitalistic upper caste population in India. Dalits are more vulnerable than the rest because the notion of untouchability ends with them. The beer shop of Shirdi did not practice physical untouchability but Sagar's identity - his ringtone became incidental to this inhuman crime. For Indians, Babasaheb Ambedkar

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[5] Bhimacha Killa, is a very controversial song. After having discussion with few writers, poets and known figure in Maharashtra discovered many peoples are claiming rights to this song. Giant production companies like Ultra and T-Series have copyright on the song, under the banner of religious songs. T-Series produced this song with Shinde Brothers. Shinde brothers (Anand and Milind) are popular for Bhim Geete as well, in mainstream Marathi music. Ultra produced this song with Arun Yewale and Pravin Yewale, the music director are the Sandip Sachin duo and Shailesh from Pune. Interestingly all of them, belong to the Neo-Buddhist (Mahar) Community. The leader of Republican Party of India (A) (RPI-A) Ramdas Athawale is addressing the T-Series version song. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC7shofkTWA)
[6] In Maharashtra, many Buddhists who converted from their untouchable castes do not feel good when someone calls them 'Dalit'. (http://twocircles.net/2016aug30/1472558065.html)

is the face of identity leadership. Krantiba Phule[7], Siddhartha Buddha, Annabhau Sathe[8] are among the few faces of Dalit leadership. Celebration of their birth anniversaries in Maharashtra are observed through songs. Vandalisation and corrupting these celebrations become the rituals for upper dominant caste groups. Thus, songs are also equally nurtured with celebration and vandalisation. '*Bhimacha Killa*' is not just a trigger but symbolised affect of songs.

A fact finding report by '*Jatiya Atyachar Virodi Kruti Samiti*', (Anti-caste atrocities commitee) who visited Shirdi on 21st May 2015 states,

> "The humiliation and brutal torture that Sagar was subjected to fall within the pattern of atrocities on Dalits (such as in Khairlanji, Sonai, Kharda, and Javkheda within Maharashtra) where the attackers do not simply wish to kill the person but desire to imprint their dominant status on the body of the victims in the form of injuries and mutilations".

In submitted article to Subversion, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Thorat (2017) noted that, "Nothing is more emblematic of this system of social organisation than the Marathi saying '*Bamnya ghari livan, Kunbya ghari daan, Mahara-manga ghari gaan*'. (Writing belongs to Brahmin's household, grains in the Kunbi's (peasant) house, and songs to the Mahar and Matang's (outcastes) house). This is essentially how the relations of production are organized typically....".

Arvind Rajagopal (2003) describes that, "...images were not merely artistic creations intended to convey a message so much so as they combined artistic motifs and social conventions so as to increase their own circulations". There are so many songs on Gandhi[9], Kabeer, King Shivaji, Allah and Jesus and those are for praising but people are not getting killed for the same. The socially reproduced content of media perpetuates the caste consciousness. I have argued through interviewee and my experience that download work helped to improve status quo but not caste.

Methodology:

The present study is auto-ethnographic. Many people who are makers of ringtone are the source for the information. Cruel history of brutality through the songs are visible, this study is looking at the

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[7] A Radical personality during the time of colonial era, contemporary of Karl Marx, historian and anthropologists, who has written critical books on Hinduism and caste system. His notable published books like, Shetkaryanche Asud, Gulamgiri, Ishara, Brahmananche Kasab, Tritiya Ratna and so on critically looking at the Varnashrama system and land ownership by the upper caste. Babasaheb Ambedkar called him as his teacher. Krantiba Phule even written Powada (Folk form of song) on King Shivaji addressing his history.
[8] Literary figure who traces the history of Maharashtra with the very narrow and micro ways of criminal caste of Maharashtra. He has written more than 40 novels and so many songs. He is right now known as poor, illiterate communists who have travel to Russia.Also story is famous that Balraj Sahani the actor was his comrade so he used to visit him in his house in Chiragnagar, Chembur and Borivali.
[9] Famously known for the Indian Independence Movement.

narrow space of ringtone and its political economy. As a download worker what I have seen and many people like me seen kind of brutality. Shirpur is the place where I did 'download work'. Download work refers to the process of transferring media formats (audio, video images) onto the memory cards. Shirpur is located in the Dhule district of Khandesh. Khandesh is a region in Maharashtra that is one of least developed in the country. Its administrative borders include the districts of Nandurbar, Jalgaon and Dhule. The prominent town of Malegaon in Maharashtra and Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh historically constitute what is known as Khandesh. Marathi is the official language of Khandesh.

I have interviewed/will interview many different identities but to look at the Sagar Shejawal case I have spoken to those who are download worker-laborers and few consumers belongs to various caste. Narrated accounts of these people also seen as the insights of the industry respective of their socio political understanding of geohistory of Khandesh. Through the eyes of 'download work' what becomes important is the point of everything stopped and nothing less than the beyond of caste. The argument of paper does not only showing how technology is affecting to the deprived identities but how caste is adequately played role to identified who is deprived and who's not? Masummi (1993) said that, 'technology giving the 'liberalisation' and freedom with the fear of everyday'. Geo-history of Khandesh, does not negotiating with the deprived class identities for the technological liberalisation but it is the fear. Being a part of the social-cultural-political social facts of ruled caste system, technology also cannot able to upsurge from derogatory cruelty.

The ramification of download culture starts with the cheap memory cards of the mobile. Before, it was no angle to find to spread songs, images like what 'download culture' done with it. Ramification of download culture violating traditional law of properties like songs and images and that is what we can seen socially. The violation of images and songs remains as illegal and immoral but the caste of societies mind killed the vulnerable and bottomest. Violation just not the clearing vulnerable mentally but the physically. Stigma of the caste does not stopped by the technology. Ramification of the image and songs became trigger point to clear the vulnerable and playing songs on the phone becomes the immoral to the women in a house. Conceptualisation of oppression doesn't empower the mindset, either way through technology or through artistic production.

Conclusion:

The artefacts that consumers choose range from cinema songs to songs made popular by local artists to the theme songs of soap operas on Television. I stress here that it is the download worker's labour that makes these artefacts accessible to consumers. It is this labour that is

completes the circuit of production when it come to the digital products. This circuit has also brought in consumption from hitherto unknown consumers such as women. Not that this has contradicted any of the moral prescriptions of larger society. This has managed to give download work the status of an unorganised yet small scale industry. As with other gentrification processes of neoliberalism, download work has also expanded into new territories. For the purpose of this paper, we shall stay within the framework of songs, image and videos as the artifacts of this culture and look at the contributions of download work toward producing an emotional connect, to their cherished ideas and ideals.

Anil Wagh, a 25-year-old download worker from Dhule district speaks about the connection between the consumers and Adarsh and Utkarsh Shinde's songs and the sentiments of those who admire their songs. He said,

> "It is the effect of the Shirdi incident that people are playing the songs '*Bhimacha Killa*' (Bhima's Fort) and '*Babasahebanchi* Ringtone' (Babasaheb Ringtone) everywhere. It is not a celebratory song but people are dancing to it. What I saw is the anger of my customers expressed through their dance. I do not care why they are dancing but society has a connection with Babasaheb's name".

Being a download worker anything that materialized/produced by me (download worker) is labor and its an expressive intention also. Adorno and Horkheimer say,

> "The attitude of the public, which ostensibly and actually favours the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system and not an excuse for it".

The act of the playing and action of transferring the media may be counted as events. But the processes and histories behind the labour and infrastructure that made it possible is never taken into consideration. Download work is fugitive and changeable. Law and regulations are also against the download worker Download workers are not acknowledged, let alone celebrated as people involved in IT or ITES work. They are treated as members of their caste. This is despite the lack of felicity with technology on the part of their oppressors. This phenomenon is akin to what Gail Omvedt discusses in 'Untouchables in the world of IT' (2004) She says,

> "...like many Dalits (ex-Untouchables) is trying to break into the new world of Information Technology, but fears to reveal his (her) origins to his colleagues. With caste attitudes continuing to shape marriages, life chances and career opportunities, the fear is understandable"

While there seems to be a possibility for the Dalit software engineer to hide his/her identity, the average download worker does not have half that chance.

PAPER 2: <u>Digital vigilantes, citizen journalists, or none of the above: policing the sensible in the era of Youtube</u>

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In 2013, after a series of violent attacks on African nationals living in Khirki, an urban village in South Delhi, I used my DSLR camera to film a group of residents on the main street of the village arguing about whether and how to forcibly expel African residents. As I walked away from the scene several men from the village approached me demanding the data card from my digital camera. They argued that footage was too sensitive and that if I put this footage on Youtube, the video would circulate far and wide and that, as a result, the Indian diaspora in Africa would be attacked and that I would be responsible. Moreover, they argued that I would be giving their village and India a bad name. They appealed to my Indian-ness to convince me that I shouldn't circulate the video on Youtube, presuming, of course, that I intended to do so in the first place. In this turn of events urban villagers in India recognized the international effects that representations of violence being perpetrated against African nationals at the local level would have if they were circulated on Youtube – and sought to police them. They did so, ostensibly, to protect the Indian diaspora in Africa but also protect themselves, their village, and 'India' from scrutiny.

In this essay, I explore how my encounter with these men in that moment and the months that followed pushed me to productively think through the various misrecognitions and assumptions that my interactions with them laid bare. Specifically, I am interested in using these ethnographic encounters to theorize how Youtube produces a policing of the sensible. If we consider, drawing from Jacques Ranciere (2004), that the sensible – the way we see, hear, feel, experience the world – is governed by a deep sense of what we imagine is normal, acceptable, then anything spectacular and beyond the pale is a break in the order we have come to expect. Youtube videos that circulate depictions of a break in the sensible create a complicated relationship between our sensory understandings of the normative order and its violations. They do so in a way I argue that mainstream journalistic, artistic, or social science accounts cannot precisely because Youtube footage – in its shaky, grainy, amateurish presentation – harkens and appeals to a real beyond the numbing spectacle that mass mediation, the mystification of expert accounts, or the sheer abstraction of artistic representation produces.

On the one hand, the grainy hyper-real representations that circulate on Youtube come to stand in as a felicitous witnessing of violence and injustice, a means to remind and reinforce the boundaries of consent-based liberalism in the wake of a rising and increasingly virulent politics of difference. For instance, Youtube and the footage in enables and circulates has allowed citizen/subjects to police the state and its excesses in the name of preservation of the normative order imagined as the rule of law. Recent Youtube footage of Spanish soldiers beating Catalonian voters, the steady stream of Youtube videos documenting US police officers violently attacking Black and Brown citizens, or Youtube footage of the Turkish secrete police attacking Kurdish protestors who appeared in various locations on Prime Minister Edrogan's official state tour – all have made the digital rounds and offered overwhelming evidence to the publics each of these videos created of the capacity and appetite the state has for circumventing the rule of law. In this scenario, Youtube videos are the product of 'citizen journalists' who uphold the liberal social contract by calling into question the cracks and rifts that state actors' produce as they attempt to impose order. This sort of policing begins and ends with an understanding of the sensible as the bordered space of states and citizens as the presumed beneficiaries of such raw journalistic accounts from below.

On the other hand, Youtube has not only offered up the opportunity for those deemed and those self-described citizen journalists to police the state (and its excesses). Youtube has also created the possibility for 'digital vigilantes' to document and circulate accounts of non-state actors as they engage in purported boundary violations. Daily, we (at least those of us on social media) are barraged with videos of acts and behaviour beyond what is deemed normative. These videos subsume us in congealing publics and reinforce not only a sense of what, in some cases, is legally permissible, but what is morally and socially acceptable. These circulating accounts cannot be easily contained within the rubric of citizen journalism as the motivations and politics of their production and their reach exceeds both the citizen (in relation to the state) and journalism insofar as they are, potentially, meant to incite rather than inform. These videos, thus, can be seen as acts of vigilantism. In these instances, policing the sensible becomes a political imperative, a means to contain and control from the ground up in ways that exceed the state.

Policing the sensible – whether from a citizen journalistic or digital vigilante position – pressures state and non-state actors to curtail their own excesses. Youtube and its capacity to circulate unfolding accounts on the ground, in this sense, can be easily seen as a social good (although we must keep in mind publics might congeal around representations of the excesses of state and non-state actors that laud the excesses (and the representations of them) as necessary evils for the long

term preservation of the normative order). Yet, these acts of policing the sensible through mass witnessing also have the potential for producing unrest and potential violence as the videos circulate (as the men in Khirki argued) and for creating another layer of policing on the ground as to what can be captured and towards what ends (as I experienced with these very same men). In this sense, policing the sensible conjures the realist aesthetic of fascism, it becomes a means to limit, to silence, for the purported greater good.

Moreover, the politics that policing the sensible generates positions those that neither fancy themselves citizen journalists nor digital vigilantes – like myself – in an interesting political-ethical conundrum. As an anthropologist who makes films that ostensibly reach a very contained audience, the fact that I was misrecognized as a journalist, a vigilante, or some hybrid of both – ready, in a moments notice to upload my footage onto Youtube – poses interesting questions concerning the role of ethnographers who use photo and film to represent unfolding socio-political dramas as engaged and engaging scholarship. For social scientists in general and anthropologists in particular, the policing of the sensible, whether represented through text or other means, is an ethical imperative. We are taught to participate and observe but not do any harm, either during fieldwork or afterwards, in our representations of encounter. I conclude this essay by thinking through how my interlocutors assertion that I will cause harm if I circulate certain footage on Youtube, can be repurposed in ways that push for a close engagement with the permeable and slippery boundaries that are produced in the digital moment that may push anthropologists to at once police the sensible and transgress boundaries.

PAPER 3: <u>Kashmir 2.0 Contemporary Audio-Visual Material Dispatched from the Valley on the World Wide Web</u>

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Kashmir has long been imagined as the locus and space of desire in Bombay Cinema and has continued to be depicted in the Indian imagination as 'heaven on earth'. However, increasing conflict between the Indian and Pakistan states, the demands for Azadi by the local population, and heightened militancy and violence from the 1990s onward has changed this imagination from lauding the stunning beauty of Kashmir to seeing the landscape being stained by Kashmiri blood, the "sheer rubies on the Himalayan snow" (Kabir, 2009: 21)[10]. This paper responds to this changed and charged contemporary situation in Kashmir with a focus on the years 2000-2017, through the perspective of Kashmiris who are now responding to their context, imagined homeland, and the devastating contours of the everyday through cinema, other audio-visual media, the internet and music.

In the new century, Kashmir awakened to a new vigilance that used film, video and the internet as the means to discuss the valley. The Kashmiri picked up the camera to destabilize popular narratives about the region which was earlier either exoticized or which projected Kashmir as a place infested with terrorism. The time period chosen for the study is important because video and the internet emerged as crucial mediums in 2000 after decades of turmoil in Kashmir and simultaneously, the advent of globalisation in India facilitated the circulation of video, photographs and writings from the valley through the internet.

This project will address the mediums of internet and music to explore the new networked and mediatized Kashmir where the response to the terrible conflict with its representations and discourses has also been taken up in virtual space. In this project then, YouTube films, audio-visual material on the internet, and Kashmiri music and rap songs will be addressed in order to explore the articulations of conflict, identity, struggle and protest in Kashmir today. The purpose of this paper is to address the critical juncture in Kashmir's new media history where the audio visual has become the medium to rupture state narratives. Here the state and the local Kashmiris respond to each other through an array of audio visual material that questions subject positions and truth dispensing mechanisms. These new mediums expose the ways in which the Indian state and

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[10] Kabir, Ananya J. Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir. India: Permanent Black, 2009

Kashmir get entangled in the conflict. The paper will thus explore the conflict in Kashmir as questions of identity, political choices, the violent textures of everyday life and counter narratives get articulated in the contemporary moment through different expressive forms that Kashmiris are deploying to make their voices heard.

Using different philosophical and theoretical insights, I hope to work through the implications of the repressed mobility of the individuals in Kashmir and their hyper engagement with the internet. This engagement has created tons of audio visual material like short YouTube films like *In the Shade of the Fallen Chinar* that portrays Kashmiri artists' creating a safe space in the University of Kashmir to speak their minds through painting and music. In virtual space, through this audio visual material, a new media discourse is produced which will be elaborated upon in the first section. The distribution of this audio-visual material is mostly timed with the ongoing protests where several recordings of the protests and confrontations between the security forces and locals find their way to the internet. As issues of propaganda and counter narratives get foregrounded, internet censorship also becomes an essential part of the picture, which I hope to examine. With the advent of smartphone cameras, digital cameras and access to the internet, Kashmiris have become amateur filmmakers and videographers. The need to look at what they are uploading on the internet has become stronger due to state imposed censorship and the hyper mediatized narratives presented by news agencies. Some of the issues that this section will look at by examining the audio visual material made and uploaded on the web by Kashmiris in the valley are questions of self-representation, immediacy, bypassing censorship (for a time period) and circulating uncut versions and spreading the word about the struggle against security forces in Kashmir, hackers at risk in the valley, internet cafes as centre points for this activity, the uploading of protest videos, propaganda videos, still photography, and the overall mobilization of the internet in order to draw attention to the ongoing struggle and conflict in Kashmir.

This section will explore the questions raised by the use of raw footage as evidence and testimony against state narratives collected and spread through the internet in Kashmir, their successes, failures, propaganda mechanisms and easy access and the construction of the popular figure/the leader through the internet. Every image of protest used in a video or the last phone call made by an insurgent and the accumulation of digital material then becomes an exercise in paranoia by Kashmiris. Differing from the state narratives that do not speak in the public interest, these digital materials foreground the creation of a public history which keeps altering every moment since new materials keep cropping up on the internet. This material further acquires a digital immortality. I

will describe the process of digital archiving by Kashmiris to preserve this audio visual material as a constant struggle against the short term public memory of a digital file.

Contemporary Kashmiri music which is directly released on the internet speaks of Azadi, oppression, protest, disappearance and remembrances. Kashmiri Folklore and poetry too get transformed through this music as it is increasingly becoming a powerful tool of protest. I intend to look at these Kashmiri music videos and live performances as cinematic texts that surpass the logics of mainstream filmmaking while asserting a certain political weight. In this section, I will look at contemporary musicians from Kashmir like rapper MC Kash, Emcees Ame and Mosam who rap in English-Kashmiri, Ali Saiffudin who only sings in Kashmiri and Mohammad Muneem who sings in Kashmiri and Urdu and the all-female rock band Pragaash which was banned after a fatwa was issued by Grant Mufti in 2012. When Zubin Mehta performed at the highly publicized concert in Srinagar in 2013, a counter protest- concert was held at a closer location organized by a civil rights group headed by Khurram Parvez titled: Haqeeqat-e- Kashmir. At this concert, the songs sung in Urdu and Kashmiri articulated the themes of oppression, violence and trauma inflicted on the Kashmiri population. Thus in this section, I wish to look at how the Kashmiri music scene is rapidly changing, using Kashmiri language and adopting other languages and forms to talk about oppression and human rights violations. Here, I will look at how the Kashmiri performer, his body, his music is enabling Kashmiris to surpass regulations and find their voices. The question of exclusion of the Kashmiri woman from this space will also be discussed.

This paper addressing the questions internet videos and the power and appeal of public figures and the significance of the use of music to rupture state narratives will lead to a conclusion in which I hope to explore the significances of understanding a new Kashmir – different from the popular imagination of it as a 'paradise' – one that is boiling and seething with anger, protest and violence.

PANEL VII: NEWS AND (INTER)ACTIVE AUDIENCES

PAPER 1: Twitter and Temporality: Live Television's Appropriation of Hashtags in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Elections

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The rise of digital culture riding on the growth of networked devices in India continues to transform India's public sphere with far reaching consequences in the realm of politics, culture and varied mediated dimensions of social life. It has provided an outlet for and an intensification of a prior culture of heterodoxy and dissent that has historically been an inseparable aspect of India's political and discursive life. This culture has played out differently on each platform with the specific affordances of Twitter, Facebook and Youtube each allowing for particular kinds of networked sociality to emerge and intersect with pre-existing social and cultural mores. This presentation explores the role of Twitter in India's public sphere by investigating the ways in which its particular affordances allow for a specific kind of intensification of interactivity that makes it uniquely suited for inculcating and fostering networked issue publics that are connected across space and time in the here and now. While its features allow it to emerge as a natural medium for free-wheeling public debate and discussion, they also make Twitter an apt medium for the use by other legacy media institutions to foster and tap into the networked public for their own expedient goals.

This presentation will focus on one such attempt at the use of twitter to create a hybrid interactive audience by news television by focusing on the use of competing hashtags by networks during the live broadcast of the results of state elections for Uttar Pradesh on March 10, 2017. This analysis will focus on four news networks (Zee, Newsx, NDTV and Times Now) to compare their strategies of creating and using particular hashtags in order to generate conversation outside their studios about the ongoing discussion within. By creating distinct hashtags and then flashing it on their screen and repeatedly asking their audiences to use it in their tweets, the networks sought to tie the unfolding events in the studio and the audiences outside of it in a live interactive embrace. This fostered interactivity, conducted with the primary end of increasing viewership, creating a buzz and signaling popularity to advertisers and their peer networks makes for an interesting case study to understand both the unique features of a hashtag and the ways in which multiple media technologies are coming together

to create hybrid media ecologies in a digitally networked age. This hybrid media ecology that we inhabit today comes into being from the simultaneous co-existence of multiple channels of news, information and entertainment. An event could be televised live on television while also being tweeted about and reported on simultaneously on the online sites of news outlets before it goes in the print version of the next day's newspapers and on Youtube for perpetuity. This hybrid media ecology creates both challenges and opportunities for media outlets who must deal with fragmented attention while also being able to benefit from an interactive audience of the kind unimaginable in the pre digital age.

Live television, in particular finds itself situated uniquely at the conjunction of old and new media as its promise of immediacy and the erasure of time and space to experience an event as it unfolds "live" resonates strikingly with digital platforms such as Twitter with a similar affinity to immediacy. Scholars (Scannell 2013) have analyzed the phenomenology of liveness to understand how its promise of enjoining the viewers with an event in real time, has provided it with a cultural valence that is built as much upon immediacy as it is upon the anxiety, uncertainty and excitement associated with the unfolding of time into the future. Being able to witness the unfolding of the event in real time, even when separated from it in space provides the idea of liveness a cultural salience that has been leveraged by television networks to stand apart from competition by promising ever closer access to the event. This has often happened at the cost of risk and interference with the very event they seek to cover and report on (Kumar 2013). Twitter's emphasis on brevity, immediacy and ability to connect conversations dispersed across time and space makes it a suitable partner for live television's pursuit of ever closer access to the event.

This presentation will re-think the scholarship on live television by filtering it through the theoretical explorations about Twitter in general and the hashtag in particular (Rambukkana, 2015) to understand how the two technologies come together to create a unique assemblage of media experience. As a hyperlinking technology that both connects dispersed conversations and erases time and space in the process, the hashtag has been key to the ongoing global conversation that twitter has enabled and has become a central platform for. Its appropriation by live television seeks to tap into this ability and in so doing complements television's unidirectional functionality. By allowing for the ability to talk about and talk back to the unfolding events on the television screen, the hashtag extends and makes television bi-directional. India, with the second largest population of Twitter users in the world and an ever growing number of live news networks that try to trend particular hashtags everyday makes

for a particularly rich site for analyzing this process of convergence between distinct media technologies.

This paper's exploration through the case study of the live broadcast of the UP Assembly elections has lessons beyond this specific instance. The consequences of the global growth of Twitter and its ability to foster alliances and progressive politics but also its implicit sanction for reactionary discourses (Udupa 2017) are just beginning to be explored by scholars. This study seeks to add to those explorations allowing us a better understanding of a platform whose role in reshaping global politics has been widely acknowledged.

PAPER 2: <u>**Did the 2014 Elections Polarize Online News Audiences in India? A Network Analysis of Digital Trace Data on News Usage**</u>

Dr. Harsh Taneja

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The year 2014 "marked India's late arrival in the spectacle of 'mediated elections' familiar to observers of American style mediated democracy" (Chakravartty and Roy, 2015). It was the country's first election with its significant population consuming news online and both political parties and publics using social media for campaign and deliberations. This study ascertains the extent of ideological polarization in how Indians (both residents and the Diaspora) consume news online, and how this changed during the elections. It employs network analyses of shared user traffic between 175 India-based digital news outlets with 12 cross-sections of monthly news consumption data obtained from *ComScore*.

As digital media become the pre-eminent modes of people's engagement with news and political information, mediascapes globally have witnessed increasing polarization along partisan lines. However, whether digital media use leads to audience polarization remains an open question. Although wide ranging scholarship has examined news consumption to answer this question in Western contexts employing Eurocentric concepts such as "partisan selective exposure", this study aims to turn this debate towards burgeoning democracies in the global South, where both digital media access and news supply are growing at a frenzied pace.

Digital Media Use, Ideological Polarization and the 2014 Indian Elections

In a high-choice media environment, "[p]artisanship is an appropriate criterion for making news selections" (Stroud, 2011 p. 6). Therefore, as news audiences fragment, they could retreat into like-minded enclaves, resulting in highly polarized media use. "[T]he extent that people expose themselves exclusively to one set of those voices— those with whom they already agree—then political views can be expected to polarize, and thus governing becomes more difficult, and extremism more likely." (Mutz & Young, 2011, p. 1025). Studies find evidence of partisan selective exposure in both surveys (e.g., Stroud, 2011), where people are asked about their political leanings and their news sources, as well as laboratory experiments that manipulate media source cues (e.g., Iyengar & Han, 2009). Instead of relying on self-reports (surveys) or lab experiments,

studies using digital trace data (sourced from audience measurement providers like Nielsen or ComScore) find little evidence of partisan audience polarization. These suggest that regardless of their political leanings, most people visit "centrist" outlets, and a small number of users also visit extreme ideological websites; the latter generally have omnivorous news diets (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011, Webster & Ksiazek, 2012, Divir-Gvisman et al. 2014). The evidence for or against audience polarization is at best mixed.

However, extant scholarship largely focuses on relatively stable attitudes like political interest and partisanship (Menchen-Trevino, 2012). Little attention has been paid to how citizens pay attention to the news during events such as Elections that naturally raise the level of political interest leading to overall higher levels of news consumption (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). During elections many hitherto uninterested people also seek out political information and others seek even more of it. These conditions for facilitating ideological patterns of news use and potential audience polarization are also relevant for large non-Western democracies including India.

There is general scholarly and popular agreement that in recent decades Indian democracy has deepened. This deepening has taken place despite the lack of social and economic development at the scale at which mainstream western theories of political science posit for democracies to sustain and flourish (Neyazi, 2014). The growth in news media in India has a role in this process of democratization and urbanization (Nair, 2003; Udupa, 2012; Neyazi, 2010). 2014 was the first election in India that a significant number of India's voting population accessed news online. Consequently, the country's prominent news organizations invested substantially more this time in their online election coverage (Sardesai, 2014). Other than mainstream news organizations, many ideologically polarized blogs and opinion sites- spanning the political spectrum- also surfaced in India closer to the elections. Online news consumption data from India before, during and after these elections thus offer a fertile ground for understanding the extent to which news consumption is polarized during periods of heightened news interest.

Method: Network Analysis using ComScore WorldWide Internet Use Panel Data

Surveys and experiments are able to only partially gauge people's digital media diets, which passively obtained trace data capture quite comprehensively. Further people tend to overestimate their news usage in surveys (Prior, 2009; 2012). Mindful of these considerations, this study relies on trace web-use data, sourced from ComScore, a panel-based service that provides passively obtained Internet use data once a month from 2 million users worldwide in 170 countries. ComScore has been sampling in India since 2007 and the panel has scaled according to the growth

in Internet usage. This study uses the ComScore "Worldwide" aggregated panel. The data thus capture web usage of both Indians residing in India as well as the Diaspora.

The sample for this study includes monthly shared usage data from the most visited 200 Indian news websites between November 2013 and October 2014. Thus for each outlet, I obtained data about its audience duplication with every other outlet. Simply put, audience duplication is the extent to which two media outlets (e.g., websites) are consumed by the same set of people in a given time period. Duplication indicates in a given month the number of people who visited, for example, both "TheHindu.com" as well as "NarendraModi.in". For each month, I obtained audience duplication between all pairs of media outlets in the sample to create an *audience duplication network* with websites as nodes and shared traffic (duplication) as the ties. These twelve cross-sections of include both the election months (April and May 2014) as well as sufficient number of months before and after to capture the gradual increase in news interest before and it's tapering after the elections.

This sample covers outlets that are more centrist, as well as extreme ones on either side of the political spectrum. Departing from the conservative/liberal classification used in western literature, I classified most outlets as either "centrist", "pro-Modi/BJP" or "anti-Modi/anti-BJP". Although many of the outlets in the sample provide news in English, reflecting the relatively elite profile of Internet users in India at the time, the sample has many websites in Bangla, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam to provide a holistic slice of news media. (The exact sample size varies slightly month to month, depending on fluctuations in user traffic).

Analysis and Preliminary Findings:

Contrary to the selective exposure thesis, the preliminary results broadly point to evidence of cross cutting exposure between websites being the highest when overall news consumption was highest - during the election months and especially in May 2014 when results were announced. Partisan websites on the "pro-Modi" spectrum such as "Narendramodi.in" and "Niticentral.com" occupied far more central positions in the news consumption networks than sites with "anti-Modi" voices such as "Scroll.in". and "TheHindu.com". These findings are consistent with the popular discourse around the "right wing trolls" who systematically visited mainstream and "anti-Modi" sites to counter any unfavorable opinions about Narendra Modi. On the contrary, the results indicate lower evidence of cross visiting behavior to "pro-Modi" sites among visitors to "anti-modi" sites such as "Scroll.in".

PAPER 3: <u>A Possible Biography of Online Outrage: Quantifying Digital Protest in India</u>

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Dr. Aniket Alam, Research Advisor & Associate Professor of Humanities at IIIT Hyderabad

The societies of the information age that we live in are characterized by large-scale communication networks, which have had a direct bearing on politics. The spontaneous, leaderless mass movements for justice, or micro-managed election campaigns with a unprecedented level of granular targeting of voters are two examples. But the political resides not only in these obvious examples, but is widespread in the manner in which digital media helps bring people together; or not.

The proposed paper is an outcome of ongoing research on how curiosity and outrage help draw people to online political communities, even if temporary. This paper will study the online life history of outrage & trace the various paths of its political life.

Conventional theories of outrage, which give insights about why and when people get outraged and how organizations like corporations and governments deal with them, are unable to explain the manner in which outrage builds up, grows and influences politics in the internet age. Protest cultures triggered by public outrage spreading through social media networks inhabit times and geographies, which are alien to the explanatory framework on conventional theories.

The proposed study is a novel attempt at quantifying digital protest and outrage movements in the Indian context. There has been previous work in these aspects, Conover et al (2011) show that political retweets have a highly segregated partisan structure in the context of 2010 U.S congressional elections, similarly Iyengar et al(2012) have shown the magnitude of polarization during election campaigning online. However, the dynamics of political tweets in protest cultures with completely different origins and goals are yet to be examined. The feeling of denial of justice is expressed as outrage and social psychologists have found that higher degree of concern for justice is often expressed by higher outrage. Rothmund et al(2014) have shown that individual differences inperceived justice from different perspectives, like victim & observer, account for people engaging themselves in political

actions. Bekafigo et al (2013) demonstrated that online political participation on social media correlates with offline participation, and supports the idea that a real world protest culture originates and grows from social media engagement. This paper is an attempt to bring some of these insights to the study of the politics of social media in India.

This paper studies the response on social media to two major incidents in the recent past, which were based on the use of outrage. The first incident studied is the gangrape and murder of a 23 year old student in Delhi in December 2012 and the second one is the recent murder of an activist journalist in Bangalore.

We have collected the twitter responses of the second incident, using a standard scraper tweaked to our needs. The facebook data collection for the first incident is underway. We plan to collect all the facebook posts shared by different individual profiles that are public, public pages, and the corresponding influence parameters like likes, shares etc. All the tweets which have a reference to the murder incident of the activist journalist have been collected with keyword gauri lankesh, they appeared in the window of 05/09/17 to 05/10/17. The total dataset of size 103,601 tweets and as yet unregulated number of facebook posts will be used for our research. We will analyse the group dynamics during the period about both the narrated incidents, the conversations and responses between like-minded and different-minded people using clustering algorithms and the consequent implications and semantics for group identity. Also we propose to analyse the emergence of public conversation and how they take a political shape. We will try to construct alignments and partisanship based on hashtag usage and retweet network. Further based on the established personality strength models we attempt to study the formation of opinion leadership and political involvement. We will also use tools to examine the clustering and communication dynamics of ideologically similar / heterogeneous groups and individuals.

We propose to analyse from the large set of twitter & facebook data whether outrage is triggered by influential social media users which could be individuals or groups and try to alienate the chain of causation: where does outrage originate and how it moves on digital media. We will conclude by explaining whether and in what ways is it similar to and different from the experience already noted in the literature.