Social Media And Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election 2023: Issues And Challenges

Paban Kumar Moharana
Department Of Political Science
Shailabala Women's Autonomous College
Lecturer In Political Science
Shailabala Women's Autonomous College, Cuttack
Odisha-753001

I.   INTRODUCTION:

Social media plays an important role to facilitate the interactive way by engaging users to participate, comment on and create content as means of communicating with other participants during election campaigns. Social media has evolved as a major weapon where citizens can discuss the issues related to day to day life and also the state's stature. In the era of globalization, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are not just creations on the internet orb, but are fast turning up as an influencer and opinion innovators. The inception of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube has brought about an enormous upshot in the political globe. It has also been a significant function in dispersing information through multimedia frames, beyond national borders, across social, cultural and political niches. This chapter explores how social media increases political knowledge in one sphere while at the same juncture false information scatters and what those issues are created by operating the same as well to be examined. In this context, this chapter deals with how social media influenced Particularly in Karnataka's legislative assembly election 2023.

The media space has specifically changed a lot with the genesis of social media. It is a platform that reflects the vibration of the political activities of the citizens in the area under study. Apart from highlighting issues, there are politically relevant and crucial for strengthening democratic opinions and values. It has also exposed the connection between government and the population. People are more aware of what their political leaders are up to. The discussions on political issues and challenges for government officials created by many clients during the campaigns are widespread and instantaneous.

Social media are interactive technologies that allow the creation or sharing or exchange of information, ideas, data and other forms of expressions through virtual communities and networks. Some of the most popular social media websites with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and its associated Facebook messenger), tik tok, WeChat, Instagram, Qzone, we Ibo, twitter tumbler, and LinkedIn. By social media we generally have an attention to the new electronic media as differentiated from conventional media like the television, radio and print media. Social media are particularly named so as it assists in upholding a good societal affinity with the other.

During the 2023 legislative assembly election in Karnataka all political parties and candidates have extensively utilized social media in order to mobilize voters. Increasingly, politician and elected officials are realizing the power of social media for communicating political information and interacting with citizens. social media tools such as twitter, Facebook, and you tube provide new ways to stimulate citizen engagement in political life. Where elections and electoral campaigns have a central role so far as the Karnataka assembly election is concerned.

II.   STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER:

In this paper, the aims and objectives will be first dealt with including hypothesis. Next, methods of study will be taken up. The paper writer intends to highlight social media and its impact on Indian politics. Then social media and Karnataka legislative assembly election 2023 specifically will be taken up. Then the most important part is some case studies in Karnataka concerning the means of reciprocal information for strengthening electoral politics and democratic setup. This will include the perception of some of the young voters who take advantage of using social media platforms and citizenry participation in electoral politics. Some issues and challenges will be explored in the area under study. Finally, this will be followed by the conclusion.

III.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objective of the paper writer is to highlight social media on electoral politics and convey its reciprocal communication for strengthening democratic pillars in Karnataka legislative election 2023.

The objective is also to focus on the young voters who take advantage of using social media platforms and citizenry participation in electoral politics and to study social media as the facilitator of the fourth pillar of democracy in rural as well as urban areas with some concrete cases in Karnataka legislative election 2023.

IV.   HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

Social media has considerable impact on educated and economically better-off sections of society.

Social media has facilitated the political communication of political leaders with the voters during elections and it has been a better effectiveness on the Karnataka legislative election because of its IT Hubs in Bangalore.

V.   METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The method followed in the study is Historical cum Analytical. The material collected from the secondary sources like books, articles, journals and newspapers have also been analysed. Internet source has also been made use of. Some works are based on primary data that have been collected from political leaders.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INDIAN POLITICS:

India's general elections were slated to occur between April and May 2014 probably one of the most awaited elections decades back. It was not only becoming a sort of presidential contest but is also initiated waves for several other reasons. Among them, a very substantial one was the involvement of the youth. For a considerable amount of time over the last two-three decades or so, the educated urban youth had completely turned away from mainstream political activism. For a long while, being associated with politics or political activism was taboo and was considered a major negative in the path of a bright young Indian's professional career growth. But things are being changed and rather than changing instantaneous. The signs were all there for the last two or three years when the rapid popularity of the social media was making things undergo a fast expansion. Twitter and Facebook became great tools for the reluctant young Indian to actively engage at least in the discussions on political, economic, military as well as social issues. What started as discussions eventually became powerful groups for not just mere discussions but criticism and dissemination of opinion on several such issues which mainstream media would not discuss or show for several reasons. Initially most political parties did not take the social media and the rising wave of youth seriously and ignored it as a passing phase which would have no impact on voting patterns or electoral outcomes. Yet some political leaders found this as a great tool to connect with the educated and the middle class of India who for long had taken the voting day as an unexpected holiday to enjoy instead of voting. The reason for the success of social media and why some political parties have gained immensely out of it is because, most of the youth of India, that teeming millions working in ad agencies, research houses, IT companies, BPOs and in other spheres of the service or manufacturing sector do not get a chance to watch television or have rather distanced themselves from the ubiquitous television sets, but have hooked on all the more to the virtual world through their laptops, workstations and smart phones. Eventually what started as a mere virtual platform for discussions became a wonder tool for dissemination of information, advocacy, voter registration drive and voter mobilization. There can never be any doubt that a large number of first time voters and a large number of those young people who have never voted in the past did vote with much enthusiasm in the recently concluded assembly elections. Each of the states that went to poll witnessed massive surge in the polling percentages which broke all previous records. This could not have been possible without the active participation from a large number of such voters who were not voting in the past. In respect of using the social media and especially Twitter and Facebook, BJP and especially its Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi had a head start and their popularity as well as reach through social media is far more than that of any other parties.

Narendra Modi has the highest follower in twitter while in Facebook one can see many Facebook pages dedicated to him with considerable following. He was one of the early movers into the social media paradigm and it worked for him. Aam Aadmi Party too has to give a certain portion of its electoral success in Delhi to the impact it could create through the social media. However, parties like Congress and several other political parties were late in realizing the reach of the social media and the kind of impact it could create. Many of them are now trying to play the catching game. With elections merely two months away, social media campaigning is heating up with the focus changing to renewed drive for voter registration, crowd funding of events as well as development of election strategies. Social media is here to stay and it is increasingly becoming an indispensable tool for political democracy. With India's internet penetration on a massive upward journey, the reach would eventually extend to not just the educated mass of cities but also perhaps one day become a tool to connect with every Indian, be it urban or rural, be it the skilled or unskilled workforce, be it the elite or the rustic. Social Media is now an extended army of democracy of India from which nothing can be hidden.

Nirbhaya case had cut deep into the heart of people of India irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The unfortunate incident inspired a whole generation to stand together for women's rights and make the state answerable for its citizens. There were calls for social reform that were not based on clichés of being holistic but on equality for men and women in opportunity and access, in education and familial structures. An important part in raising this debate was played by the media, both national and foreign. The amazing characteristic of the nationwide protests was never called for by any political party or a religious leader. It was a people's movement and it was the conscience of the people who made them come out and demand justice for Nirbhaya. Television broadcast the developments all the time but people on the streets certainly were not watching Television. News reached them on their cell phone via Facebook and Twitter and also via other news sites. People received the reactions of prominent people who are respected and hold a special place in society on twitter and got bonded like never before. With so many people pitching in, it was people's movement. Social media also seethed with anger. People connected with each other on social networking sites, offering an insight into how it has emerged into a space for nuanced debate. Within ten days of the incident, Facebook groups 'Gang raped in Delhi', 'Delhi for Women's Safety' received 5046 and 4263 likes respectively. Other Facebook groups such as 'Delhi Gang Rape – Please Don't Ignore "Must Read" For Damini', and 'Delhi Gang Rape – Protest' emerged as individual fight against such crimes. These groups acted like platforms and gave a voice to everyone, even those who want to protest against sexual assault cases in India even if they are out of the country. Media activism of a powerful kind, of a type that jolts people out of their comforts and brings them on a same pedestal calling for both, meaningful dialogue and action for a better future, is not to be shunned, but actively promoted through social media.

THE SCENARIO IN KARNATAKA:

The Karnataka Assembly election of 2023 has witnessed a significant influence of social media in shaping public opinion and political discourse. With over 62 million internet users in the state, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have emerged as powerful tools for political parties to connect with voters and spread their messages. The ruling Congress party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Janata Dal (Secular) have all actively used social media to reach out to voters and shape their campaigns. Political parties have employed social media teams to create engaging content, run targeted ads, and monitor online conversations around their party and their opponents. One of the most significant impacts of social media on the Karnataka elections has been its ability to reach out to first-time voters and young people who make up a significant chunk of the electorate. Political parties have used social media platforms to engage with these voters and create a sense of belonging to their respective political ideologies.

The BJP, which has a massive social media presence, has been particularly active in the online space. The party's social media team has been churning out viral content, including videos, memes, and infographics, to create a buzz around their campaign. They have also launched a massive online outreach campaign, called the "Karnataka BJP Social Media Army," which has over 50,000 volunteers who are active on social media platforms.

The Congress, on the other hand, has been using social media to counter the BJP's online propaganda. The party has been running targeted ads to reach out to specific voter groups and has also created social media content to highlight their achievements in the state. The Janata Dal (Secular), led by HD Kumaraswamy, has also been actively using social media to connect with voters. The party has a significant presence on social media platforms and has been running a campaign to portray themselves as the alternative to the two dominant parties.

Apart from political parties, social media has also played a crucial role in mobilizing civil society and activists. Several social media campaigns, such as Karnataka Votes and Karnataka Elections2023, have trended on Twitter, with people sharing information, analysis, and opinions about the election. However, social media's impact on the Karnataka elections has not been entirely positive. Fake news, hate speech, and misinformation have also been rampant on social media platforms. Political parties and their supporters have been accused of spreading fake news to discredit their opponents and sway public opinion.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2023:

Freedom of speech and expression can assume true and dynamic significance only when political decisions are decided upon by the masses through social media platforms with equitable regard to the interests and aptitudes of strengthening democracy in Kanataka. According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB, by 2025, number of media users in rural India may have a higher number of internet users compared to urban centers which indicates the need to strengthen the digital ecosystem in the country. With better network and more smart phones in rural karnataka candidates embrace social media for campaigning. The study has found that 4.5 crore voters in the concerned state are active participant in electoral politics.

In the karnataka assembly election, now it is to be demystified that what are the key factors have helped congress for returning to its front office. Study is to be found out that the congress party has initially started campaigning through social media with five promises that shared person –to- personal accounts.

Kaveesh Gowda in charge of campaign and Social Media for Congress Party in Mysore said that he was not very positive of Social media making a huge impact. Facebook users, turning as potential voters is a big challenge. Actively engaging on Facebook does not guarantee votes. Most of the Facebook users when verified were not registered voters. Citing examples of many IT professionals who hail from Mysore and are working in MNC's in Bangalore were found to be active in more than one party Facebook pages; they are considerably more homogeneous than the Mysore electorate. Most of them are below the age of 25 were IT savvy youngsters who are hooked on social media but shy away from voting under one or the other pretext, he opined.

Professor Karuna Kaushik, JSS University, says that Politicians are apparently impressed and encouraged by the role played by Social media in the recent street protests – like the ones after Mumbai's 26/11 strike, the Anna Hazare agitation and the protests sparked by the Delhi gang-rape. It may be recalled by its role in gathering students and all age group supporters while Anti-corruption movement leaded by activist Anna Hazare. Social Media gathered so many people (mainly college going students) for a peaceful march towards Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House) in the capital city Delhi. A former Senior Journalists with Deccan Herald, Vijendra Rao who has covered Karnataka Elections extensively, is of the opinion that social media in Karnataka assembly elections has no major role to play in deciding the fate of the candidates. Reaching out to the rural population of Karnataka through Social Media is impossible. Social media has a role to play only among educated IT savvy urban youths in our country.

SA Hussain, office bearer of Karnataka Congress Committee (KPCC) who is also overseeing the IT cell sharing his thoughts says, firstly social media will be able to change politics absolutely in India is impracticable, but on the other hand it becomes handy for the party and the leaders to voice their opinion through another medium it ensures an alternative news source.

For political parties to be connected to social media and being active round the clock costs and it is an investment and a long term strategy that should be done not just for simplistic political gains, but because it's a listening post to tap into the aspirations of the young.

Naresh Kausihk, an IT Professional from Mysore in his mid-thirties, has not bothered to vote in the last three elections. But this election he was motivated and was serious to cast his vote, he was frustrated and disappointed the way things were in Mysore and the enormous corruption that has made headlines in Karnataka. When Naresh visited the polling booth he was disillusioned that his name was not in the voters list, Social media unfortunately did not come handy to him facilitating his to cast his vote.

Arif sait hails from a political family and has seen campaigning trends for more than three decades. State politics has changed drastically and witnessed a sea change; it is become tougher and harder reaching to the right voter. Social Media belongs to the educated and technologically connected citizens. It is not a medium for the masses he thinks. The challenges for any party are to connect to the rural vote bank.

The role played by the Election Commission on various Public groups, NGO's & citizens initiatives to create awareness and a movement for empowerment of democracy in fact resulted in higher voter turnout and 72% polling for the first time in Karnataka.

Kirti Kiran Kakubal a young lawyer strongly believes that it will take at least two decades for social media to have a stronger say in democratic processes. It is not the number of likes and tweets that will determine the probability of victory of a candidate but his ability to engage with electorate.

Today from a politics perspective, social media can at best be considered as a platform to reach to a wider audience and initiate discussions. Assuming that Social media will be a major deciding factor is a ridiculous proposition by any standards, factors like internet penetration in India, broadband access to voting population, fake identities on Facebook, eligible voters among Facebook users, low voting % rates in urban and metropolitans, demographic biased sampling, and skewed demographics of Facebook users have to be considered.

VI. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

To tackle the problem of fake news and hate speech, the Election Commission of India has set up a social media monitoring cell to monitor social media platforms for any violation of the Model Code of Conduct. The cell has been working with social media platforms to remove any content that violates the law. While social media has played a positive role in mobilizing voters and creating a sense of political engagement, it has also been used to spread fake news and misinformation. Study has found out that one of the congress leader named Subhash Rathod, from Chincholi, says, "WhatsApp is our main medium, while we also send out Facebook updates regularly."

As election campaigning gains pace, social media campaigning of political leaders is in full swing. While social media was used widely during previous elections too, with internet connectivity spreading, this time even politicians in rural areas and senior (older) leaders are utilizing social media extensively. Most leaders in rural areas have set up their own social media teams for 2023 legislative election in Karnataka.

Most political parties and leaders have dedicated social media managers. But the strategy during election time is completely different, experts said. While traditionally, tweets and posters with assurances and promises by candidates were the order While traditionally, tweets and posters with assurances and promises by candidates

were the order of the day, now, many candidates look forward to posting creative content with better visualizations during the election season. The candidates look for customized content and now the trend is short videos with appealing content. Many times, we also come up with punch lines and customized dialogues to attract the crowds," one of the representatives from a political digital campaign management company, working closely with congress, said.

Many videos have gone viral over the last month, especially those with a mix of caricatures. The representatives affirmed that special content for reels and anecdotes is furthermore the need of the day and to attract the youngsters. While a few candidates tend to showcase their achievements through videos with infographics whereas others look to highlight the misgovernance, corruption, and drawbacks of other candidates. Another content manager said that informational updates on posters and videos about civic concerns stand a big hit among the populace. Apart from videos, posters and photos also catch attention, but need to be curated well, said a representative from Rajneethi political management consultants. "When we talk about political campaigns on social media, either candid moments of the candidates

VII. CONCLUSION:

On an overall analysis, it has been found that social mdia is not a flatware shot when it comes to political transformation. The use of social media tools like text messaging, e-mail, photo-sharing, social networks etc. doesn't detach from the preordained consequence. Therefore, attempts have been made by clay shirky, Professor New Media, New York University, to outline social media's effect on political action is too often lessened to dueling retellings. Social media has a limited impact at best on important facets like elections and deciding the serendipity of politicians. In karnataka assembly election, the researcher has to be found out that from rural voters to first tme voters across Karnataka were embracing social media giving political candidates direct access to them with the eyes for 2024 general elctions ahead. All three major political parties were strategising with huge influential strategies to reach out to rural as well as semi-urban along with urban voters. Study also shows that the emergence of social media in the politics of Karnataka has ushered in a new era of political mobilisation of the common masses. Social media can be said to be the torch-bearers of the democratic institutions in India. The intriguing conclusions show the utilisation of social media as a tool for the political convalescence of the citizens in real democracy in that area under study. People show themselves as the citizenry who participated in the electoral process.

In the context of Karnataka, the study area, it is observed that Social media, a relatively newer entrant in the field of mass media, has proved to be more democratic than newspaper and television. Social media has provided the opportunity for citizens who are conversant with the medium to express their views about a number of issues. In many cases groups have been formed by likeminded people who discuss and debate over a number of decisions on the part of the government and seek new ideas for way ahead. The power of the medium can be easily judged from the developments in India in recent times. Social media has been used by various public service organizations, media barons, actors and N.G.O to inform people about their objectives and also to make them aware of various initiatives on the part of the government as well as non government organisations for social upliftment. The present study is aimed to examine and with concluded that people of karnataka are enjoying the highest level of internet connection and online information is perceived as more credible and reliable than traditional media sources. To conclude finally media and especially pillars like social media can help them realise their dream of direct democracy in Karnataka.

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