Adivasi Media in India: Relevance in Representing Marginalized Voices

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Abstract: Increasingly scholars are emphasizing the importance of community driven media such as indigenous media for foregrounding marginalized voices. However, not all the indigenous media across the globe receive adequate attention in discursive spaces such as Adivasi (indigenous) media in India. Consequently, little is known about these media, their characteristics and relevance, and such gaps essentially call for scholarly inquiry into the domain of Adivasi media. Embracing qualitative approaches, this paper describes the presence and roles of Adivasi media in the contemporary mediascape and presents five brief illustrations. It argues that by negotiating with limited resources and structural access, locally situated Adivasi media and their unique characteristics, such as cultural appropriateness and trustworthiness, are instrumental in overcoming communicative barriers as well as in creating discursive possibilities in regional as well as international platforms.

Keywords: Indigenous media, India, indigenous, Adivasi media, Adivasi, new media

1. Introduction

Media are increasingly becoming rich sites for studying and theorizing societal processes and cultural practices in local, national and transnational discursive spaces (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin, 2002). Anderson (1992) and Habermas (1989) put emphasis on the need for understanding the effects of cultural and contextual parameters on the flows of people, resources, objects and ideas, especially against the backdrop of advancing communication and media technologies. Scholars noted that the dominant media oftentimes pay less attention to the narratives and issues of the underserved people (Howley, 2010; Lewis & Jones, 2006).

Further, scholars have opined that community driven media can aid marginalized sections of the society to raise their voices in defending and protecting their cultural identities, which essentially questions and challenges the hegemonic misrepresentations (Downing & Husband, 2005; Rodriguez, 2001). In the contemporary era, community generated mediated contents play crucial roles in constructing identities, legitimizing narratives, and building communities both in local and global contexts (Appadurai, 1990; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin, 2002).

An important recent focus has been on indigenous media, and Wilson and Stewart (2008) opined that indigenous media are simultaneously 'local' and 'global', arguing that indigenous media, on the one hand, emerge from "geographically scattered, locally based production centers" (p. 2) and, on the other hand, are globally connected "with increased effectiveness and reach" (p. 2).

Scholars have shown that when marginalized people assert control over and lead the process of foregrounding of indigenous matters, they make their voices, images and histories visible,

and influence the cultural politics of meaning makings and representations in local, national and global discursive spaces (Mahon, 2000; Turner, 1990). However, not all the indigenous media across the globe receive adequate attention, especially those of the global south. For instance, in their book, prominent indigenous media scholars, Wilson and Stewart (2008) acknowledged that the lack of "access to the talents of a wider range of indigenous producers do not allow us to be as comprehensive as we might wish and to cover every form of indigenous media in every cultural corner of the globe, and we particularly lament the fact that we do not have case studies from India, Africa and China" (p. 23).

Therefore, this study responds to Wilson and Stewart's call by presenting descriptions and illustrations focused on the Adivasi[1] (indigenous) media in India. Geographical isolation, communicative gaps such as linguistics and literacy barriers, and systematic ignorance of Adivasi issues and agencies by the hegemonic forces are some of the main causes of such lack of access to the Adivasi media resources. In contemporary context, Calder (2011) commented, "there has been very little media coverage of the Adivasi's plight, even within India. This is partly because there are no Adivasi journalists or even journalists who speak the local language, but mainly due to intimidation" (n.p.). Consequently, little is known about the Adivasi media, their characteristics and contributions; such gaps essentially call for scholarly inquiry into the domain of Adivasi or indigenous media in India.

Most of the 104 million indigenous people in India (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011), who belong to 705 ethnic groups, are negotiating across various structural and communicative barriers from the margins (Planning Commission, 2008). Traditionally, the Adivasi people are perceived as parts of the lower-strata of the existing social structure; oftentimes they have been portrayed as demons (*ashura*), 'born-criminals', and untouchables (*shudra*) (Danda, 2002). During the British colonial rule, for more than 200 years (1737-1947), Adivasi people experienced the effects of unilateral imposition of Eurocentric knowledge and discourses, which caused erosions of local knowledge traditions (Harding, 1998). In the postcolonial context, dominant interventions and agendas are posing harsh challenges for the lives of the Adivasi people (Kapoor, 2009). Azam and Bhatia (2012) noted, "For the rich and influential people, (Indian) democracy implies a right to justice, liberty and equality but for the poor, landless, tribals (Adivasis) and other marginalized groups democracy is nearly empty" (p. 2).

Theories of indigenous media studies fundamentally argue that historically and structurally indigenous knowledge and articulations have been ignored and distorted in the West-centric discursive spaces (Blankson & Murphy, 2007). In the context of marginalization of Adivasi identities and delegitimization of their voices, indigenous media such as Adivasi media play crucial roles in challenging hegemonic portrayals (Wilson & Stewart, 2008). To counter such dominant misrepresentations, indigenous media seeks to challenge hegemonic stereotypes,

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[1]   Adivasi people: In India, the government and mainstream discourses use various terms to refer indigenous people such as *Adivasi* or tribes (or Scheduled Tribes). This study espouses the United Nations' notion of understanding the "indigenous people"; and the terms *Adivasi*(s), Scheduled Tribes (or tribes) are used interchangeably with "indigenous people".

legitimize indigenous discourses to create awareness about local issues to foreground indigenous matters in discursive spaces (Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2003; Rodriguez, 2001).

As previously mentioned, so far, little or no academic research has focused on studying Adivasi media, nor about their relevance and contributions in the mediated spaces. This study is an attempt to bridge the gap. This paper not only addresses various contemporary Adivasi media in the central indigenous belt[2] in India; but it also discusses their roles and relevance in bringing forth contextual socio-political issues by creating awareness and consciousness among wider audiences. This paper hopes to initiate wider academic discussion on the realities and contributions of Adivasi media in the contemporary mediascape towards establishing a plurality of voices.

This paper first explores contemporary literatures on indigenous media in understanding their relevance in local and transnational spaces and examines how Adivasi media potentially play roles in foregrounding Adivasi voices and narratives in mediated spaces. Next, the author describes the Adivasi people of India and various contemporary Adivasi media along with a few illustrations. Finally, the author discusses the relevance of Adivasi media in foregrounding indigenous issues and voices in discursive spaces.

2. Adivasi Media in the Contemporary Mediascape

A recent UN document suggests that "the lack of indigenous media resources, and the dominance of privately owned media whose content was unrelated to the reality of indigenous peoples created a 'serious divorce and inequity that weakens and perverts the cultural identity' of those peoples" (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2011, n.p.). Scholars have argued that guided by neoliberal epistemologies, the hegemonic discourses oftentimes ontologically influence modes, components and instruments of knowledge productions (Dutta, 2008). Historically, such consistent and strategic propagations of dominant discourse tried to devalue and distort indigenous identities, narratives and worldviews by employing strategies of "creative destruction" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3).

In the context of India, Thomas (2014) decries the "extraordinary decline of the survival capacities of the rural poor, especially India's indigenous, Adivasi (tribal) populations" (p. 486) that struggle for existence, unnoticed and neglected, beyond the "glare" of national and international media. At the same time, the Adivasi people have been denied their rights of their own land, forest, and natural resources; thus, agentic potentials of indigenous people have been ignored and indigenous voices have been systematically silenced and erased from the mediated spaces (Dutta, 2008).

The situation of Adivasi people is very different than that of their indigenous counterparts in more economically developed countries. For instance, the aboriginals of Australia and

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[2] Central Indigenous Belt: It stretches from Gujarat in the west, up to West Bengal in the east, and comprises the states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. It is one of the poorest regions of the country. 79.4% of the indigenous populations of India live in this region. Nearly 90 per cent of the Adivasi people of the belt live in rural areas.

the Native American population of the USA are relatively more represented in the mediated spaces than the Adivasis. Anand (2005) noted that "While in the United States there have been concerted and conscious efforts made to improve the presence of social minorities in the media, the Indian newspaper establishment does not even acknowledge the non-representation of certain communities as an issue" (p. 67). To address such a scenario, Virmani (2000) opined, "The mass media, if democratized and put in the hands of local communities can become true vehicles of cultural expression and affirmation" (n.p). She further noted that local media are capable of addressing the social injustices and the concerns of local communities, as well as reinforcing local identities by foregrounding highly localized and contextual issues.

Choudhary (2009) showed that the literacy rate among the Adivasis is very low, and their languages are still considered as less-important in mainstream discursive spaces. Devy (2008) points out that since none of the Adivasi languages is accepted as an official language of administration, there have been limited employment opportunities for Adivasi language speakers. As a result of prolonged systematic negligence, many of the languages have started to become extinct. Moreover, unfair nexus among the dominant stakeholders, such as media companies, industrialists and government organizations, cause further delegitimization of the Adivasi voices. For example, because some leading (mainstream) newspaper groups have major stakes in the mining and power sector, they are more sympathetic to the interests of the industry and turn a blind eye to the local indigenous communities who may protest the industry's oppressive and unjust actions (Sharma, 2013).

In contrast to the exploitative hegemonic praxis, Adivasi epistemologies and knowledge systems fundamentally evolve as dynamic, organic and transforming processes by adopting the elements of nature, creativity and innovation (Bob, 2004). Burgess (2006) showed that portrayal of everyday (and mundane) life is an important aspect of indigenous people's expression especially when they create their own media. Lutz (2007) noted that indigenous people "want to govern themselves in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, and to retain their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions. They want to… establish media in their languages" (p. 1).

Owing to locally situated and contextual production of knowledge, indigenous media play an important role in effectively reaching and conveying messages to the community members whereas mainstream mass media channels such as television, radio and newspaper oftentimes fail to reach and represent issues and concerns of most of the Adivasi people. In this context, Mundy and Compton (1991) noted, oftentimes, local audiences are skeptical about externally controlled media; whereas, indigenous media are far more credible to local people as they are produced and controlled by community members.

3. Adivasi People and Their Situation

Adivasi (Adivasi is a Sanskrit word; 'Adi'= from the beginning, 'Vasi'= inhabitants/residents), and Scheduled Tribes are the collective names used for identifying Indigenous people in India. According to the 2011 census data, the total population of 705 scheduled tribes in India was 104 million; they comprised 8.6% of the total population of the country (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011). The Government's Eleventh Five

Year Plan (2007-12) document showed that only 8.3% of the indigenous people live in urban spaces, where they have relatively greater access to technologies and basic infrastructures (The Planning Commission of India, 2008). Most of the scheduled tribe people of India are found in two main regions: (a) the central indigenous belt, where more than 79% of the total ST populations live, and (b) the north-east region (Rath, 2006). This paper focuses on the media and mediated discourses of the Adivasi people of the central indigenous belt.

Contemporary research documents and reports reflect that the situation of Adivasi people is a matter of concern. *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, a United Nations publication (2009) noted,

> …the indigenous communities (of India) as a group … ranked in the bottom 25. … Scheduled Tribes (Adivasi people)… score lower in education, health and other social and economic aspects measured by the HDI (Human Development Index) (p. 29).

Erosion of indigenous cultural artifacts is another key issue; according to a report of Minority Rights Group International (2008), "While the larger indigenous groups and languages will survive as a result of numbers, the destruction of their economic base and environment poses grave threats to those who are still able to follow their traditional way of life and may result in the cultural extinction of many of the smaller Adivasi peoples" (n.p.). For instance, one of the ancient indigenous languages of India became extinct forever as the last speaker of '*Bo*' language, Boa Sr died in 2010. Recent studies showed that approximately 480 languages (out of a total 780 living languages) are spoken by indigenous and nomadic people in India (Pathak, 2013). Other studies on endangered languages noted that a large number of Indian languages (323 languages according to Anthropological Society of India; 196 languages, including 42 critically endangered languages, as listed in UNESCO documents) are on the brink of extension; the majority of which are indigenous languages (refer to Appendix A, where lists of Adivasi languages along with resources on indigenous language-rights, and language-specific information for a few of the indigenous languages are provided). In terms of recognition of indigenous languages, so far, no indigenous language is accepted as an official language for judicial and/or administrative work in any of the states located in the central indigenous belt of India. However, only one indigenous language of that region, i.e., Santali (with approximately 6 million speakers), was included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India along with 21 other scheduled languages.

4. Method

This paper examines contemporary Adivasi media of the central indigenous belt of India. In order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the state of Adivasi media, the author employed qualitative methods, including internet searches, analysis of media content, and participant observation in new-media spaces in studying the mediated Adivasi discourses. Information about Adivasi media found in the web-spaces is primarily included in the paper. The methodology in the study occurred in three phases: Data gathering, translation and categorization.

Data Gathering: Initially an extensive web-search was conducted to gather contemporary Adivasi-media contents via internet search engines. Several key words used in the search were: indigenous media in India, Adivasi newspaper, tribal social networks, Adivasi radio, films on scheduled tribes, Santhali media, etc. From the comprehensive web-search process, approximately 1200 web pages, documents (in PDF, MS Word formats), visual and audio-visual materials (in JPEG, WAV formats) were collected. Most of the collected web-resources were the actual discourses from various Adivasi media sources; in addition, some scholarly writings, reports and analysis of Adivasi media were collected in the search process.

Additionally, to learn about the Adivasi discourses in the social media spaces such as Facebook, and online discussion forums, the author joined several Adivasi social media groups and forums such as *Adivasi Yuba Shakti* and *Adivasi People and Indian Politics*. After joining the online forums and groups, the author studied several discussion threads along with associated comments on different Adivasi issues.

After reading and carefully examining these materials of the data sources described above, approximately 300 media reports, documents, and discussion threads (from social media) were selected for further analysis for this paper. These documents helped the author in identifying a variety of Adivasi media sources and various types of issues found within them.

Translation: Next, the media contents (texts as well as audio-visual contents) were translated into English and transcribed verbatim by the author, who is fluent in a number of Indian languages like Bengali and Hindi, and who understands local languages like Nagpuri and Panchpargania. To translate specific local expressions, dialects, and vocabularies, assistance was sought from scholars of local universities of India; e.g., to learn meanings of Nagpuri and Panchpargania words, scholars of the Chotanagpur region of Jharkhand were consulted. Initial versions of transcripts were shown to several of the author's colleagues who were conversant in those Indian languages. Disagreements were resolved by discussion with them, and further correction and transcription modifications were conducted on the basis of consensus.

Categorization of Contents: Then, the mediated contents were examined for two aspects of Adivasi media: the type of media, and the issues addressed by the discourses. First, the transcribed media discourses were categorized on the basis of various contemporary media types. In this process, three types of Adivasi media were found, 1) print media, 2) audio and visual media, and 3) internet-based social media. Audio and visual media was further sub-divided into three sub-types, namely community radios, voice based platforms, and documentary films. Thus, a total of five media types and sub-types were identified. In the next step, examination of the mediated discourses revealed several important contemporary issues Adivasis are facing and negotiating. More than twenty issues emerged from initial analysis of the media contents. Some of the issues appeared more frequently than the others. Five of the frequently appearing issues were then chosen to discuss the realities of Adivasi existence as well as the challenges faced by the Adivasi media.

Creation of Illustrations: The results section of the paper brings together the types of Adivasi media and important issues facing Adivasi peoples. That is, five of the contemporary issues were chosen and presented in this paper as brief illustrations in order to demonstrate and illuminate the realities of Adivasis of the central tribal zone. These illustrations represent current socio-political and communicative issues of the Adivasi identities as mediated through

five different types and sub-types of media. The illustrations are about recognition of Adivasi languages, production of radio programs on local matters in local dialects, contribution of citizen journalists to legitimized local issues, making of documentaries on dominant oppressions by Adivasi filmmakers, call for united resistive acts and activisms by the Adivasi youths. Finally, additional information was collected and incorporated to enrich the illustrations.

5. Results: Adivasi Media in India

In India, the co-existence of two media forms, i.e., traditional and contemporary media forms is a reality. Traditional media include folk dance, song, storytelling, poetry, plays and puppet shows, etc. They can be found mainly in rural and suburban sectors and are practiced for communication and entertainment; oftentimes, they are used to convey messages relating to contemporary socio-political issues. Along with the traditional communicative forms, contemporary media-forms like print media, audio-visual media (film, radio and TV shows, and voice-based platforms), and internet-based social media have also emerged in the mediascape of India.

5.1. Print Media

According to the Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (*DAVP*), Government of India, in 2011, two newspapers were published in Adivasi languages in the central indigenous belt. They were *Johar Sahiya* (now defunct), a monthly newspaper in the *Nagpuri* language and *Disom Khobor,* a fortnightly newspaper in the *Santali* language with circulation figures of 5317 and 6669 copies respectively. Both the newspapers put emphasis on contemporary Adivasi issues, primarily to create awareness and solidarity for bringing about economic, political and social justice. Apart from the aforementioned publications, some newspapers and magazines were also published[3] in *Sadri, Kharia, Kurukh* and *Santali* languages; some of them use indigenous scripts such as *Ol-Chiki*[4] for their publications.

In spite of their sincere efforts, many Adivasi publications, funded by local Adivasi groups, are facing various adversities such as inadequate distribution network, poor marketing infrastructures, and limited financial resources. Consequently, publication of many Adivasi newspapers, such as *Bij Biinko* and *Dhumkuria*, published in the *Kurukh* language, have been stopped.

In addition to the aforementioned publications, some NGOs regularly publish literatures on Adivasi issues as a part of their community-based interventions and activism. For example, *Ekta Parishad*, *Ekalavya*, *Abhivyakti Media for Development*, *Manthan Adhyayan Kendra* and *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA), who work for human rights of Adivasis and other

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[3] For instance, *Gharaiya Goith*, published in the *Sadri* language; *Satod*, published in the *Kharia* language; *Singi Dia* and *Naam Kudukhat*, published in the *Kurukh* language; and *Sandhayni*, *Chando Mamo*, *Setah*, *Paanja, Rupaj Sawnta Bewra, Sar Sagun, Sagen Sakam, Kapurmuli, Topoi Sagai, Kherwarh, Disom Beura* and *Tapal*, published in the *Santali* language.

[4] Ol-Chiki script: Pandit Raghunath Murmu created the Ol-Chiki script in the 1920s for writing the Santali language.

marginalized populations, publish in print and web formats. Conservation and promotion of indigenous languages, literature, and cultural artifacts is another key issue in the central indigenous belt. The organization *Bhasha Research and Publication Center* publishes multilingual magazines such as '*Dhol*', '*Balko nu Bol*' (for children), and '*Lakhara*', in Adivasi languages, addressing contemporary cultural, human rights and socioeconomic issues.

Brief Illustration 1: Two Indigenous Newspapers. Two major Adivasi newspapers (as per 2011 data), *Disom Khobor* and *Johar Sahiya* have faced a severe financial crisis in recent years. As a result, *Johar Sahiya* stopped publication at the end of 2013. Though still operational, *Disom Khobor* regularly appeals to its readers, "As losses are expected due to poor marketing infrastructure, well wishers of *Disom Khobor* are requested to donate generously for meeting the publication expense of *Disom Khobor*" (n.p.). One of the key contributions of the newspapers was their consistent fight for the legal recognition of the Adivasi languages.

Since its inception, *Johar Sahiya* regularly brought forth the demand for recognizing Adivasi languages as official languages of Jharkhand, India. The newspaper documented how the Adivasi people organized social movements and collective protests to legitimize their language rights along with other socio-political issues and human rights. In the issue of October 2007, *Johar Sahiya* noted, "In Jharkhand, everyone is shouting vigorously to deny the rights of Adivasi and other regional languages. Wonderful efforts our civil societies and the mainstream!" On the other hand, *Disom Khobor* published several news articles, which talked about protests and resistance actions of Adivasi people against the dominant discrimination. The newspapers published news articles addressing contemporary indigenous issues such as "school education in the Adivasi and other regional languages", "regular publication of Adivasi newspapers", "preservation of Adivasi languages". Thus, while negotiating with resource scarcity and weak distribution networks, the Adivasi newspapers sought to bring forth issues of language rights and other indigenous rights to create wider awareness.

5.2. Audio and Visual Media

As of now, in India there is no dedicated radio or television channel for Indigenous people at the national or regional level. In some regions, a few non-prime TV and Radio time-slot(s) were provided for broadcasting indigenous cultural programs and performances such as folk dance and songs. Apart from that, some indigenous and exogenous organizations and individuals disseminate Adivasi matters/programs via electronic media like community radios, voice-based platforms, and documentary films.

5.2.1. Community Radio

In some parts of India, community radio initiatives play key roles in legitimizing contemporary Adivasi issues, partly due to the fact that they include Adivasi people in co-creating the media discourses. Participation of local people in community radio stations, enable the marginalized to voice their narratives and contextual issues. For instance, using community radio, they seek to bring forth local indigenous matters in local languages; talk about local cultures, festivals, events and art-forms such as folk-song, drama; such gestures encourage local people to interact

and contribute to the programs. Some of the key local Adivasi issues the programs address are literacy, child education, employment opportunities, alcoholism, dowry, family planning, health (including HIV/AIDS) awareness, water and natural resources, environment, indigenous knowledge (e.g., medicinal plants and processes), agriculture practices, local market rates of essential commodities, etc.

Though community radio stations operate in different parts of India, the overall environment is bureaucratically driven, and it lacks editorial freedom (Pavarala, 2003). Since there is no dedicated Adivasi community-radio station in India, a few community radio stations[5], run by local organizations of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Gujarat, pay attention to the issues and voices of the Adivasi people. Listeners of these programs regularly interact with the radio stations to communicate their thoughts, suggestions and grievances.

Brief Illustration 2: "*Chala Ho Gaon Mein*". In August 2001, two non-government organizations (NGOs), i.e., Alternative for India Development (AID) and the National Foundation of India (NFI), introduced a community radio program, "*Chala Ho Gaon Mein*", to foster local development and community empowerment in about 45 villages in the Palamau district of Jharkhand, India. The program was designed based on the feedback from interactive workshops organized by the NGOs, where the villagers identified community radio as a powerful and effective communication medium for raising their contextual issues. The 30-minute program was a popular one; more than 500 episodes of the program have been broadcasted so far. Illiterate and semi-literate villagers participated and contributed to the program to raise local issues like corruption, economic deprivation, empowerment avenues, literacy, child education, underage marriage, domestic violence, and health issues. The program included community members in making decisions about the content; it has also involved local artists in the production process. Three important characteristics of the programs were the use of local dialect, the foregrounding of local issues, and bringing forth local agencies and their ownerships (Sunanda, n.d.). Thus, the program used local resources to bring forth the voices of the underserved, and helped to create a platform for discussing local issues.

5.2.2. Voice-based Platforms

In recent years, indigenous people are using voice-based online platforms such as *CGnet Swara* and *Avaaj Otalo* to discuss and bring attention to their issues. *CGnet Swara,* a voice-based platform, enables illiterate and semi-literate Adivasi and non-Adivasi people of Chhattisgarh, India, to call, record and upload their voices (i.e., audio files) in local languages; wider audiences can access, read and share local narratives via the internet, more specifically through websites and social networks (Mudliar, Donner & Thies, 2013). Voice-based communications have helped Adivasi communities, especially in cases of those languages, which do not have written-scripts or adequate legitimacy in mediated spaces. Other voice-based social media

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[5]   Some of them are Radio *Bundelkhand*, *Dharkan* 107.8 FM, and *Chanderi Ki Aawaz* (the Voices of Chanderi), which talks about sustainable development issues in Madhya Pradesh; and the *Kutch Mahila Vikas Snaghatan* (KMVS), which produces programs like '*Kutch Log ji Bani*' (the voice of Kutch) and raises various local issues of *Kutch*, Gujarat in local dialects.

platforms (voice4All) like *Avaaj Otalo*, based in Gujarat, give opportunities to rural farmers, including Adivasi agriculture workers, to access agriculture and rural-development information and to share their opinions through voice messages via mobile phones (Patel et. al, 2013).

Brief Illustration 3: ***CGnet Swara.*** As a voice forum for audio-based citizen journalism in the rural sectors of India, *CGnet Swara* uses five Indian languages, to post local messages in text and audio formats, in the social media spaces. Adivasi people have raised several situated issues using *CGnet Swara* platform in the last couple of years, such as issues of land rights, atrocities against Adivasis, water resources, and non-recognition of Adivasis by the government authorities, among others. Adivasi "citizen journalists," even with their limited technological access and journalism training, reported and legitimized several local news reports in socially mediated spaces; some of the frequently reported issues are land rights, oppression and social injustices. For instance, to report an incident of disenfranchisement of Adivasis from their own lands, one of the citizen journalists from Sarkeli village, Chhattisgarh, commented, "our only demand is that we do not want to give up our lands to the government on any condition and that no plans should be made for our land. When they accept this, we will cease the Dharna (non-violent sit-in protest). Otherwise, it will continue indefinitely". Another key issue is atrocities with Adivasi people; in one such case, another citizen journalist reported, "Police have attacked villages near Chintalnar in Dantewada district and have burnt many houses …and raped five women during these attacks in last one week". Later, regional media foregrounded these issues in mediated spaces; consequently, top administration promised to take appropriate action against such heinous attacks. Thereby, the voice-based communication platforms and local citizen journalists foregrounded contemporary Adivasi matters to open up avenues for reducing social disparities.

5.2.3. Documentary Films

In the global context, indigenous audio-visual media such as third Cinema, video popular, video indigena have used subversive discourses in order to disrupt the hegemonic depictions and (mis)representation. Similarly, in India the parallel film and the art film movement (1942-1976), and contemporary independent films and documentaries, foregrounded many of the Adivasi issues in the mainstream. Many of the films were ethnographic films, documented the lives of Adivasi communities, such as *Bastar: Tribes and Tribulations*, *Hill Kharia Tribe of Orissa*, *Chenchus — Children of the Forest*. Some films were made to document indigenous festivals and culture, e.g., *Festival of Love* and *Shikar Utsav*. Apart from the above types, a few biographical documentary films were also produced such as *Ulgulan-Ek-Kranti*, a biography of legendary indigenous leader Birsa Munda.

From the perspective of activism, especially to raise consciousness among indigenous as well as exogenous people, many films have addressed contemporary Adivasi issues like poverty, insurgency, land rights, and/or violence against indigenous people. For instance, a film, *Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda*, showed how the Adivasis of Jharkhand negotiated and protested against health hazards caused by pollution from mining industries. Another documentary *Of Land, Labour and Love* narrated how indigenous people are working collaboratively to negotiate and overcome situated resource-scarcities and difficulties of their everyday lives. Again, increasingly indigenous film-directors and producers are making films on contemporary

indigenous issues. Some of these films were exhibited in national and international film festivals like Vibgyor Film Festival (Kerala, India), Tri-Continental Film Festival (in Asia, Africa and Latin America).

   Brief Illustration 4: Documentary films on Adivasi issues by an indigenous film director. As mentioned previously, more and more Adivasi filmmakers are coming forward to make documentary films in recent years to foreground contemporary issues of marginalization. Biju Toppo, an indigenous filmmaker, is one of the pioneers who directed a couple of documentary films to legitimize the protests of Adivasi people against state-sponsored land acquisitions.

   In the film, *Development flows from the barrel of the gun*, Mr. Toppo shows how Adivasi people became the victims of so-called development projects across the central indigenous belt. The film depicted that poor Adivasis lost their lands in three regions, namely in Orissa for an aluminum ore project, in Jharkhand for a dam construction project, and in Chhattisgarh for a steel plant project. The film foregrounds the contextual narratives of the local Adivasis and social activists, and shows how they organized rallies and protested against the state violence and atrocities.

   In another film *Pratirodh* (or *Resistance*), Mr. Toppo focuses on Adivasi people's protests against governmental land acquisitions for a Uranium mining project in Nagri, Jharkhand. From the mining activities, local Adivasis were suffering from nuclear radiation and pollution. The documentary shows how political leaders and government officers (and organizations) misled local Adivasis and strategically manipulated their voices, faiths and emotions to achieve the hegemonic agendas. Moreover, both the films sought to counter the hegemonic misrepresentation of Adivasi realities and existence, and brought forth Adivasi struggles in the mainstream mediated spaces.

5.3. Internet-based Media and Social Networks

Most of the Adivasis of India are rural and semi-literate; consequently, they are negotiating with the issue of digital divide. Research suggests that in comparison to other age groups, urban Adivasi youths have more access to the internet and social media resources (Vanneman, Noon, Sen, Desai & Shariff, 2006). Increasingly, Adivasi communities and organizations are having their own Facebook, Twitter pages, websites, and YouTube channels; these resources are used for sharing news and thoughts on Adivasi lives and contemporary issues. For example, Facebook pages like *Adivasi-Tribal India* and *Dalit Adivasi Dunia* talk about overall Adivasi issues of India, whereas pages like *Santhal Community* and *We the Banjara* are more community-specific. Along with sharing festival-related, cultural, educational and job-related information, these social media spaces promote internet-based activism and legitimize issues related to basic human rights. Again, there are some dedicated Adivasi websites and blogs that compile and report local socio-political matters, instances of oppression and injustice; some of the websites are *Adivasinetwork.com* and *Adivasi.net*. In addition, Adivasi people are also using audio-visual media like YouTube such as *Adivasi-Topic,* and *Jharkhandi.Org* to upload cultural and art-related videos. Moreover, pro-Adivasi organizations like *Naramada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) and *Ekta Parishad* have shared activism-related videos in their web spaces.

Brief Illustration 5: Adivasi Groups on Facebook. Adivasi Facebook users create and participate in several groups (privacy settings: public and closed) to communicate with fellow Adivasis and likeminded users. Members of Adivasi Facebook groups such as *Adivasi People and Indian Politics*, and *Adivasi Yuba Shakti* promote internet-based activism and raise voices for basic human rights. Many of the group members (both individuals and organizations) are skeptical about the intentions of the mainstream media as they oftentimes serve the interests of dominant stakeholders. For example, one of the online group members, Soren, wrote, "[T]oday we Adivasis are fighting for our own existence. Mainstream media are playing their manipulative games." To combat such hegemonic acts, *Jayas*, an Adivasi youth organization, appealed, "We are requesting all our educated Adivasi youths to be active on WhatsApp and Facebook. For our own good, we need to be unified to raise our voices for our constitutional and educational rights and organize campaigns for basic infrastructural facilities such as electricity, water, and health. Friends, together we, the Adivasi youths, can change the world". Access to internet resources and emerging digital communicative avenues helped the Adivasi youths to foreground their voices, demands and calls for action in the dialogic spaces of social media. For instance, one of the Adivasi-activist webpages, *Sangharsh Sambad*, noted, "We are calling all the Adivasi youths to take unified decisions to build a future agenda, so that we can write the success stories of our own development." Such articulations from the inside of the Adivasi community have created possibilities of representation of contemporary Adivasi issues and voices in the spaces of decision-making.

6. Discussion

Embracing contemporary media forms, Adivasi media produce contextual discourses in textual, verbal, and audiovisual formats. This section discusses the relevance of Adivasi media by identifying their unique strengths, relevance and the issues negotiated by them in the contemporary glocal context.

6.1. Scope of Adivasi Media

Historically, hegemonic discourses have portrayed Adivasis as devoid of agency (Guha, 1988). Challenging the dominant claims, recent studies suggest that indigenous people are capable of articulating their discourses independently (Mahon, 2000); in indigenous media context, Turner (1979) noted that through the production of media, indigenous people perform their agency to legitimize "their own goals and capacity for struggle on their own behalf" (p. 2). Through the production of media, indigenous people create avenues for raising their voices in "combating mainstream stereotypes, addressing information gaps in non-Indigenous society, and reinforcing local community languages and cultures" (Meadows, 2009, p. 118). Such mediated narratives and expressions are important means of cultural preservation and of political mobilization (Srinivasan, 2006).

6.2. Strengths of Adivasi Media

From a communicative perspective, Adivasi media are meaningful and relevant in the

underserved contexts because of their unique strengths. First, Adivasi media are produced locally, and their contents are oftentimes decided and controlled by the Adivasi people. In doing so, they actively choose relevant local issues and formats, which ensures that the mediated outputs are culturally appropriate. Secondly, contemporary media platforms allow Adivasi people to produce and share media products in their local languages and local dialects; e.g., films, audio-visual and text messages. It opens up meaningful avenues for them to overcome linguistic and literacy barriers, particularly for those communities whose languages are lesser known and/or do not have formal scripts. Third, from a credibility perspective, Adivasi media are powerful and trustworthy since the community insiders create and share them; in other words, these mediated discourses are essentially emerging from within the community. Finally, Adivasi media are increasingly embracing newer media options in co-creating interactive spaces in socially mediated platforms. Such mediated activities yield dialogic opportunities to discuss, analyze, critique and promote contemporary Adivasi issues with a wider/global audience.

Scholars showed that advancement of media technologies and opening up of newer communicative avenues have helped indigenous communities to critique/challenge dominant misrepresentation of indigenous realities (Ginsburg, 1994). Particularly when there is no dedicated Adivasi broadcasting or telecasting media in India, Adivasi people are showing inclination of using newer media platforms; for instance, Adivasi youths are participating in social media to do activist work and using voice-based platforms such as *CGnet Swara* to foreground their issues in discursive spaces.

6.3. Adivasi Media Challenges

In spite of having some unique characteristics, Adivasi media are constantly negotiating with various issues that pose considerable challenges to their existence and operations. Poor marketing and distribution networks and inadequate financial resources are some of them. For instance, as most of the newspaper publications are funded by individuals or small groups, lack of adequate funding is one of the issues most of the indigenous print media are currently facing. Owing to limited funding and limited infrastructure, the distribution and circulation of many of the indigenous print media get affected; some of them (such as *Johar Sahiya*) have stopped their publication permanently.

As Adivasi peoples are some of the most economically underserved communities of India, they have to negotiate with two key barriers to access or to participate in new media spaces. One of them is affordability; owing to lack of purchase power their access to audio, audiovisual, and computer-enabled media is limited. Moreover, because of lack of availability of communicative and technological resources, such as limited to no electricity and/or broadband facility, many of the Adivasi people cannot access various media platforms. Next, from educational and computer-literacy perspective, Adivasi people are one of the most underprivileged communities in India. Consequently, only a handful of Adivasi people can communicate in mainstream languages and run computer programs. As a result, most of the Adivasi people have remained information-poor in this era of digital divide.

As a collective, the Adivasi people are negotiating with two more barriers; namely, linguistics and policy barriers. As of now, none of the Adivasi languages are used in the government offices

for administrative or judicial purposes in the central indigenous belt, and many of them have no recognized scripts. Though some of indigenous print media are consistently fighting for the language recognition issue, it never got serious attention in the mainstream because of inability and/or strategic ignorance of non-Adivasi people to read Adivasi scripts such as *ol-chiki* script. Finally, owing to existing government policies and related hindrances, the reach and promotion of Adivasi media are affected. For example, as per the current regulations, community radios have to operate within limited transmission power and lower range; such restrictions limit the reach of those radios. Consequently, a large number of Adivasi villagers never get the chance to listen to or participate in the community radio programs. In order to reduce/remove the aforementioned barriers, Government and non-Government (national and international) organizations need to take appropriate steps to bridge the communicative, infrastructural, and technological gaps.

6.4. Reaching out to a Wider Audience

Though a few Adivasi issues have achieved some legitimacy in local as well as international media, the majority of the indigenous issues are struggling to create awareness among the wider population. For instance, preservation and protection of Adivasi knowledge, languages, cultural artifacts and intellectual property have become one of the central concerns from the perspective of human rights and fundamental freedom. In this context, the roles of the United Nations (UN) agencies, particularly of the Working Group on Indigenous Population (WGIP) have been crucial in raising awareness of indigenous issues and disseminating information on indigenous matters in discursive spaces. In such contexts, the UN (2007) in their article 17 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, stated, "Indigenous people have the right to establish their own media in their own languages" (p. 7). Moreover, in another instance, the UN commented that by using media, indigenous people across the globe could participate in promoting and protecting the rights and cultures of their own. Such declarations and discursive actions are instrumental to bring forth Adivasi voices and issues, particularly when the dominant (mis)representations consistently seek to dehumanize and distort Adivasi philosophies, civilizations, and worldviews in the spaces of discursivity.

To challenge delegitimization and ignorance of Adivasi issues in mainstream mediated spaces, oftentimes some international organizations are actively taking initiatives to advocate for indigenous issues on the world stage. Survival International, Cultural Survival, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Indigenous Environmental Network, and International Development Exchange are some of the key organizations working in this area. They are playing roles in creating dialogic spaces to foreground contemporary indigenous issues, struggles and negotiations of the Adivasis, which need more visibility.

In this era of globalization and the digital divide, it is crucial for Adivasi as well as the mainstream population of India to bridge resource- and infrastructure-gaps in order to ensure adequate legitimation of indigenous voices, identities, culture, collective human rights and contextual issues (Wilson & Stewart, 2008). Apart from the governmental and non-governmental initiatives, academic institutions could play meaningful and responsible roles in strengthening Adivasi media activities. For instance, preparing future Adivasi-media

professionals, activists, and scholars could be one such option. Issues of the Adivasi people of India are gradually getting some attention in international academic spaces; various departments such as Indigenous Studies, Anthropology, and South-Asian Studies, within North-American, European, and Australian universities are offering courses on Adivasi issues and affairs. In India, universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Hyderabad, Andhra University, Central University of Jharkhand, and others offer courses that address issues and concerns of the Adivasis. In 2008, the Government of India established a national university named Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, dedicated to Adivasi causes. In most of the cases, the universities are offering courses on Adivasi art, culture, and languages. A more communicative focus on designing courses could be helpful in preparing future media professionals such as journalists, editors, and researchers who would play meaningful roles to foreground the voices of the Adivasi people.

Adivasi media, and Indigenous media in general, are considered as important platforms from the communicative perspectives as the discourses of these media oftentimes carry messages of development, peace, and empowerment, as well as catalyze processes of social equality by raising consciousness among various stakeholders. Wilson and Stewart (2008) emphasized that the roles of indigenous media are instrumental in the context of the cultural and political struggle of indigenous (Adivasi) people. This paper provides descriptions of several types of Adivasi media and presents illustrations to foreground Adivasi articulations and views. Adivasi media and their presence in mediated spaces are crucial because as these contexts enter the global landscape, they create new possibilities of networks of cooperation and solidarity locally, nationally, and internationally. Consequently, they build awareness among the indigenous as well as exogenous people; which is important for creating entry points for bringing about social justice (Ginsburg, 1993; Mahon, 2000). Committed to foregrounding cultural and contextual issues, Adivasi media play potentially important roles in bringing forth the rights of protecting and promoting Adivasi languages, traditional knowledge, and indigenous rights in local and international discursive spaces. Therefore, Adivasi media-contents and contemporary issues of the Adivasis need to be legitimized in order to challenge hegemonic representations and exoticizations of indigenous identities, and to bring forth the narratives, perspectives and worldviews of the Adivasi people in the local as well as the global mediated spaces.

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Appendix A: Resources on Adivasi Languages

Category	Description	Retrieved from
Lists/Atlas of Adivasi Languages	Alphabetical list of Adivasi and minor languages of India	http://www.culturopedia.in/Languages/tribal_languages(a).html
	Alphabetical list of Adivasi languages of India	http://www.peopleslinguisticsurvey.org/view-Languages.aspx?id=3
	Alphabetical list of languages of India	https://www.ethnologue.com/country/IN/languages
	UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (PDF format)	http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001870/187026e.pdf
	UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger	http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap
	Government of India list of Critically Endangered Languages	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=108207
Adivasi Languages and Their Rights	A book: "Linguistic minorities in India: An appraisal of the linguistic rights of minorities in India"	http://www.gfbv.it/3dossier/asia/india2013.pdf
	An article of Adivasi/ minority languages of India and their rights	http://www.gfbv.it/3dossier/asia/india2013.html
Language Specific Resources	Talking dictionary of a few Adivasi languages of India	http://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/india.php
	Santali language	http://wesanthals.tripod.com/id45.html
	Mundari language	http://www.mundarisamaj.org/category/wiki/education/mundari-language/
	Ho language	http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/langhotspots/Ho/index.html