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**Abstract:** In a democratic political system political participation of people is a must needed requirement. For any kind of participation the participants always need to be aware of the facts and situations. From the time immemorial there have been various means among people for communication, sharing information with each other. With the passes of time the present era evolved with the advent of technology with its own pros and cons. For communication social media platforms are the new and latest developments for mankind. A huge number of people use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter ,WhatsApp etc.In India the percentage of youth who use social media is 66 which is sufficient enough to take a significant role in politics that can create or break the existing political scenario of the country . Now the matter of concern regarding use of social media is that there are huge number of information floating in such platform without any scrutiny. Every person is free to share their opinion unless it creates tremendous public damage. The post truth era is the new addition to manipulate to promote irrational public opinion to gain political interest by the political parties which came into attention largely after Oxford Dictionary declared the same term as the word of the year in 2016. In terms of political scenario people share their opinion about a situation, towards any activities of a political party, specially youth do not feel hesitate to share their voice. Since social media platforms are more conventional and easy access as compared to traditional means of communication people got more active participation in these platforms. Young people are getting benefit from social media but may be it is not equally beneficial for everyone in every situation. Political parties also avail the advantage of social media platforms to reach the masses. The study specifically covers the time period of 2014 general elections and 2019 Assam legislative elections.

**Key words:** social media, post truth politics, youth, political participation, voting behaviour.

**Introduction:**

From the beginning itself people's always find out ways to communicate with each others. This is the way how people share information, opinions. Communication is very important to get aware of anything happening around. So the communication process and the means to it must be conventional, effective and authentic. Media is a means for sharing information. Traditional media such as television or radio may be

the Industrial Revolution the world witnessed so many technological innovations which made people's life more comfortable. With the invention of internet the world is now more or less living in a virtual world where social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc are included. These platforms are much more popular because of its easy access and ability to connect more people as compared to traditional media.

**Definitions :****1. Social media:**

In a simple way when we use the word social media we mean various platforms to communicate such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube etc. We do socialisation through these digital channels. The study also covers these platforms as the term social media is use in it.

Social media is broadly defined, "a variety of websites, services and applications that allow users to engage in social behaviour online or on a mobile phone.(Sharma & Mahapatra,2020).

Oxford Dictionary defines social media as, websites and applications that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking." (Sharma & Mahapatra,2020).

Social media defined as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. (Sharma & Mahapatra,2020).

Also there is no single opinion about who had invented the term social media ,

Ted Leonsis in 1997 is cited using the term in the same manner as it is used today and claim to have created the term. (Sharma & Mahapatra,2020).

Tina Sharkey who owns the domain socialMedia.com since 1999 and claims she coined the term during her working days on village where she was in charge of community building. (Sharma & Mahapatra,2020).

**2. Youth :** For the purpose of the study the term youth include those who are eligible to cast their vote i.e from the age of 18 and not more than the age of 35.

**Methodology:** The study is based on Descriptive, Analytical method. Descriptive method for describing the situation in politics in the presence of social media. Analytical method for comparison between two general elections in India for a more appropriate outcome which are effected by social media. For this study data has been collected purely from secondary sources like books, research papers, news papers, websites etc.

**Objectives:**

1. To find out what was the role of social media in 2014 & 2019 general elections in India.
2. To find out how youth are take participate in politics through social media.
3. To find out impact of social media on voting behaviour of youth.

There are numerous research works on social media and its influence on various fields such as on women's participation in politics, voting behaviour, on youth etc. Since this study relate to social media influence on youth and their political participation. Some of the literature reviews are as follows:

In their study **“Role of Social Media in Election campaigning in India with special reference to Assam”(2020). Author Rantu Sharma and Dr. Niranjan Mahapatra** highlighted on the definition of the term social media and also the influence of social media platforms during Assembly elections. The article analyses how Bharathiya Janata Party used social media's platforms to connect with their voters with some slogans such as Last battle of Saraighat, Ab ki bar Modi Sarkar which were effortlessly pronounced by the people in their daily routine as they had heard, read those slogans in every social media platforms they used, In an article published in feminism in India **How has social media Helped organise protests against CAA?** Analysed how social media contributed to the protest against CAA. Social media handles daily updated various news, photos and videos across the state which instantly strike the mind and emotions of people to outburst. The news channels of the country are busy with bias ideologies and shows fake news which is far away from the reality that fuel to the increasing popularity of social media platforms.

In an Article **Digital Politics in India's 2019 general election** author **Nalin Mehta** analyses various aspects of digital initiatives of political parties most notably Bharathiya Janata Party and Congress through social media platforms before 2019 general election which has an impact on the results of the election. The article also analysed the frequency of social media uses by the leaders of the two major political party and various digital initiatives and advertisements by political parties before election.

### **Analysis :**

#### **1. Social media and political system:**

Elections in a democracy is a core component. In India elections whether it is Assembly elections in a state or the General elections always been the game changing point in the political system. Political parties accordingly become conscious in the campaigns to get the attention and support from their voters. Along with the passes of time the nature of campaigning and the involvement and behaviour of voters has been changing over the time. This is the era where we are somehow influenced by social media in our everyday including socially, economically or politically. In the same way activities in the political system also affected by social media and elections are not an exception to it. Every political party keeps a professional IT cells to maintain connectivity with the masses through social media and they target to reach that section of the society who are not well empowered politically to find out the differences between fake news and the authentic news. They believe in whatever shown to them.

#### **1.1 General Election, 2014 :**

The general election of 2014 in India was a revolution in Indian political system. Bharathiya Janata Party changed the way of political campaigns for election with the extensive use of social media. It was the social media platforms that created a history of massive win for the party in 2014 after a long dominance of Congress in Indian political system. It will be wrong if we consider social media as the only strategy of BJP but definitely

changing pattern of communication and it is the extensive use of tool for communication.

BJP's IT cell head Arvind Gupta said that "we saw a trend, we read this trend, where the youth of the country were embracing social media as their first tool when they started using internet and we made sure our presence was there. By the time Narendra Modi sworn as Prime Minister he had more than 16 million likes on Facebook, the second most for any politician in the world, and he was the sixth most followed world leader on Twitter. A report published by **ComScore Inc.** a U.S. company that measures digital usages said that 75% of India's online population was younger than the age of 35, significantly younger than other BRICS countries. Nilotpal Chakravarti, the association vice president of the internet and Mobile Association of India cleared that Narendra Modi used Twitter by himself to reach out the youth of the country and discussed about their problems, their requirements regarding jobs, security. Use of social media before general election in 2014 was a constructive strategy adopted by Bharathiya Janata Party to make sure that they are in touch with their voters(Ali,2014).

By following the global trend Indian politicians also use social media in the context of elections to connect with their voters. India's present ruling party Bhartiya Janata Party used social media platforms in such an extensive way which gave a very easy win to the party. Politicians used it as it gives possibilities to escape critics. In 2014 general election of India is social media played a prominent role because of Narendra Modi who used social media in a very effective way to reach the masses and that was a game changing moment for the political system in India. Within a month after becoming Prime Minister in 2014, Modi emerged as the world's second most popular head of a state on Facebook and in 2019, he has been the most liked leader on Facebook with 43.5million likes on his personal page and 13.7 million likes on his institutional Prime Minister of India page.(Rao.A,2019). Other parties were late to the show but quickly mastered several of the BJP,s tactics. Notably the main opposition party congress under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi in 2017 revamped party's media policy with a new focus on social media, analytic and crowd sourcing to compete with the BJP to garner attention in the cyberspace.(Rao.A,2019).

The content of any media has different affects on individuals. The tradition media where people are not actively involved to share their opinion the new technology brings so much opportunities to share opinion to a large number of people at one go. The Hypodermic Needle theory says that ideas from the media are in a direct casual relationship to behaviour. This theory believes that the media could inject India's into someone's mind like the way liquids are injected by a syringe.

In India 70% of total internet users are daily active users as revealed by a study conducted by the Internet and Mobile Associations of India. The percentage is not a joke to a country where poverty is a burning issue, many rural areas of North East are not well equipped with internet service. We can't say that only youth are actively engaged in social media platforms but it will fair enough to say that youth plays a major role in participation through social media in the politics.

Irrespective of the fact that the North eastern region of the country is not so developed, Where Assam is also included the number of people engaged in social media is so high. Since internet became an integral part of

of social media has changed the atmosphere of political campaigning and people's participation.

One aspect of political awareness is what political parties do to provide participation to their voters. In Assam, before Assembly Elections congress party ran a online contest among young people to know about their perspectives and opinions about various issues of Assam that need to be address immediately. Surprisingly and in a good way almost 20,000 videos was collected from various regions where youth more specifically highlighted on issues like flood, women safety, illegal immigration etc as said by the congress leaders. The congress leaders also shown their wish to discuss such topics with the youths for their opinions as it was not a mere contest but the opinions of youths do matter for the party.

### 1.2 General Election, 2019:

After exceptional win of Bharathiya Janata Party in 2014 generations election, the other parties , most notably the Congress put so much efforts to change the situation through social media. Before 2014 the access of digital media was limited to a small section who has the capability to access the internet but with the launch of Jio networks it becomes very cheap for every section of the society. After a massive success in 2014 general election, the Bharatiya Janata Party again started its digital initiatives before 2019 general election. A digital campaign was launched as 'youth with Modi' to discuss and advertise about various initiatives and policies introduced by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

In 2019 general election major social media companies agreed to voluntary code of ethics which was submit by the Internet & Mobile Association to the election commission of India on March 20,2019. Principles to which the agreed social media companies :

- I. They would conduct education and communication campaigns to build awareness on educations.
- II. To create a high priority dedicated grievance redressal channel to take action on objectionable
- III. To ensure per certification of all political advertisements published onto their platforms from the government's media certification and monitoring committees as mandated by the Supreme Court.
- IV. To transparently report paid political advertisements and to label and disclose them as such.

On the evolution of objectionable post, the Election Commission of India reported that 909 posts were taken down during the election period by tech platforms through the grievance redressal mechanism.( Election Commission,2019). Facebook removed 650 posts, Twitter deleted 220 tweets, YouTube removed five videos. The situation shows the condition of political information or misinformation flows daily in those platforms. Before elections slogans propounded by BJP became so popular among masses. Some of them were 'Last Battle of Saraighat' , 'Ab Ki Bar Modi Sarkar'. The word "Paribortan" use by BJP to indicate change that will take place if the party win touch every individual and create a great impact on voters.

### 2. Youth's participation in both the elections:

about two thirds of the population is under 35 which shows the importance of young voters in our country. A survey involving 200,000 Indians from the age of 18-35 years in March 2019 in urban regions of the country shows that around 85% of youth think that voting should be compulsory and three quarters of voters also stated that they do an extensive research before casting their vote to a candidate. This survey and statistics suggest that the young voters today recognise their right to vote and its importance. This could be because there are increasing awareness among voters about political system of the country and connectivity with the political system. Youth are getting opportunities to get informed and engaged in political activities through media specially social media platforms which is a easy access for most of the youth. (Devakishen, B, 2019)

### **Post truth politics:**

The term post truth politics has manage to grab the attention of every conscious political person ever since oxford Dictionary declared the term as word of the year in 2016, relating to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotional and personal beliefs. Although the concept post truth has been existing for the last decade, it gets its political currency in the context of Brexit and the presidential election in the United States. (J, Jojo, 2020). The post truth concept is not restricted only to America or Europe. After the Second World War America arose as the leader of the world and preserver of Democracy. But the incident of 9/11 broke the claim and the world used to look on America as not so powerful leader as it claimed. America tries to propagate in all ways politically that would stand up their claim as world powerful leader. In that case media played a prominent role.

Modreanu clarifies in her argument the concept of post truth that the ethical code of approving one's commitment to truth that was traditionally considered with one's morale uprightness is under erasure. Considering someone as liar is not to the level of considering him/ her as morally wrong rather one understands such a person lacks moral correctness. One is neither put into question or challenged by his/her ethical dishonesty rather valued as a person ethically challenged, i.e for someone truth is temporarily unavailable. This would amount to say that either no one is always correct, or everyone, at some point in life, lacks truth. No one could be true always. This would result to state that being a liar is only a condition that is very relative as to say that no one could be always true. Aristotel in his *Metaphysics* mentioned his statement that All men by nature desire to know. The quest for knowledge and wisdom is always considered to be a search for truth. Plato, the Greek philosopher, in his book *republic* says that one should say true lies to bring about just society. He says, "we devise one of those useful falsehood...one noble falsehood, in the best case, persuade even the rulers." This would imply that there is nothing as to state conclusively or absolutely as the truth. The myth of metals told by the Phoenician story that Plato uses in his '*Republic*' remains one of the earliest records of the noble falsehood. (J, Jojo, 2020).

Though there is a very thin gap between the reality and imagination. In social media platforms all the news or information are not true, some of them are created as a truth in the political context by political parties or leaders or someone supporting a political party for their interest. In social media platforms it is easy to manipulate people specially the youth as they are so much curious to know. But the problem is how to

informed and may be most of them are not an authentic one. In the era of post truth politics political parties use any kind of weapon to inject their own perspective to the mind of their voters. Politics in India loosing it's connection with honesty, because politics has always had a close connection with lie in the war of power. Young mind find it difficult to rely on their political leaders without getting aware of their activities and initiatives, position to solve the problems. In social media platforms there are ample of sources to get information or misinformation. Every person cannot recognise the truth behind a lie or manipulation. When an incident happens the public faces lack of proper information i.e the truth and personal subjective judgement take place at the first stance. In social media emotional expression based on jokes and carnival become increasingly a way of discourse and people form their opinions based on such irrational emotional contents. The media ignores the truth of the incident and amplifies the emotional conflict, making the truth give way to the public's carnival, in the post truth era, joking carnival has gradually become a normalised manifestation of social public opinion.( Su.Y,2022)

**Conclusion :**

Youth are the asset of our country. Political system is the lifeline of our country who is supposed to take decisions for for the people. If the youth are not motivated to participate in the political that is not a good sign for the future of the country specially for a democracy like India. But the system itself not so encouraging to welcome youth. The way political parties and leaders use social media it gives the youth to communicate with their representatives, it provides opportunities to get aware of various activities of political parties and take participation directly in various programs conducted digitally. But the problem is in traditional media the number of people who produced information was less and consumer of such information was large. Now it works in reverse way i.e number of information producers are high and consumers are less. But the concern is that there are number of information flows daily in every social media platform irrespective of their authenticity. Political parties or the information producers most of the time target those people who are not well educated or aware about what is happening around them. They believe what they see in the screen of their device. For political parties to remain in power people stay far away from the truth, even the truth of their lives. To convince people social media platforms are a easy way because in digital platforms people do not see what they want, but they see what is presenting before them.



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