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## **2. Investigating the social issues in National Dastak You Tube news channel**

**(Reference: February 2025)**

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### **Abstract**

*This study critically analyses how the National Dastak YouTube news channel represents and covers social issues, specifically concentrating on February 2025. National Dastak has become an important digital platform, elevating the voices of marginalised groups and highlighting issues frequently neglected by traditional media. February 2025 was characterised by a number of significant events concerning caste discrimination, labour rights, women's safety, and political activism, rendering it an essential time to analyse the channel's editorial emphasis and storytelling approaches.*

*This study conducts a qualitative content analysis of chosen video reports, interviews, and panel discussions released in February 2025, examining how National Dastak presents social justice issues, the language and visuals it uses, and the engagement patterns it encourages among its viewers. Additional interviews with media specialists and surveys of habitual viewers offer more understanding of audience perception, trust, and involvement. The study seeks to assess if National Dastak effectively fosters alternative journalism methods and if it contests prevailing media narratives.*

*The study also evaluates how the channel's use of grassroots reporting, visual storytelling, and colloquial language enhances its credibility with underrepresented consumers. The study also critically assesses the difficulties independent digital journalism faces, including censorship, unstable finances, and the demands of preserving editorial independence in a cutthroat media landscape. This research enhances the overall comprehension of digital journalism's capacity to foster social transformation, especially within the Indian socio-political setting, and provides important insights into the changing dynamics between alternative media and public dialogue.*

**Keywords:** *YouTube reporting, Societal concerns, online media, Caste Bias, Alternative journalism*

### **Introduction**

The emergence of digital journalism has completely changed the way that information is created, shared, and consumed in India's ever changing media landscape. A significant portion of the population no longer trusts traditional print and broadcast media because they are frequently swayed by corporate interests, political connections, or socioeconomic biases. On the other hand, digital platforms-particularly news channels based on YouTube- have established a distinct niche



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by providing alternate viewpoints and empowering underrepresented communities. One well-known example is National Dastak, a YouTube news station that has become well-known across the country for its steadfast dedication to reporting on social concerns, especially those pertaining to social justice, labour rights, caste, and class. Its motto, "*Unki Bhi Suno Jo Chup Hai*" (Listen also to those who are silent), sums up its goal of elevating voices that have traditionally been underrepresented or silenced in popular discourse.

This study focuses on how National Dastak covered social concerns in February 2025, when India had a number of important socio-political occurrences. This study attempts to comprehend how alternative media platforms are changing public conversation around important social issues by examining the channel's reporting, vocabulary, interaction strategies, and framing styles. It also looks at whether National Dastak's material this month was successful in raising civic consciousness and involvement and how it provided a counter narrative to how marginalised communities were portrayed in the mainstream media.

February 2025 is not a coincidental choice. A number of significant socio-political events occurred throughout India this month, bringing caste discrimination, student agitation, labour exploitation, and rural distress into sharp relief. The death of a Dalit sanitation worker in Kanpur as a result of hazardous working conditions, the student protests at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) over faculty members' alleged caste-based discrimination, the death of a tribal woman in Jharkhand that infuriated human rights activists, and the anniversary celebrations of the historic 2020–21 farmers' protests were among the major events. While much of the mainstream media either underreported or misrepresented these issues, National Dastak continuously brought attention to them, and each of these incidents served as a focal point for larger conversations about social justice, inequality, and governance shortcomings.

Due to its digital format, National Dastak is able to get around several institutional and structural obstacles that traditional media sources must overcome. Direct interaction with audiences is made possible by its YouTube-centric business model, which eliminates the need for governmental or corporate gatekeeping. More significantly, its content strategy frequently includes interviews with local activists, on-the-ground reporting from rural and semi-urban areas, and coverage of events that are rarely included in the headlines of mainstream Hindi and English newspapers or television networks. By doing this, National Dastak portrays itself as a platform for participatory journalism, which emphasises community voices in news production, rather than only as a news channel.

Alternative media does not, however, come without difficulties. Even for sites like National Dastak, questions about editorial biases, sensationalism, echo chamber danger, and legitimacy are relevant. Therefore, it is essential to critically assess its substance in order to comprehend both its advantages and disadvantages, particularly in a time as highly charged as February 2025. Instead of romanticising alternative media, it is critical to consider if it complies with journalistic norms including factual accuracy, fair reporting, and moral narration.



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In the end, this study contends that despite its shortcomings, National Dastak is an essential component of India's changing media landscape due to its persistent emphasis on underrepresented voices and grassroots realities. A compelling case study that demonstrates the channel's capacity to serve as a catalyst for public discourse and action as well as a mirror to societal inequalities is February 2025. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the potential, challenges, and strengths of alternative journalism in modern-day India.

'National Dastak is a major Hindi-language digital news platform that has become a voice for India's marginalised communities, providing a powerful alternative to mainstream media narratives. Founded and led by journalist Shambhu Kumar Singh, the channel has established itself as one of the most influential independent news outlets on YouTube, boasting over 10.5 million subscribers, 4.17 billion total views, and a strong reputation for grassroots reporting.'<sup>1</sup>

### Focus Areas

'National Dastak's journalism primarily focuses on the representation and concerns of marginalised groups, including Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujans, minorities, and women. The outlet regularly highlights issues of caste discrimination, economic inequality, and social injustice, subjects often neglected by mainstream news houses. Its coverage includes stories from rural and semi-urban India, where communities face systemic exclusion from media visibility. This editorial line positions the channel as part of India's growing alternative media ecosystem, alongside other platforms like *The Mooknayak* and *Bolta Hindustan* that amplify voices of underrepresented populations.'<sup>2</sup>

'National Dastak defines its mission as giving space to the Bahujan, Dalit, Adivasi, minority, and women's voices that are frequently ignored by conventional media outlets. The platform's content covers issues such as caste discrimination, rural deprivation, state injustice, and political developments affecting marginalised groups. Its slogan and vision emphasise being the "*voice of the oppressed*" (पीड़ितों की आवाज़), and its programming includes on-ground reports, interviews, commentary, and socio-political analysis. By focusing on community concerns rather than elite narratives, National Dastak reshapes public discourses around equality, representation, and rights.'<sup>2,1</sup>

### Core Social Issues Covered

'National Dastak extensively reports on caste-based discrimination, social injustice, political marginalisation, and the lack of representation for deprived groups. Issues such as atrocities against Dalits, reservation policies, land rights, and the challenges faced by marginalised populations in accessing justice and public services are frequently addressed. The channel also highlights developments around prominent Bahujan and Dalit leaders, legal cases, and anti-caste movements, reflecting its commitment to social equality.'<sup>3</sup>

### Audience Engagement

'National Dastak maintains a strong digital presence, particularly on YouTube and Facebook, where it actively interacts with audiences through comments, live discussions, and viewer-submitted content. As of September 2025, the channel had 10.5 million subscribers and over 4



billion cumulative views, ranking it among the top independent YouTube news channels in India. It uploads short interviews, on-ground reports, and opinion videos daily, generating high engagement rates that reflect a loyal mobile-first audience base. The platform's estimated monthly revenue ranges between \$58,000 and \$173,000, primarily through ad monetisation and viewer donations'<sup>4</sup>.

'National Dastak has significantly influenced India's public discourse, offering alternative narratives that contrast with the dominant frames of corporate news media. Its reports frequently critique policies perceived as harmful to marginalised communities and challenge government or elite-centric content dissemination. This approach makes it an important counterbalance to mainstream media, which has often been criticised for bias towards state or corporate interests, lack of diversity, and sensationalist rhetoric.'<sup>2,2</sup>

'YouTube-based journalism has broadened discussions on employment, education, and caste-based violence by offering a participatory platform where audiences engage directly with reporters. Such engagement has fostered community-driven movements and informed debates that have influenced policy responses, similar to grassroots mobilisation seen during protests like the Anti-CAA movement'<sup>5</sup>.

### **Challenges and Credibility Issues**

'Despite its popularity, National Dastak faces numerous challenges. In 2024, the Indian government ordered YouTube to temporarily restrict the channel, citing the Information Technology Act, 2021- a move widely criticised as governmental overreach and censorship. Regulatory pressures under the IT Rules 2021 have placed independent media channels under surveillance, curbing their freedom to critique the state.

National Dastak is one of India's most prominent independent digital news platforms, known for advocating the voices of marginalised and underrepresented communities. Established in 2015 under the leadership of Mr. Shambhu Kumar Singh, it has become a significant player in the Indian alternative media space, especially at a time when mainstream media is often criticised for its limited diversity and perceived pro-establishment bias.'<sup>6</sup>

'In addition to regulatory threats, channels like National Dastak grapple with limited financial resources, dependence on viewer funding, and risks associated with copyright claims from larger media houses. These conditions raise concerns about sustainability and editorial independence. Moreover, like many digital outlets, the platform must guard against misinformation risks and uphold editorial accuracy without formal newsroom structures.'<sup>2,3</sup>

'However, the channel's independence has also made it a target of governmental scrutiny. In 2024, the Indian government allegedly invoked Section 69A of the Information Technology Act (2000) and the IT Rules (2021) to direct YouTube to temporarily block National Dastak's channel, citing undisclosed reasons. The decision triggered widespread criticism from civil society and press freedom advocates, who viewed it as an example of opaque censorship aimed at silencing critical voices. Shambhu Kumar Singh publicly stated that the government's action was an attempt to "suppress the Bahujan voice" and to stifle journalism representing non-



dominant communities. The incident underscored the vulnerability of independent digital media under India's tightening regulatory environment

Despite these pressures, National Dastak has continued its operations, producing consistent coverage on political accountability, caste discrimination, and rural distress. It has played a critical role in shaping debates around social justice, especially through mobilising digital audiences during events such as the Anti-CAA movement and Dalit rights campaigns. The channel's reporting style blends traditional journalism with participatory media, encouraging viewers to engage directly with civic issues rather than consuming news passively.'<sup>7</sup>

### **Objective of the study:**

A research study's objectives form the cornerstone around which the entire investigation is constructed. The main and **secondary goals** that direct the study are described and expanded upon in this section. Every goal has been explained, along with its significance and justification in light of India's digital media ecosystem and the socio-political environment of the time period being studied.

1. To list and classify the main social concerns that National Dastak addressed in February 2025.
2. Examine how National Dastak presents these social issues using framing and narrative techniques.
3. To evaluate how National Dastak contests the narratives presented by mainstream media, particularly regarding issues of caste, class, and grassroots politics.
4. To evaluate audience engagement, feedback, and perceptions regarding National Dastak's coverage in February 2025.
5. To investigate the capabilities and constraints of YouTube-based alternative media in promoting civic engagement and the democratisation of media.

### **Hypothesis**

1. National Dastak frames social issues through a Dalit-Bahujan perspective, prioritising marginalised voices missing in mainstream media.
2. The channel's editorial focus challenges caste-based discrimination and exposes institutional marginalisation in Indian society.
3. Its reporting style amplifies local grievances and ground realities often neglected by national television news outlets.
4. National Dastak's digital-first approach creates alternative spaces for discourse, enabling civic participation among socially excluded groups.
5. The representation of social issues on the platform reshapes the public understanding of caste, justice, and citizenship.



### **Literature Review**

The literature examined in this review is categorised into several thematic areas: Digital Journalism or Citizen Journalism, Caste and Media Representation, Alternative Media in India, Social Media and Grassroots Journalism, and the Emergence of YouTube as a News Platform. These subjects provide a basis for comprehending National Dastak's significance in the current landscape of Indian media.

#### **1. Digital Journalism and Citizen Journalism**

The transition from conventional journalism to digital platforms, especially news channels on YouTube, has transformed the production, consumption, and distribution of news. Researchers such as Allan & Thorsen (2009) and Fenton (2010) contend that both digital journalism and citizen journalism play crucial roles in the democratisation of media. Citizen journalism enables everyday individuals to report on events, present alternative viewpoints, and contest the mainstream media's dominance over information flow. Digital platforms like YouTube allow users to bypass the gatekeeping of traditional news organisations, granting them the ability to share lesser-known stories directly with audiences worldwide.

The effectiveness of National Dastak is fundamentally linked to its capacity to elevate social issues-frequently overlooked by conventional media- into public discourse. Research conducted by Hermida (2012) on participatory journalism illustrates how platforms such as YouTube foster a 'dialogical' interaction between journalists and their audiences. This is in harmony with National Dastak's strategy of amplifying marginalised voices, including those from rural Dalit communities and labour organisations.

Furthermore, Sambrook (2010) underscores that the reliability of citizen journalism is rooted in its potential to cultivate trust with audiences by concentrating on local, often hyperlocal, and matters. The emphasis of National Dastak on grassroots reporting exemplifies this trust-building approach, which stands in stark contrast to the predominantly top-down structure of mainstream news broadcasts.

#### **2. Caste and Media Representation in India**

The topic of caste and its portrayal in Indian media has been thoroughly examined, with researchers consistently demonstrating that mainstream media frequently overlooks or misrepresents issues faced by Dalits. Thussu (2007) and Rodrigues (2012) contend that both print and broadcast media in India exhibit a strong caste bias, often depicting Dalits and other marginalised groups as subjects of sympathy or neglecting them entirely. This is particularly apparent in narratives surrounding violence, discrimination, and social exclusion, where the voices of Dalits are either muted or marginalised. Jaffrelot (2003), in his analysis of caste and politics, emphasises that by failing to adequately report on caste-related atrocities, the media plays a role in perpetuating the existing system of caste-based oppression.

As Gail Omvedt (2004) highlights that the Bahujan viewpoint has been historically suppressed by the Brahminical dominance over knowledge systems. National Dastak, in



alignment with Ambedkarite principles, serves as a platform dedicated to restoring epistemic justice. For example, in February 2025, it provided comprehensive coverage of various caste-related incidents in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that were either minimised or overlooked by major national newspapers. Their reporting encompassed not just the incidents themselves but also included historical context, public responses, legal developments, and interviews with leaders from the community.

### **3. Alternative Media in India**

Alternative media has significantly influenced India's media environment, especially in elevating the perspectives of marginalised and underrepresented groups. Researchers such as Kumar (2006) and Sharma (2014) examine how alternative media contest the dominant narratives propagated by conventional media outlets, which frequently serve the interests of influential political, economic, or corporate elites. A notable instance of alternative media is National Dastak, which utilises YouTube to engage a wider audience and highlight critical issues such as labour rights, caste discrimination, and women's empowerment.

Choudhury (2018) posits that the power of alternative media stems from its independence from state and market influences. Typically, it is funded by the community, operated by volunteers, and driven by principles of social justice. This is exemplified by National Dastak, which relies on contributions from viewers and support from progressive civil society organisations. In February 2025, while numerous mainstream media outlets focused on political rallies and celebrity happenings, National Dastak highlighted labour suicides in Chhattisgarh, custodial abuse in Bihar, and housing displacements in Jharkhand—issues that are vital to the socio-political landscape but largely overlooked by national media.

In India, alternative media has gained significant importance as traditional media faces a diminishing space for dissent, as noted by Sen (2017). With the consolidation of mainstream media outlets and a decline in their editorial independence, alternative media platforms have emerged to address this gap. National Dastak, focusing on local reporting and issue-driven journalism, acts as a crucial counterbalance to the frequently sensationalised or politically biased coverage offered by mainstream news organisations.

### **4. Social Media and Grassroots Journalism**

The emergence of social media as a medium for grassroots journalism has revolutionised the reporting and consumption of news. Tufekci (2017) examines how social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enable real-time, participatory journalism. Citizen journalists utilize these platforms to cover local events, highlight social issues, and rally support for various causes.

Social media platforms play a crucial role in enabling conversations about social justice and human rights. According to Gillespie (2018), these platforms have fostered the emergence of counter-publics, where diverse voices can contest the narratives presented by mainstream media. National Dastak utilizes the extensive reach of YouTube to disseminate its content, cultivate a



dedicated audience, and engage viewers in discussions regarding caste-based violence, labour rights, and gender equality.

This participatory approach fosters what Tufekci (2017) refers to as 'networked publics'—digital communities that unite around common concerns and hopes. The comment sections, live streams, and viewer polls of National Dastak establish a dialogic environment where information circulates reciprocally.

Furthermore, Bhargava (2016) examines the role of social media in enabling citizens to act as content creators, thereby facilitating the democratisation of the news cycle. This empowerment is particularly significant in a nation like India, where media ownership is frequently dominated by a small number of large conglomerates that may not adequately reflect the interests of the general populace.

## **5. The Rise of YouTube as a News Platform**

The rise of YouTube as a leading platform for news distribution has challenged the traditional media's control over information sharing. Bruns (2019) examines how platforms such as YouTube have transformed into key centres for news consumption, particularly among younger viewers who are progressively distancing themselves from conventional television broadcasts. The algorithmic recommendations of YouTube enhance the platform's effectiveness as a source of diverse news by tailoring content to viewers' interests, resulting in greater access to varied viewpoints.

Waisbord (2019) warns that the YouTube model poses challenges, as its algorithms may favour sensationalism over factual accuracy. This raises concerns regarding misinformation and the risk of reinforcing echo chambers. National Dastak must navigate the difficulty of providing factually accurate content while preserving its identity as an alternative platform. By utilising ground reports, eyewitness testimonies, and thorough investigative journalism, National Dastak addresses some of these challenges, positioning itself as a reliable and trustworthy news source.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Case Studies (India)**

To grasp the operational and editorial importance of National Dastak, it is essential to investigate particular cases that the channel has reported on. This section reviews five significant case studies from around February 2025, which encompass a range of social issues such as caste-based violence, labour rights, electoral narratives, educational inequality, and media representation. Each case exemplifies National Dastak's unique storytelling approach and its dedication to amplifying the voices of marginalised communities.

### **1: Hathras District, Uttar Pradesh- Caste-Based Discrimination in Government School (February 2025)**



In early February 2025, a video released by National Dastak revealed the discriminatory practices experienced by Dalit children at a government primary school in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. Field interviews and parental testimonies indicated that Dalit students were segregated during mid-day meals, denied access to clean drinking water, and subjected to humiliation by teachers from upper castes. While both national and regional news outlets either overlooked the issue or framed it as a mere 'school management problem,' National Dastak's report distinctly characterised it as caste-based discrimination, placing the incident within the broader context of systemic inequality.

## **2. Manual Scavenging Deaths in Tamil Nadu- Exposing the Invisible (February 2025)**

In the second week of February 2025, National Dastak published an investigative report concerning the deaths of two Dalit sanitation workers in Madurai, which occurred as a result of manual scavenging- an illegal activity according to Indian law. Unlike mainstream media that simply labelled the fatalities as 'accidents,' National Dastak's report emphasised: the caste background of the deceased and their ongoing cycle of manual scavenging; the infringement of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act (2013), and the government's neglect in providing safety equipment or alternative job opportunities. The report's impact was amplified by poignant interviews with the families of the victims and visual documentation from the community, illustrating the lack of recognition for such tragedies by local authorities. National Dastak's findings sparked a Twitter movement under the hashtag #StopManualScavenging, which compelled the Tamil Nadu government to promise compensation and launch an investigation.

## **3. Labourers' Protest in Chhattisgarh - Wages and Safety Violations (February 2025)**

In mid-February 2025, National Dastak reported on a week-long demonstration by construction workers in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, who were seeking overdue wages and safety gear from a private contractor engaged in the construction of government-subsidised housing. While mainstream Hindi news outlets concentrated on the Delhi Assembly election campaigns, National Dastak dispatched a reporter to the scene and provided live video updates. Their report prominently featured: Documentation of breaches of the Building and Other Construction Workers Act (1996), discussions with labour union representatives, and visual proof of hazardous working conditions. The channel's coverage gained significant traction in labour-related WhatsApp groups and attracted the attention of national NGOs. As a result of the media scrutiny, local authorities took action, leading to the workers receiving partial compensation. This incident underscores National Dastak's commitment to highlighting overlooked economic challenges and its role in advocating for labour rights.

## **4. Student Suicide at Ambedkar University – Mental Health and Caste Bias (Late January, Reported in February 2025)**

In early February 2025, National Dastak reported on the suicide of Sunil Kumar, a Dalit research scholar from Ambedkar University in Delhi. Although the incident took place in late



January, the university administration sought to conceal the details. Mainstream English media characterised it as a 'personal tragedy,' whereas National Dastak adopted an investigative stance. Their findings indicated that Sunil had raised concerns about discrimination from his academic supervisor, faced repeated denials of his fellowship without justification, and that his peers had observed subtle yet systemic caste bias within the campus atmosphere. The video titled '**Sunil ke saath Kya Hua?**' (What happened with Sunil?) produced by National Dastak garnered over 1 million views in just one week, prompting a student protest on campus and compelling the university to establish a grievance redressal committee. The ethical perspective of the channel resonated with Dr. BR Ambedkar's vision of 'annihilation of caste through education,' highlighting National Dastak's commitment to challenging caste privilege in prestigious institutions.

### **5. Exclusive Interview with Bhim Army Leader- Countering Media Stereotypes (February 2025)**

On February 20, 2025, National Dastak aired an exclusive interview with Chandrasekhar Azad 'Ravan', the leader of the Bhim Army, where he discussed the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections and the representation of Dalits. This interview was distinguished not only by the access granted but also by its framing. Unlike mainstream media, which frequently depicts Azad as a 'radical disruptor' or overlooks his socio-political ideology, National Dastak provided a comprehensive, unedited platform for him to address key issues such as: electoral injustices faced by Dalit candidates, the appropriation of Dalit vote banks by dominant political parties, and grassroots mobilisation initiatives in Uttar Pradesh. Following the interview, the channel produced analysis videos that elucidated the Bahujan political philosophy and its relevance to contemporary issues. Additionally, it featured counterarguments from Dalit intellectuals who critiqued the strategies of the Bhim Army, thereby fostering a constructive intra-community dialogue. This coverage created a unique democratic space for representational politics, underscoring the necessity for independent platforms that operate free from elite editorial biases.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

This study employed on secondary data collection methods

#### **Secondary Data Collection**

The secondary data collected from web sources, particularly YouTube videos and social media reports from February 2025, provides a comprehensive overview of National Dastak's engagement with social issues. The channels' content primarily focuses on caste discrimination, political accountability, electoral processes, and social justice, especially concerning marginalised communities like Bahujans, Dalits, and tribal groups.

#### **Discussion**

- The analysis shows National Dastak as more than an alternative news outlet-it functions as a digital resistance platform challenging mainstream media's caste and class biases.



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- Through stories on Dalit rights, labour exploitation, caste discrimination, and student activism, the channel presents news from a social justice framework, rejecting “neutrality” that conceals privilege.
- Drawing on Ambedkarite philosophy, it uses the Indian Constitution as a moral and political anchor, reaffirming equality and dignity.
- The platform encourages participatory journalism—audiences contribute through comments, live discussions, and digital engagement, forming an interactive digital commons for protest and awareness.
- Reports integrate historical and legal contexts, explaining structural causes behind suffering (e.g., manual scavenging violations, educational discrimination). This differentiates it from mainstream event-based reporting.
- The channel’s digital-first approach enables grassroots coverage via low-cost, decentralised networks across YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, though its Hindi focus limits non-Hindi outreach.
- Its ethical reporting model avoids sensationalism, respects victims’ privacy, and prioritises dignity over spectacle, exemplifying trauma-sensitive journalism.
- National Dastak promotes intra-community dialogue, allowing critical debates among Dalit and Bahujan voices instead of presenting a monolithic narrative.
- Its journalism has had tangible impacts—investigations launched, renewed activism, and policy attention following its coverage.
- Key challenges include algorithmic suppression, limited resources, and the lack of institutional support, threatening its long-term sustainability.
- Overall, National Dastak represents a transformative model of ethical, participatory, and community-rooted digital journalism, vital for democratizing India’s media landscape amidst rising centralisation and caste-based exclusion.

### Conclusion

- The examined case studies reveal that National Dastak goes beyond traditional journalism by embedding every story—such as Hathras, manual scavenging deaths, Chhattisgarh labour protests, and the Ambedkar University case—within deep socio-historical and legal contexts.
- Its reporting integrates constitutional principles, grassroots perspectives, and ethical commitment, making its journalism educational, activist, and solidary in nature.
- National Dastak functions as a digital archive of resistance, documenting struggles that are often erased or distorted, thereby preserving historical truths through video narratives.
- These documented materials serve as tools for activists, lawyers, teachers, and researchers, extending their utility beyond mere reportage into advocacy and education.
- The platform sustains collective memory, ensuring that the voices and experiences of marginalised communities remain central to India’s ongoing socio-political discourse.



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- The study's theoretical grounding—drawing from counter-publics, participatory media, and critical caste theory—underscores that National Dastak forms an alternative public sphere challenging dominant narratives.
- It redefines citizenship by offering a media space where marginalised voices articulate agency and resistance, aligning with global debates on digital democratisation and social equity.
- The Indian context, shaped by caste hierarchies and resistance movements, lends particular urgency and relevance to this digital assertion of equality and justice.
- National Dastak exemplifies ethical and people-centred journalism, proving that media can maintain integrity and justice without resorting to artificial neutrality or profit-driven motives.
- The platform compels media practitioners, educators, and policymakers to rethink journalism's democratic responsibilities and potential as an instrument for justice and moral accountability.
- Despite facing threats like censorship, financial precarity, and political pressure, National Dastak's endurance illustrates the resilience of independent media in hostile environments.
- The study concludes that the true significance of such platforms lies in their commitment to persist and evolve, symbolising hope and moral resistance in times of democratic strain.
- Its continued survival requires active support from audiences, institutions, and civil society to foster a more just, inclusive, and participatory public sphere.

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