

Alternative media, youth and civil society

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



BIOGRAPHY OF Dr. Govind Ji Pandey Filmmaker, college professor, social activist Dr. Govind Ji Pandey was born in Varanasi in 1972. Studied at BHU, Varansi and received his doctoral Degree in Journalism from MG Kashi Vidya Peeth, Varanasi. Acted in many films and worked for promotion of Bhojpuri Films in Purvanchal. Dr Pandey taught students of Masters Course at MGKVP before he moved to Delhi as Lecturer (Electronic Media), in MBICEM, a college affiliated to GGSIP University. Here he taught BJ(MC) students for six years. During his stay in Delhi he supervised various small research projects of students.

He taught Video and Radio Journalism, Production, and supervised around five hundred audio and audio-visual production of students. Some of the films supervised by him got prize in prestigious film festivals like Jeevika, Vatavaran, Misce-en-scene etc. Dr. Pandey is author of a book ' Television Journalism and Programme Formats'. At present he is working as a Reader (MassCommunication) at BB Ambedkar University, Lucknow. He is teaching PG students and guiding research scholars for their Ph. D thesis at BBA University. Alternative Media, Youth and Civil Society Dr. Govind Ji Pandey Associate Professor, Dept. f Mass Comm & Journalism Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Univrsity, Lucknow Email-com Mob. 0919198915357

The pen is mightier than the sword, and the alternative media may become mightier than the mainstream media. This is not a mere conjecture the process has already begun. The alternative media has emerged as a key player in promoting the cause of marginalized section of the society, an alternative voice of people and reflecting reality. The neglect of

underprivileged and browbeaten by mainstream media, suppression and manipulation of information by government and media industry has posed a evere threat to the right to freedom of speech and expression of the members of global civil society. In the backdrop of the great danger posed by the media and political-economical nexus, a new development has given hope to millions around the world, of reuniting and creating an alternative source of information which is free by all means. The past few decades have shown us the path of creating a multi polar world and the advent of new media will create a world with multiple sources of voices.

The information will come from those who are not only consumers of it, but producing it as well. The recent technological developments have reduced the cost of production dramatically. The speed of internet has increased with the development in the data transmission technology. This development has provided in the form of new media, a very strong tool of communication to challenge the monopoly of traditional mainstream media. The alternative media particularly Internet and Community Radio have changed the way we were consuming the media products.

Now the consumer is no more a passive receiver of the media content but involved in the process of collection, selection and dissemination of information. There is a large number of people who believe that media can be used as a tool for social change. The large number of people involved in developing and disseminating information can be a great source of information for hundred and thousands of people all across the world. The information flow can not be stopped by the governments and now it has

taken a global shape. Things happening at far of places now started affecting local governments.

The recent case of Iran where the Iranian Government stopped the flow of information by putting many journalists behind bars and blocking television and slowing down internet speed could not restrict the flow of information. People used their mobile phones and cameras and put videos and audio of the various acts of Government for viewing and it became instant hit. A global opinion was formed and it affected the Iranian Government as well. It shows the strength of the alternative sources of information in shaping the modern world. The present study is an attempt to analyze the time people devote in creating media content.

The continuous up gradation of information which has changed the social and economical condition of the consumers, in particular the youth studying in various universities in India.. The objectives of research are : 1)To understand the time youth devote for creating and consuming the media content; 2)to analyze the various tools used for content creation and reception by students; 3)to compare preference given to the medium for the content creation and consumption; 4)to analyze nature and type of content created by the students: 5)to observe social change in student community.

The research study aims at highlighting the characteristics of alternative media, civil society, with the help of theoretical discussions and finally the relevance of concepts related with alternative media, civil society and youth have been analyzed through the following research hypotheses: RH 1) Internet is the most preferred medium among youth. RH2)University students are actively participating in the social campaigns promoted through <https://assignbuster.com/alternative-media-youth-and-civil-society/>

various social network sites. RH3)The most preferred tool for content generation is mobile phone. RH4)New media has changed information creation and consumption behavior of students.

Methodology: For the analysis of above mentioned objectives and hypotheses a sample of 300 PG students of various departments of three universities from Lucknow, UP, India, were selected and their opinion on the various issues were taken. For this purpose aninterviewschedule was constructed. The students were selected through non-probability sampling method and equal representation was given to male and female students.

Civil Society: Jurgen Habermas' founded the notion of ' public sphere,' in which he discussed about a model of rational communication and rational critical debate.

While explaining this kind of public sphere he said that, ' private people come together as a public and they engage the state on various matters of public interest with reasoned argument. ' As Habermas stressed, the public sphere has been in a permanent state of transformation as underlying social and economical conditions have changed. Though we have many views about civil society but we were not able to provide a single definition of civil society which is unanimously supported by all the scholars. The most recent one given by Mary Kaldor in his essay written in the book Global Civil Society 2007/08 talks about civil society, as the edium through which social contracts or bargain are negotiated between the individual and the centers of political and economic authority. Civil society is a process of management of society that is bottom- up rather than top down, and involves the struggle for emancipatorygoals. Till 1989, the definition of civil society was

territorially bounded. The concept of civil society was prevalent in some parts of Europe and America. The developments that have started around the world in early part of seventy and continued through eighties and nineties strengthen the democratic movement in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world.

It is very clearly stated that to have a vibrant civil society you need established democratic rights of electing public representatives, an independent judiciary and separation of legislative from executive. Media's Role in a Civil Society The control of media by large business houses who are governed by the state bureaucracies and commercial motives has created an environment where the power has come under one head which is a dangerous sign for a democratic country like India.

The UNESCO report on various aspects of communication and society provided eight following functions of mass media; i) dissemination of information ii) socialization iii) motivation iv) promoting debate and discussion on public issues v) education vi) cultural promotion vii) entertainment and viii) integration. The objective of these functions were to provide complete information to the public so that they can form opinion and participate in the democratic process i. e. debate and discussion which ultimately guarantees their freedom of speech and expression.

There is an immense danger to the freedom of speech and expression in the form of control and manipulation of information by state and private media industry. The control of mainstream media has come from various quarters and in variable forms. The fourth pillar of democracy has been hijacked by the various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Main stream <https://assignbuster.com/alternative-media-youth-and-civil-society/>

media is no more the voice of people and is in a total disconnect of the real India. The mainstream media is serving the interests of minuscule minority and totally neglecting the real issues.

If we analyze the issues that have been the centre of debate and discussion on various television channels and in print media we will hardly see an issue that is affecting the masses or talking about the marginalized section of the society. The mainstream media is obsessed with the glamour and politics, real developmental issues are vanished from the scene. What is Alternative Media? Michael Albert (2004) attempts to define alternative media in his manifesto, ' what makes alternative media alternative'? As he writes ' An alternative media institution does not maximize profits, does not primarily sell audience to advertisers for revenues, is structured to subvert society's defining hierarchical social relationships, and is structurally profoundly different from and as independent of other major social institution, particularly corporations, as it can be many segments of civil society are politically motivated communities promoting numerous causes and holding various versions of democracy.

John Ehrenberg (1999) " A democratic sphere of public action that limits the thrust of state power. Alternative media enable and encourage empowerment and learning outcomes may take place in either formal or informal education settings. UNESCO report on alternative media says: ' These are the kinds of consciously political and social demands by groups for whom alternative communication is but another facet of their need to contest hegemonic structures and forms to create an new social and cultural reality for themselves. (UNESCO, 1993, p. 16) Advent and Type of Alternative

Media The monopoly of information control and ownership by the government, political and economic elites given them a lot of power to manipulate information.

The newspapers and television channels have been driven by the commercial motives and the news about the poor and the marginalized were shifted to the inner pages. The global civil society felt a need of having alternative media which can connect with the rural, is committed to the poor and the oppressed and report the truth. The alternative media was present during the media boom but did not take proper shape. Just after the internet revolution now, it came in to prominence. Some of the alternative media that have created and posted great challenge to mainstream media are following:

1)Interne Newspaper 2)Blogs 3)Social Networkingwebsites)Mobile phones and Pager services 5)Independent documentary/Video filmmakers 6)Community Radio 7)Visual Radio 8)Ham operators 9)Small Newspapers and Magazines 10)Newsletters, brochures, handbills, pamphlets, posters, etc

The development of alternative media gave ordinary citizens power to publish articles, upload videos and display photographs. It gave birth to a new kind of journalism which is public journalism. In this type of journalism public is producer, editor, reporter and consumers of the content. It has reduced the gate keeping authority of the traditional media. Role of

Alternative Media 1)An alternative voice of people:

It has a great role to play in shaping up a global civil society and free world. With the advent of internet and use of advance technology in mobile telephone industry the local issues have all the potential to become global that to within a very little time. The recent experience of the governments of

China and Iran attempting to control the internet has led to a strong underground movement. The authorities blocked the flow of information by putting journalists in jail and tried to stifle the flow of information but the internet gave people the much needed voice and forum which is hard to contain by the governments.)A forum for marginalized section of the society: The main stream media is catering to the need of affluent in the society. The marginalized section of society is hardly finding place in the main stream media. The voice and problems of the socially weaker class is unreported and unrepresented. Here alternative media can play an important role in highlighting the problems of poor and marginalized communities. The small community newspapers, community radio, television broadcast blogs, posters etc. can help the people overcome neglect by mainstream media to highlight the atrocities, faults in bureaucratic and other institutional setup.

Marie Trigona, in his book " Argentina's Community Media Fights for Access and Legal Reform", she explores Argentine groups that have emerged to produce alternative and independent media for television, radio and video in an effort to counter lack of access to marginalized communities in mass media. 3)Global public sphere: The world is shrinking and the nation state boundaries have disappeared in the contemporary societies. Any issue that is related with a particular country might become global within no time, curtsy new media. This is not merely a hypothesis but global reality.

One of the biggest examples is " Batti Band Campaign", such was the impact of this campaign that through out the world people came out in support of it and now it is a global phenomenon. And this is not the only example of this

type there are many examples where global opinion was generated in support of many campaigns and world governments were forced to accept global opinion. This is how new technologies have reinvigorated a sense of transnational public sphere and strengthened global civil organizations movements and provided platform for sub cultural groups and common man.

)Free expression and social activism: Alternative media is playing an important role in social learning process by providing easily accessible content to common man. In many developing and developed countries it is working as agents of social change. Denis Mc Quails in his democratic media participant theory suggests that media content should not be controlled by the Government Institutions and political organizations. Members of Civil Society should have their own media and it must promote the interest of common man.

This can be achieved only when we have multiple sources of information and communication where one can easily access and disseminate information. Recently in India, a controversy involving a union minister and a commissioner of a government body, started off from a social network site twitter, and within no time public opinion was formed. The public opinion was so strong that government accepted resignation of minister and the commissioner was forced to step-down. This shows the strength of the new media and the public opinion generated through it.

Now no government can neglect opinion of civil society. Alternative Media and Youth No country can deny the importance of youth in nation building process. The involvement and participation of youth in decision making process not only strengthen the democratic process but also contributes to

their personal development. In India, almost 55% population comes under this category who is also frequent users of new media technologies. The world's youth population, Ages 15 to 24, will become more and more concentrated in Africa and Asia.

By 2050, the number of youth will have risen from just under a half billion in 1950 to 1.2 billion. According to a recent study done by the Internet ; Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), there are 471 million mobile phone subscribers, out of which 127 million have their own Internet ready mobile device. But of these 127 million users who have mobile phones with Internet capability, only 12 million have used the Internet on their devices and the number of active mobile Internet users is just 2 million.

But “ industry experts” quoted on Business Standard claim that there are over 500 million mobile phone subscribers and due to the decline in prices of Internet-enabled handsets, there are about 10 million mobile phone Internet surfers, much more than the 2 million reported by the IMAI. This shows the potential of this media and those who are using it are mainly youth in all parts of the world. Not only this, the change brought in by the technology has given youth many different tools for content generation.

One of the most important tools is mobile phone which is used for video, audio, stillphotorecording and putting them on internet using various social network sites like twitter, U tube, face book etc. The information reaches to millions of users across the globe and global opinion is generated on various issues of public interest. In Indian universities, youth devote a lot of time for content generation and dissemination. In the study conducted in three

universities of India following conclusions were drawn: Table 1 Time devoted for internet surfing

	0-1 hour	1-2 hour	2-3 hour	3-4 hour	More than 4 hour
Male	183260	2515			
Female	265440	1515			
Total	448610	4030			

Surveys conducted in several countries in the world show that the internet addiction is on rise. In China the number of young Internet addicts had soared to 24 million by 2009, almost double the figure for 2005, It is very much evident from the data that youth particularly in the Indian university have been devoting a lot of time in content generation and dissemination on internet. Overall, 71 million users accessed Internet in year 2009, with 52 Million “ active” users who accessed it atleast once in a month.

If we look at global users on internet India is on 4th position but it may change very soon the moment it will reach to the rural population of the India. PositionCountryInternet Users Million 1USA220 2CHINA210 3JAPAN88. 1 4INDIA81 5BRAZIL53 (Source: Internet ; Mobile Association of India(IAMAI) and IMRB.) In India the growth of internet is mainly in urban centers and school ; college students itself contribute to more than 44% of all Internet usage that happens in India – Overall 72% of young people access Internet on regular basis. Table 2 Most popular tool for content generation

	Video camera	Recorder	Still camera	Mobile phone
Male	1068	126		
Female	446	136		
Total	1410	262		

Mobile is the most popular medium for content generation. Not only is that mobile a very popular mode of internet surfing among youth in India but the trend is more or less same across the globe. The Opera Mini, most widely downloaded mobile application has released the number of Mobile Internet usage.

The report is quite significant in terms of mobile internet usage in the world. Following are the top 05 countries in Opera Mini Usage: 1. Russia 2. Indonesia 3. India 4. China 5. Ukraine (Source: Internet ; Mobile Association of India(IAMAI) and IMRB. Table 3 Most preferred medium for news and entertainment

	TV	Radio	Newspaper	Internet	Film
Male	25	15	20	7	5
Female	26	36	24	5	4
Total	51	51	44	12	9

The information and communication behavior of the students have shown significant change in regard to the medium they use for news and entertainment. In a research study conducted by World Association of Newspapers (WNA) on Decoding Youth as News ; Information Consumers found that young people are spending less time with traditional media and more with new media. Same is the conclusion drawn in the data mentioned in the table three. Young participants said that usage of new media (i. e. , computers, mobile phones, the internet, and MP3 players) is increasingly taking up time participants would have spent with traditional media, though this time is obviously restricted in countries where the digital divide remains a strong barrier. Despite this, many participants say they would like to spend more time with newspapers and other traditional sources of information. Contrary to stereotype, many young participants remained respectful of traditional information sources and few dismiss them as obsolete. " (Source: World Association of Newspapers)

Table 4 University students are actively participating in campaigns promoted through social network websites

	Yes	No
Male	95	55
Female	46	104
Total	141	159

The data shown above clearly indicating that youth is engaged in social reformation with the help of alternative media. Social Networking Sites (SNS) are young people? s spaces - and engaging with young people here is

meeting young people where they are at. The recent example of Batti Band Campaign that got momentum through the SNS is one of the many examples where young ones created awareness and it is now a well established campaign.

There are many other cases in India which generated and garnered a lot of public response and support through social networking sites. Ruchika Girihotra, Jessica Lal, Nitish katara, etc. are some of the cases that are highlighted through these websites and ultimately proved to be a very strong campaign which generated a huge support for victim'sfamilyand put pressure on the state authorities to act for justice. Table 5 Do you think alternative media has changed your information and entertainment behavior

Yes	No	Male	12624	Female	13020	Total	25644
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Youth information behavior is a complex process of interplays among various factors, such as young people's cognitive status, identity formation and value negotiation, and social interaction within a context. Here the data indicates that youth in India has significantly changed their information and entertainment behavior. More than 85 % of the samples were of the opinion that they have witnessed significant change in their media content consumption. The new media has taken over from the traditional media which includes radio and television.

On the basis of the analysis of data collected with the help of interview schedule the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) Youth in India is spending a lot of time using internet and other alternative means of communication. The main stream media will have a tough competition in the form of alternative media. 2) Internet is the most popular medium among

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youth and mobile phones are the most preferred medium for content generation and uploading of data. 3)Social networking sites have become a very important platform for common man.

The social issues raised with the help of the social networking sites are getting good response from the netizens and global public opinion is very easily formed. 4)The global civil society has found a new and alternative platform for raising their voices. Alternative means of communication have become a very strong tool to form global opinion. Now the local governments are finding it difficult to stop the flow of information. 5)The world is now fast becoming multi polar and multiple sources of communication in the form of small and alternative media have given a strong platform to the marginalized communities and socially deprived class.)It is very much evident from this study that mobile phone is the most popular medium for content generation and dissemination of information among youth in India. They upload data to various social networking sites and actively participating in the social campaigns promoted through it.

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