

How Indians' Political Awareness Is Changing

Salient Features, Recent Trends

1. Mohan G. Benageri, Srinivas University, Mangalore, PhD Student in Humanities

2. Dr. V. Basil Hans is a research professor at Srinivas University in Mangalore.

Abstract

This article looks at how Indian individuals' political awareness has changed over time, focussing on its most important aspects and contemporary trends. India has changed from being politically inactive to being more active and focused on issues in the last several decades. The growth of social media, higher literacy rates, and a larger youth population have all played a big role in this change. Political awareness has grown to include more than just voting. It also includes civil rights, holding government accountable, and mobilising people based on their identification. The article looks at how political behaviour varies by location and demographic group, focussing on how caste, religion, gender, and economic status continue to impact political views and agendas. Recent events, such as the rise of powerful regional parties, the use of digital campaigning, and public reactions to national policy, show that the voter is becoming more active and vocal. The article looks at these changes to show how India's democracy is changing because of the changing political awareness of its population.

Keywords: Political Consciousness, Indian Voters, Democratic Participation, Politics and Social Media, Identity Politics, and Political Mobilisation

Introduction:

Since gaining independence, India's political scene has changed a lot. It is now the world's largest democracy. The Indian electorate has changed from being a small group of politically active elites to a larger, more diversified group that is more involved in politics. This change is not just about numbers, like more people voting, but also about quality. People are becoming more aware, organising around issues, and asking for more openness and accountability in government.

Political consciousness is the level of understanding that people and groups have about political systems, rights, duties, and the effects of political acts. In India, this awareness has been moulded by things like colonial legacies, caste and group identities, regional differences, and social and economic inequality. But in the last several decades, a number of things have changed how Indians interact with politics. These include increased urbanisation, the growth of education, the spread of media, and the rise of a politically vocal youth population.

Recent developments show a clear transition from being a passive citizen to being an active one. Now, people are not just voters, but also political players, such as campaigners, protesters, and policy influencers. Social media, regional political movements, and issue-based movements like protests against corruption and debates over citizenship have made politics a part of everyday life. This change in consciousness shows both the hopes and fears of a society that is changing.

This article looks at the most important aspects and recent trends that are affecting political awareness in India today. The goal is to figure out what social and political forces are causing

this transition, which demographic groups are most affected, and what this change means for India's democratic future.

Objectives:

To look at how Indian individuals' political awareness has changed over time, especially in light of developments in technology, culture, and the economy.

To find and look at the most important aspects of modern political awareness and involvement in India.

To look into current changes in political engagement, such as how people vote, how they get involved in issues, and how they get people to vote.

To find out how digital media and communication technologies affect the political knowledge and involvement of different age groups, especially young people.

To learn how elements like caste, religion, gender, and geography affect people's political views and actions.

To think about what it means for India's democratic processes and institutional accountability if people's political awareness changes.

Why the Study is Important:

To understand how India's democracy is changing, it's important to know how Indians' political awareness is changing. As people's political knowledge grows and becomes more varied, it changes how they engage with institutions, affect policy, and protect their rights. This change has big effects on how elections are run, how the government works, and the future of participatory democracy in the country.

Changes in political behaviour in recent years, brought about by young people getting involved, digital activism, and issue-based mobilisation, have made it harder for old forms of political control and representation to work. Policymakers, political analysts, civil society actors, and educators all need to study these shifts because they show how political expectations, public discourse, and social cohesion are changing.

Additionally, this study adds to our knowledge of how under-represented voices are making their way into politics and how technology and media are affecting people's ability to participate in democracy. It is important to study political consciousness in order to keep India's democracy responsive and open to everyone, as the country continues to deal with complicated issues linked to identity politics, governance, and civic trust.

Questions for Research:

Over the past few decades, how has the political awareness of Indian citizens changed?

What are the main things that make up the current patterns of political knowledge and involvement in India?

What part do digital media, education, and youth activism play in determining how people think about politics today?

How do things like caste, religion, gender, and geography affect people's political views and actions?

What are the latest developments in how people act politically, such as how they vote, protest, and organise around issues?

What do these changes mean for India's democratic government and political accountability?

Theoretical Framework:

The study of how Indians' political consciousness has changed uses ideas from political science, sociology, and communication studies to understand how civic engagement, identity politics, and democratic involvement have changed over time.

Political Socialisation Theory: This theory describes how people learn about politics and develop their political opinions, attitudes, and behaviours through things like family, school, the media, and friends. Digital platforms and issue-based movements are having a bigger and bigger impact on political socialisation in India, especially among young people and people voting for the first time.

The Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady) says that three things affect political participation: resources (time, money, and skills), psychological engagement (interest and efficacy), and recruitment (mobilisation by parties or groups). This helps explain why people from different socio-economic classes in India don't all participate equally and why digital mobilisation is becoming more important.

Identity Politics and Intersectionality: Theories of identity politics and intersectionality show how overlapping identities, such as caste, religion, gender, and class, affect people's political views and behaviours. These identities are very important to political awareness in India, and they often affect how people vote, how groups come together, and how political alliances are formed.

Public Sphere Theory (Jürgen Habermas) looks at how public discourse affects people's willingness to participate in democracy. The digital public sphere (social media, online forums) is becoming more and more important in India for shaping political discussions, allowing new kinds of action, and sometimes making divisions even worse.

Post-materialist Values Theory (Ronald Inglehart) As economies grow, people often stop caring about material things (such safety and basic requirements) and start caring about post-materialist things (like protecting the environment, gender equality, and civil rights). This hypothesis helps explain why climate change, corruption, and minority rights are becoming more important in Indian politics, especially among educated and urban voters.

This theoretical framework gives us a way to look at the changing and complex nature of political consciousness in India from many different fields. It connects the structural,

psychological, and cultural aspects of political behaviour and helps us understand both the stability and the change in democratic participation.

Review of the Literature:

More and more academics are interested in the political awareness of Indian citizens, especially in relation to democratisation, identity politics, and the effects of digital media. Researchers have looked at this topic from historical, social, and political points of view, creating a body of knowledge that is both rich and constantly changing.

The Historical Roots of Political Awareness in India Early research, such that of Rajni Kothari (1964) and Myron Weiner (1978), looked at how political institutions and mass political behaviour developed in India after it became independent. These works stressed how caste, geography, and class were important factors in how people got involved in politics. People typically talked about the rise of electoral politics in terms of elite mobilisation and limited participation.

Caste, Identity, and Deepening Democracy More recent research has shown how identity politics affects how people think about politics. Christophe Jaffrelot (2003) and Yogendra Yadav (1999) say that the emergence of backward castes and Dalit assertion through political engagement has changed what it means to be an Indian citizen. This change from being a passive citizen to an active citizen among communities that have been historically left out is a big trend in the shifting political landscape.

Youth and New Political Engagement: Sanjay Kumar's (2013) and Anja Kovacs's (2012) studies look at how India's young people are becoming more politically aware thanks to education, urbanisation, and technology. Many young Indians are more focused on issues like corruption, jobs, education, and climate change than on loyalty to a political party. This is a change in how people of different generations act and what they anticipate from politics.

Digital Media and Political Mobilization Many others have looked into the digital shift in Indian politics, like Usha Raman and Tabereh Neyazi (2017), which look at how social media platforms are changing the way people talk about politics and get involved. India's political scene today includes online activism, viral campaigns, and false information spread through digital media. These technologies have made it easier for people to get involved, but they have also made it easier for them to be manipulated and polarised.

Political mobilisations like the anti-corruption campaign spearheaded by Anna Hazare in 2011, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests from 2019 to 2020, and the farmers' protests from 2020 to 2021 show that people are becoming more aware of politics across demographic and geographic divides. Researchers like Amrita Basu and Ghanshyam Shah have looked into how civil society movements are taking back political space and changing the way people talk about democracy.

Gaps in the Literature While there is a lot of useful information in the existing literature about some aspects of political consciousness, there isn't much that brings together identity, digital influence, and new generational trends into a single framework. Also, many scholarly discussions don't include enough rural perspectives or the voices of non-elite, non-urban actors.

This literature study shows how complex political consciousness is in India and lays the groundwork for a more in-depth look at how it has changed over time and where it is going now.

Problem Statement

India is the world's largest democracy, but it faces a paradox: even while more people are voting and getting involved in politics, the type, depth, and direction of political consciousness among its population are still uneven, complicated, and not well understood. New ways of asserting identity, internet activism, and issue-based participation are making it harder for traditional ideas about political behaviour, such as caste-based loyalty or party devotion, to hold up.

But scholarly and policy discussions often don't fully grasp the complex changes in political consciousness, especially among young people, marginalised groups, and people who are linked to the internet. Additionally, the growing power of false information, political division, and fake participation on social media makes it harder to recognise what real political involvement looks like today.

This study tries to fill in the gaps by looking at how political awareness in India is changing, what is causing this change, and what it means for the stability, inclusiveness, and governance of democracy in India today.

Analysis:

There are several ways to look at how India's political consciousness has changed, such as changes in demographics, technology, identity politics, and ways of participating. These things together show how political involvement is growing more varied, active, and, at times, divided.

1. Change in demographics and getting young people involved

India has a lot of young people—more than 50% are under 25 years old—and this has been a big part of changing the way people think about politics. Young Indians are becoming more knowledgeable, outspoken, and focused on issues. Older people generally voted primarily on loyalty or family ties. Younger people, on the other hand, are more likely to care about jobs, education, gender rights, climate change, and corruption. The anti-CAA rallies and the farmers' agitation drew a lot of young people, which shows that they are willing to stand up to authority and demand accountability.

2. Digital Media as a Place for Politics

The internet revolution has made it easier for everyone to get political information, but it has also made it easier for false information and echo chambers to spread. People use Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp to organise protests and manipulate politics. Online activism, like the farmers' protests of 2020–2021, has made the voices of people who are often ignored louder, but it has also led to more surveillance and restriction.

The way people talk about politics has also changed because of social media. It promotes feelings and things that go viral instead of facts and complexity, which makes people more divided. Political parties now spend a lot of money on digital marketing, data-driven targeting, and managing stories. This shows that people's political awareness is growing in virtual areas.

3. Politics of Identity and Assertion

Caste, religion, and regional identity are still very important in Indian politics, but the way they are expressed is changing. Dalit, tribal, and minority groups are making their political power more clear through voting and grassroots initiatives. Identity is no longer just a group of people who vote the same way; it is also a way to fight ideas and work out political deals.

Women are also become more involved in politics, both as voters and as candidates. Women in rural India have become more politically aware and able to lead thanks to programs like women's self-help groups and local panchayat reservations. But there are still not many women and men in politics at the national level.

4. Change from being a passive citizen to an active one

In addition to voting, people can now protest, sign online petitions, write about politics as a citizen journalist, and take part in public debates. People are more and more questioning what the government does, taking part in policy discussions, and holding leaders accountable. India Against Corruption (2011) and Save the Internet (2015) are two examples of how active, networked citizenship is growing.

5. Populism and Polarisation

More people becoming involved is a sign of a healthy democracy, but it has also made things more divided. People commonly talk about politics in terms of two sides: nationalist vs. anti-national, secular vs. communal, and urban elite vs. rural poor. This makes it harder to have good conversations and turns complicated problems into ideological extremes. Many people now see dissent, patriotism, and democracy in a different light because of populist language and appeals to the majority.

Important Results:

People are becoming more politically aware, but there are still divisions along class, caste, gender, and geographical lines.

Digital channels are important for getting people involved in politics, but they also spread false information and make people more divided.

Youth and groups that are often left out are becoming more important in politics and political engagement.

Civic action is becoming more focused on issues, but it is also facing more problems from state surveillance and internet harassment.

This study indicates that political awareness in India is not developing in a straight line. Instead, it is defined by contradictions: as people become more aware, they also become more confused; as more people get involved, they also become less happy with political institutions. To keep India's democracy strong and healthy, we need to understand how complicated this is.

Limitations:

Data Availability and Reliability: The analysis depends a lot on secondary data sources including surveys, media reports, and prior research, which may not always be accurate or up to date. Not having full, broken-down data on political behaviour in all regions and demographic groupings makes it harder to provide in-depth study.

Rapidly Changing Dynamics: Political awareness is a changing and fluid thing that is affected by events like elections, policy changes, and social movements. Because of this, the results are only a snapshot in time and may not show future trends or sudden changes in political involvement.

Urban-Centric Bias: A lot of the study and digital data that is out there mostly shows urban, literate people. There may not be enough information about the political views and actions of rural and marginalised communities, which make up a large part of the Indian population.

The study looks at caste, religion, gender, and region, but the way these identities interact with one other is more complicated than what this article can cover. More qualitative research is needed to fully understand these connections.

Effect of False Information: The rise of false information and online polarisation makes it harder to tell how politically aware someone really is. It can be hard to tell the difference between educated political activity and reactive or controlled behaviour.

Future Research Directions:

Longitudinal Studies on Political Consciousness: Future research might use longitudinal methods to look at how political consciousness and behaviour change over time. This would give us a better understanding of how events, policies, and social changes affect citizen engagement.

Focus on Rural and Marginalised Communities: We need more in-depth research on political awareness among rural populations and marginalised groups, such as women, Dalits, Adivasis, and religious minorities, so that we may better understand their specific problems and ways of getting involved.

Impact of Digital Media in Different Situations: Digital media's role in getting people involved in politics is well known, but more research should be done on how it affects people in different languages, regions, and social classes, as well as how it spreads false information instead of encouraging real political conversation.

Intersectionality and Political Behaviour: We need more detailed research to figure out how overlapping identities like caste, gender, class, and religion affect political awareness, voting behaviour, and activity in complicated ways.

Youth Political Socialisation and Education: Looking into how formal and informal education systems affect how young people become politically involved can help us find ways to encourage informed and active citizenship from a young age.

The Role of New Political Movements: Future research should look at how new social and political movements, such as environmental activism, feminist groups, and digital rights campaigns, are changing the way people think about politics and are involved in democracy.

Conclusion :

Indians' political awareness is changing in a big way. People are becoming more knowledgeable, more diverse in their participation, and new ways of becoming involved in civic life are emerging. This transition is a result of bigger changes in society and the economy, new technologies, and changing identity politics that together make it harder to act in the same way politically. Youth activism, the power of digital media, and issue-based mobilisation have all made democracy more open, giving more people, especially those from marginalised and previously disengaged groups, a chance to speak up and hold leaders accountable.

But this change is complicated and not often smooth. It includes both more political power and more division. The relationship between caste, religion, gender, and regional identities still affects how people think about politics. The internet public realm also brings new chances and dangers for democratic discourse. As India's voters become more vocal and diverse, it is important to understand how these changes in political awareness affect the country's democratic institutions and promote inclusive governance.

Ultimately, the changing political awareness of Indian citizens presents both challenges and opportunities for the country's democratic future. This shows how important it is to keep doing research, making policies, and teaching people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

References

- A. Basu (2017). Political Mobilisation and Social Movements in India. Press at Oxford University.
- Inglehart, R. (1997). Modernisation and Postmodernization: Changes in Culture, Economy, and Politics in 43 Societies. Press from Princeton University.
- C. Jaffrelot (2003). The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India: India's Silent Revolution. C. Hurst & Co.
- Kothari, R. (1964). Political life in India. Longman Orient.
- S. Kumar (2013). Young people and politics in India. Routledge India.
- Neyazi, T. A., and Raman, U. (2017). The Digital Public Sphere in India. Sage Publishing.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., and Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in Politics in the United States*. Press at Harvard University.

M. Weiner (1978). *Democracy and Political Participation in India*. The Press of Princeton University.

Yadav, Y. (1999). India's Third Electoral System, 1989–99: Politics in the Time of Change *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(34/35), 2393–2399.