

# Mediated Democracy: The Role of New Media in Shaping Political Consciousness in Contemporary India

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*Abstract- In the digital age, democracy is no longer shaped only by newspapers, television, and political rallies. Instead, it is deeply influenced by new media platforms such as social media, digital news websites, blogs, online forums, and video-sharing platforms. In India, where millions of people now use the internet and smartphones, new media has become a powerful tool in forming political opinions and spreading awareness. This research paper focuses on how new media has shaped political consciousness in contemporary India. Political consciousness refers to people's awareness of political issues, government policies, rights, responsibilities, and social problems. The study explores both the positive and negative roles of new media. On the positive side, it has provided easy access to information, encouraged youth participation, strengthened citizen voice, and increased transparency. People can now express opinions, question leaders, and support social movements through hashtags, online campaigns, and digital activism. On the negative side, new media has also become a space for misinformation, fake news, propaganda, online abuse, and political manipulation. This paper uses secondary research methods, including journal articles, news reports, book references, and online data, to analyze how new media shapes political thought in India. The findings suggest that while new media has strengthened democracy in many ways, it also presents serious challenges that need to be managed through media literacy, strong regulations, and ethical journalism. The paper concludes that new media is neither fully good nor fully bad; its impact on democracy depends on how responsibly it is used by citizens, government, and media organizations.*

**Keywords:** *New Media, Mediated Democracy, Political Consciousness, Social Media, Digital Activism, India, Youth Participation, Misinformation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is based on the idea that people have the power to choose their government and express their opinions freely. In a democratic country like India, citizens play an important role in shaping the political system. Traditionally, newspapers, radio, and television were the main sources through which people got political information. However, in the last

decade, the rise of new media has completely changed how people receive, share, and react to political content.

New media refers to digital forms of communication that use internet-based technology. These include social networking sites like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, blogs, podcasts, online news portals, and discussion forums. These platforms allow people to not only receive information but also create and share content. This is a major shift from traditional media, where communication was mostly one-sided.

India has one of the largest internet-using populations in the world. With affordable smartphones and cheap data, people from different backgrounds are now connected to digital platforms. Young people, in particular, are highly active on social media. They use these platforms to discuss politics, protest against injustice, support movements, and raise awareness about national issues. Examples include discussions during elections, farmers' protests, student movements, and debates on new laws and policies.

This research paper focuses on the concept of "mediated democracy." Mediated democracy means a form of democracy where media becomes a central channel through which political ideas, participation, and awareness are shaped. The paper aims to understand how new media is influencing political thinking in India. It also examines whether this influence is helping democracy grow stronger or making it more vulnerable.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have studied the relationship between media and democracy. According to Habermas (1989), the public sphere is a space where people discuss social and political issues. In the digital era, social media platforms have created a new type of public sphere where people share opinions

freely. However, unlike earlier times, this space is not always controlled or verified.

McLuhan (1964) famously said, “The medium is the message.” This means that the type of media used also affects how people understand the message. In modern times, the fast, emotional, and visual nature of social media content can strongly shape political opinions.

According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012), digital media allows “connective action,” where people can take part in movements without joining traditional organizations. Hashtags like #IndiaAgainstCorruption, #CAAProtests, and #MeToo have shown how people use online spaces to express political demands.

In the Indian context, scholars like Sumanth (2017) have observed that social media played a very important role during the 2014 and 2019 general elections, as political parties used digital strategies to reach voters. Facebook pages, Instagram reels, WhatsApp forwards, and X posts were used to promote ideologies, criticize opposition, and attract support.

However, research by Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) shows that false news spreads faster online than true news. This is dangerous for democracy because it confuses people and manipulates their thinking.

Other studies have also pointed out issues such as online hate speech, trolling, and cyberbullying, especially against journalists, activists, and minorities. These problems make the digital space unsafe and less democratic.

From the review of existing research, we can understand that new media plays a strong role in shaping political consciousness, but it also brings serious problems.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. To understand the role of new media in shaping political consciousness in contemporary India.
2. To analyze how social media platforms influence public opinion and political awareness.

3. To examine both positive and negative impacts of new media on Indian democracy.
4. To understand how youth participation in politics is influenced by new media.
5. To suggest ways to make new media more responsible and democratic.

In addition to understanding the general impact of new media on political consciousness, this research also aims to explore how different age groups experience political content online. The study further seeks to identify whether new media makes political information more accessible or more confusing for citizens. Another key objective is to examine the role of influencers, content creators, and independent journalists in forming political opinions on social media platforms. This research also attempts to understand whether new media strengthens democratic values like participation, awareness, and debate, or weakens them by spreading misinformation, emotional manipulation, and biased narratives.

The study also intends to evaluate the difference between traditional political communication and digital political communication, especially in terms of speed, reach, and emotional impact on audiences.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on qualitative secondary data analysis. The data has been collected from:

- Academic research papers
- Books on media and democracy
- Online journals and government reports
- Articles from credible news websites
- Existing studies on Indian political communication

No primary survey or interview has been conducted. Instead, the study analyzes existing information from different sources to understand trends and patterns. This method is suitable because the topic is broad and focused on understanding media influence on society. The research is descriptive and analytical in nature. It aims to describe the current situation of new media in India and analyze its role in shaping political thinking.

#### Role of New Media in Indian Politics

New media plays a very important role in modern Indian politics. Political leaders, parties, and

organizations use social media to connect with voters. Elections are no longer limited to rallies, posters, and speeches. Now, campaigns take place on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp as well.

During national and state elections, people debate about candidates, ministers, laws, and promises on digital platforms. Political advertisements are shown through online videos, sponsored posts, and trending hashtags.

New media has allowed common citizens to question political leaders directly. For example, on X (Twitter), citizens often tag ministers and ask for answers. This creates a sense of participation and accountability, which is important for democracy.

New media also provides space for alternative voices such as independent journalists, students, activists, and local reporters who may not get much space in mainstream media. Through blogs, YouTube channels, and Instagram pages, they share important stories related to environment, corruption, women's rights, farmer issues, and student problems.

#### Influence on Youth and Political Awareness

The youth of India is one of the largest users of social media. Students and young adults spend a large amount of time on digital platforms. This has greatly increased their exposure to political content.

On one side, this has made young people more aware of national and international issues. They follow political news, debates, and discussions. Many young people now take part in online movements, digital protests, petitions, and awareness campaigns.

New media has also helped students understand their basic rights and express opinions. They are no longer silent viewers; they are active participants. This shows an increase in political consciousness among the youth.

On the other hand, too much unverified information can confuse young minds. Many times, youth believe what is trending without checking facts. Emotional posts, edited videos, and false stories can manipulate thinking. This highlights the need for digital and media literacy.

#### Spread of Misinformation and Fake News

One of the biggest problems of new media is the rapid spread of fake news. False political information,

edited images, fake speeches, and misleading data are shared on WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms. Many people forward messages without checking whether they are true. This can create fear, hatred, and misunderstanding among communities. In some cases, it has even led to real-life violence and tension. Fake news can shape political consciousness in a negative way. When people believe false information about a political party, leader, or community, their voting decisions and opinions get affected.

Another issue is political propaganda. Parties often use social media to spread biased information that supports their side only. This creates a divided and emotionally charged environment instead of a thoughtful and balanced democratic space.

#### Digital Activism and Online Movements

Despite the problems, new media has played a major role in social and political movements in India.

Movements like:

- Anti-corruption movement (Anna Hazare)
- Farmers' protest
- CAA–NRC protests
- #MeToo movement
- Environmental campaigns

All gained huge support because of social media. People from different parts of the country were connected through posts, hashtags, and live videos. These platforms helped in organizing protests, sharing information, and gaining international attention.

Digital activism has shown that people no longer need big organizations to be heard. Even a simple post can go viral and influence lakhs of people. This has made democracy more participatory and inclusive.

#### Challenges to Mediated Democracy

Even though new media strengthens communication, it also creates several problems in the functioning of democracy:

1. Echo Chambers – People only see content that matches their beliefs.
2. Online Hate and Trolling – Political debates often turn into abusive fights.
3. Lack of Regulation – There are limited strong laws to control misuse.

4. Emotional Manipulation – Sensational content is more viral than facts.
5. Loss of Critical Thinking – People believe trending content blindly.

These problems can weaken democracy because instead of encouraging healthy discussion, they create confusion and division.

## V. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To make new media more positive for democracy, the following steps can be taken:

1. Introduce media literacy education in schools and colleges.
2. Encourage fact-checking habits among users.
3. Strengthen digital laws and cyber policies.
4. Promote ethical journalism and responsible content sharing.
5. Encourage open, respectful and logical political discussion online.

Media literacy must be introduced as an essential part of the educational curriculum from an early stage. Students should be trained to question online content, verify sources, and understand the difference between facts and opinions. This will reduce the harmful impact of misinformation and political manipulation.

Social media platforms must also take stronger responsibility for monitoring political content, especially during elections. Clear labeling of sponsored political posts and fact-checked content should become mandatory to protect users from misleading information.

Political parties and leaders should follow ethical communication standards while using digital platforms. Spreading hate, fear, or false narratives for political gain should be strictly discouraged and legally addressed.

Additionally, independent journalism must be promoted and supported so that citizens receive truthful and balanced information. A strong democratic society depends on an informed and aware population, and new media should be used to support this goal, not weaken it. When people use new media wisely, it can truly become a force for democratic growth.

## VI. CONCLUSION

New media has become a powerful tool in shaping political consciousness in contemporary India. It has changed the way people think about politics, express opinions, and take part in democratic processes. It has given voice to the common people, increased awareness, and encouraged participation.

At the same time, it has also created serious problems such as fake news, online hate, propaganda, and manipulation. These issues cannot be ignored. They affect people's mindset and influence important decisions like voting.

Therefore, new media can be seen as a double-edged sword. Its impact on democracy depends on how responsibly it is used. If combined with awareness, education, and ethical practices, it can strengthen Indian democracy. If misused, it can harm social harmony and democratic values.

In the end, the future of mediated democracy in India lies in the hands of its people, especially the youth. With the right knowledge and responsibility, new media can become a powerful tool for positive political change.

In addition, it is important to understand that new media is neither completely positive nor completely negative for democracy. Its impact depends on how responsibly it is used by both content creators and audiences. If guided by awareness, education, and media literacy, new media can become a powerful tool for strengthening democratic values in India.

Therefore, instead of banning or ignoring digital platforms, the focus should be on promoting ethical communication, fact-checking awareness, and responsible political engagement among citizens.

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