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The Role Of Social Media In Shaping Political Campaign And Election In India

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Abstract:

Social media has become a powerful force in shaping political campaigns and elections in India. With the rapid growth of internet access and smartphone usage, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube have transformed how political parties communicate with voters. These platforms allow direct interaction between leaders and citizens, making political communication faster, more personalized, and more engaging. Political parties now use data analytics and targeted messaging to influence different groups of voters based on their interests, age, and location. At the same time, social media plays a key role in increasing political awareness and participation, especially among youth. It helps in mobilizing voters, spreading information, and encouraging democratic engagement. However, the growing influence of social media also brings challenges such as the spread of fake news, misinformation, political polarization, and concerns about data privacy. The use of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and digital campaigning strategies has further increased the complexity of modern elections in India. Overall, social media has significantly changed the nature of political campaigns and electoral behavior in India. While it strengthens democracy by increasing participation and access to information, it also raises serious concerns that require proper regulation and responsible use.

Key Words:

Artificial intelligence in politics, Digital campaign strategy, Digital democracy, Electoral process in India, Fake news, Miss information, Political communication, Political polarization, Social media, Voter behavior, Youth participation.

Introduction:

In recent years, social media has become a very important part of political campaigns and elections in India. Earlier, political parties mostly depended on newspapers, television, and public rallies to reach people. But now, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have changed the way political leaders communicate with voters. Social media allows political parties to directly connect with millions of people in a fast and low-cost way. Leaders can share their ideas, speeches, and promises instantly. At the same time, voters can express their opinions, support, or criticism openly. This has made politics more interactive and dynamic. In India, where a large number of people are young and use smartphones, social media plays a big role in influencing their political thinking. Political campaigns now use digital strategies like online advertisements, hashtags, memes, and videos to attract attention and spread their message quickly. However, while social media helps in spreading information and increasing political awareness, it also creates challenges like fake news, misinformation, and online manipulation. These issues can affect how people think and vote. Social media has changed how political parties connect with voters, how voters form opinions, and how elections are conducted. Today, digital platforms are not just tools of communication—they are central to political strategy. This essay discusses in simple language how social media influences political campaigns and elections in India, its advantages, challenges, and its future role. Overall, social media has become a powerful tool that shapes political campaigns and elections in India by changing how information is shared, how leaders connect with people, and how voters make decisions.

Growth of Social Media in India:

The growth of social media in India has been very fast in the last 10–15 years. Earlier, only a few people used the internet, mostly in cities. But now, millions of people across villages and towns are using social media every day. One major reason for this growth is the increase in smartphone users. Cheap smartphones and low-cost internet services have made it easy for people to go online. After the launch of affordable data plans by companies like Reliance Jio, internet usage increased rapidly. Today, even people in rural areas can access platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. Another important reason is the availability of content in local languages. Earlier, most online content was in English, but now people can use social media in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and many other languages. This has helped more people feel comfortable using these platforms. Social media is also growing because it is useful in daily life. People use it to communicate with friends and family, share photos and videos, get news, promote businesses, and even study. During events like elections, social media plays a big role in spreading information and influencing people's opinions. Young people are the biggest users of social media in India. They spend a lot of time online for entertainment, education, and social interaction. At the same time, older people are also slowly joining these platforms. In simple terms, social media in India is growing because it is cheap, easy to use, available in many languages, and useful for communication and information. This growth has changed how people connect, learn, and express their ideas in everyday life.

Social Media as a Campaign Tool:

Direct Communication with Voters:

One of the biggest advantages of social media is that it allows direct communication between politicians and voters. Leaders can share their ideas, achievements, and promises instantly without depending on traditional media like TV or newspapers. This direct communication helps politicians build a personal connection with voters. They can respond to questions, address issues, and share updates in real time. For

example, political leaders often use Twitter (X) or Facebook to announce policies, react to events, or connect emotionally with citizens.

Targeted and Personalized Campaigning:

Social media allows political parties to send different messages to different groups of people. This is called targeted campaigning or micro-targeting. Using data analytics, parties can identify voters based on age, gender, location, and interests. Then they create specific messages for each group. For example: Youth may receive messages about jobs and education and farmers may receive messages about agriculture policies, women may receive messages about safety and welfare schemes. This personalized approach makes campaigns more effective. Recent studies show that campaigns in India have moved from general messaging to data-driven personalized communication.

Cost-Effective Campaigning:

Traditional campaigns require a lot of money for rallies, travel, and advertisements. Social media campaigns are relatively cheaper. A single video or post can reach millions of people at a low cost. Even smaller political parties and independent candidates can use social media to compete with larger parties. This has helped make politics more inclusive and accessible.

Mobilizing Voters:

Social media plays a major role in encouraging people to vote. Campaigns like “Go Vote” or awareness videos motivate citizens, especially young voters, to participate in elections. It also helps in organizing events, protests, and political movements. Many social movements in India have gained popularity through hashtags and online campaigns. Social media has turned passive citizens into active participants in democracy.

Role of Influencers and Digital Creators:

Influencers, bloggers, and YouTubers have become important actors in political communication. They share opinions, analyze policies, and influence public thinking. Some influencers openly support political parties, while others provide neutral analysis. Their large follower base allows them to shape public opinion significantly. Research shows that influencers often play a key role in spreading political messages and even increasing polarization.

Social Media and Public Opinion Formation:

Social media is not just a campaign tool—it also shapes how people think about politics. People get news, opinions, and information from social media platforms. Unlike traditional media, where information is controlled by editors, social media allows anyone to share content.

Use of Technology and AI in Campaigns:

Recent elections in India show the increasing use of advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics, and digital war rooms. Political parties now use, AI-generated videos and speeches, data analysis to understand voter behavior, digital teams to manage social media accounts. In some cases, AI has been used to recreate voices of leaders or create emotional campaign content. This shows how technology is making campaigns more advanced and impactful.

Role During COVID-19 Pandemic:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical rallies were restricted. As a result, social media became the main platform for campaigning. Political parties used- Online rallies, live streamed speeches, Digital advertisements, this increased the importance of social media even more in elections.

Challenges and Negative Impacts:

Fake News and Misinformation:

Social media plays a very important role in spreading fake news and misinformation today. It allows people to share information quickly with just one click, but this speed also creates problems. Many times, people share news without checking if it is true or not. Because of this, false information spreads very fast and reaches a large number of people within a short time. Another reason is that social media platforms are designed to show content that gets more attention, such as shocking or emotional news. Fake news often uses strong headlines or dramatic stories to attract people. As a result, such content gets more likes, shares, and comments, which helps it spread even more widely. People also tend to believe information that matches their own opinions or beliefs, so when they see fake news that supports their views, they may accept it as true without questioning it. This creates confusion and sometimes even leads to conflicts in society. In addition, it is easy for anyone to create and post content on social media. There is often no strict checking before something is published. This makes it easier for false information, rumors, and manipulated content to circulate. Overall, social media has made communication faster and easier, but it has also made it easier for fake news and misinformation to spread. This can affect people's understanding, influence their decisions, and sometimes harm society if not handled carefully. For example -

Fake Government Circular in India in Kerala, a fake notice spread on WhatsApp and social media saying school summer holidays were reduced. It looked like an official government order, so many parents and students believed it, later, the government confirmed it was completely false.

A fake video of a US politician was created using AI and shared widely online. Many people believed it was real, which can influence voters and public opinion.

False Political Claims from Fake Accounts-A fake social media account pretending to represent a government spread false news about a US politician. Some big media outlets even reported it without checking properly, showing how quickly fake news can spread.

Old Video Shared as New Incident-a video of violence from an old event was shared online claiming it happened at a recent concert in Indore. This created panic among people, but later police clarified that the video was old and unrelated.

Fake War Images and Videos-During conflicts, fake photos and videos of bombings and soldiers are shared online. Sometimes these are AI-generated or edited clips that look real but are completely false, confusing people and spreading fear.

Political Polarization:

Social media plays a very important role in increasing political polarization, which means people become more divided in their political opinions. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube allow people to share ideas quickly, but they also create spaces where people mostly see opinions similar to their own. This happens because of algorithms that show content based on what users like, share, or follow. As a result, people are often surrounded by the same type of views again and again, which is called an "echo chamber." This makes them believe that their opinion is the only correct one. At the same time, social

media also spreads a lot of emotional and sometimes misleading information. Political posts are often designed to attract attention, so they may use strong language, fear, or anger. When people see such content repeatedly, they may become more extreme in their thinking and less willing to listen to others. This increases misunderstanding and conflict between different political groups. Another important role of social media is that it allows fake news and misinformation to spread very fast. Many people do not always check if the information is true before sharing it. False or biased news can influence opinions and create distrust between communities and political groups. This further deepens divisions in society. Social media also encourages people to express their opinions openly, but sometimes this leads to online arguments and hate speech. Instead of healthy discussion, people may attack others personally or refuse to accept different viewpoints. Over time, this weakens respectful communication and makes political differences stronger. In simple terms, social media connects people but also divides them by showing limited viewpoints, spreading emotional and false information, and reducing healthy discussion. This is why it has become a major factor in political polarization in today's world.

Manipulation of Public Opinion:

Social media plays a strong role in shaping and sometimes manipulating public opinion, which means it can influence how people think about politics, leaders, and important issues. It has become a powerful tool because millions of people use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter every day to get news and share ideas. One major way social media influence opinion is through algorithms. These algorithms show users content based on their interests, likes, and previous activity. Because of this, people mostly see information that matches their existing beliefs. This can slowly shape their thinking without them realizing it, as they are not exposed to different viewpoints. Another important factor is the spread of misinformation and fake news. On social media, false or misleading information can spread very quickly because people often share posts without checking if they are true. Sometimes, such content is created intentionally to influence public opinion, especially during elections or political events. This can confuse people and lead them to form opinions based on incorrect facts. Social media is also used for targeted advertising. Political groups and organizations can send specific messages to certain groups of people based on their age, location, interests, or behavior. These messages are designed to influence opinions in a subtle way, often by appealing to emotions like fear, anger, or pride. Influencers and popular accounts also play a role in shaping public opinion. People often trust these figures and may adopt their views without questioning them. When influencers share political content, it can strongly affect how their followers think. In simple terms, social media can manipulate public opinion by controlling what people see, spreading false information, targeting specific groups with messages, and influencing emotions. While it can be useful for sharing information, it also needs to be used carefully so that people can think independently and make informed decisions.

Privacy and Data Issues:

Social media has a big impact on privacy and data security. Privacy means keeping personal information safe, and data issues refer to how our information is collected, used, and sometimes misused online. When people use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, they often share personal details such as photos, location, interests, and daily activities. This information is collected by the platform and stored as data. Many companies use this data to understand user behavior and show targeted advertisements. While this can make ads more relevant, it also means that users' personal information is constantly being tracked. Another issue is that users are not always fully aware of how much data they are sharing. Sometimes, even simple actions like liking a post or clicking on a link can give information about a person's preferences. Over time, platforms build a detailed profile of each user. There is also a risk of

data misuse or data breaches. Hackers or unauthorized people may access personal data if the platform's security is weak. This can lead to serious problems like identity theft, fraud, or misuse of private information. Social media companies may also share user data with third parties, sometimes without clear understanding from users. This raises concerns about consent and control over personal information. In simple terms, social media affects privacy by collecting large amounts of personal data, tracking user activity, and sometimes exposing information to risks. It is important for users to be careful about what they share and to use privacy settings to protect their personal data.

Lack of registration:

Social media can also play a role in the lack of voter registration, especially among young people. Many people spend a lot of time on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, but not all of the information they see encourages them to take part in real political activities like registering to vote. One reason is distraction. Social media is full of entertainment content such as videos, memes, and trends. Because of this, important civic duties like voter registration may not get enough attention. People may enjoy political discussions online but still not take the step to register themselves. Another reason is misinformation or lack of clear information. Sometimes people do not see correct details about how to register, where to go, or what documents are needed. Confusing or false information can discourage people from registering, especially if they think the process is difficult. Social media can also create a feeling that online participation is enough. People may believe that liking, sharing, or commenting on political posts means they are already contributing. This reduces real-life action, such as registering to vote or participating in elections. In some cases, negative or discouraging content about politics—like corruption, conflict, or lack of trust in leaders—can make people feel that their vote does not matter. This can reduce motivation to register at all. In simple terms, social media can reduce voter registration by distracting people, spreading unclear or false information, and making online activity feel like a substitute for real participation. This is why awareness and correct information are very important to encourage more people to register and vote.

Impact on Democracy:

Social media has a strong impact on democracy, both in positive and negative ways. Democracy means people have the power to choose their leaders and express their opinions, and social media has changed how this happens. On the positive side, social media makes it easier for people to get information and stay aware of political issues. News, government updates, and public debates are available quickly, and people can learn about their rights and responsibilities. It also gives everyone a platform to express their opinions freely. Ordinary people can share their views, raise issues, and even organize movements or protests. This increases public participation in democracy. Social media also helps political leaders and governments connect directly with citizens. They can share their ideas, explain policies, and receive feedback from the public. This can make democracy more open and interactive. However, social media also has negative effects on democracy. One major problem is the spread of fake news and misinformation. False information can mislead voters and influence their decisions during elections. People may not always check if the information is true, which can harm fair decision-making. Another issue is political polarization. Social media often shows people only one side of an issue, making them less open to different opinions. This creates division in society and weakens unity, which is important for a healthy democracy. Social media can also be used to manipulate public opinion through targeted messages and emotional content. This can unfairly influence voters and reduce the fairness of elections. In simple terms, social media strengthens democracy by increasing awareness and participation, but it can also weaken it by

spreading false information, creating division, and influencing people in unfair ways. So, it is important to use social media responsibly for democracy to work properly.

Conclusion:

Social media plays a very important role in India today. Social media has become a powerful force in shaping political campaigns and elections in India. It has transformed the way political parties communicate, how voters engage, and how elections are conducted. While it has many advantages such as increased participation, direct communication, and cost-effective campaigning, it also brings challenges like misinformation, polarization, and data misuse. Therefore, it is important for both the government and citizens to use social media responsibly. Digital literacy, strong regulations, and ethical political practices are necessary to ensure that social media strengthens democracy rather than harming it. In conclusion, social media is now an essential part of Indian politics, and its influence will only increase in the future. It has changed the way people communicate, share information, and express their opinions. Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram help people stay connected with friends, family, and society. Social media is also useful for education, business, and spreading awareness about important issues. It gives people a voice and allows them to take part in discussions, including politics and social matters. However, it also has some negative sides, like fake news, misinformation, and privacy problems. These issues can affect people and society if not used carefully. Overall, social media is a powerful tool in India. If people use it wisely and responsibly, it can bring positive change and help in the development of society.

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