

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA**Divyshikha and B. Shankar**Department of Mass Communication, Galgotias University, Greater Noida, UP, India
guptashikha014@gmail.com, bhavani.shankar@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in**ABSTRACT**

Coronavirus has had a terrifying and far-reaching impact on human civilization and democratic politics across the world. It has already changed political discourse in many countries. This will undoubtedly lead to a change in the political agenda of India. In the construction of the country's political narrative, a new lexicon may arise and gain importance. Electoral discourse and political campaigns may include terms like health, virus, oxygen, vaccine, etc. The system of general elections was also not untouched by the outbreak of Coronavirus. The nature of election rallies for campaigning is changing. Rallies are going virtual till now. Due to the Covid protocol, the parties have come to the virtual platform. Politicians are driven by their own political agenda, but in the COVID era, there has been unity in adopting digital tools not only to stay connected but also to be effective. This study is an attempt to highlight the major impacts of COVID-19 on India's political arena. The objective of this study is to examine how Covid-19 transformed the traditional way of political campaigning, to analyze the impact of the Corona pandemic on the election, and to make some appropriate recommendations for reducing the impact of Covid-19 in India.

Keywords: Covid-19, Election, Politics.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a burden on electoral democracy around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an international and domestic impact on politics, disrupting several countries' governing and political systems, leading legislative activity to be suspended, politicians to be isolated or dead, and elections to be rescheduled owing to fears of the virus spreading.

Not only in India, but across the world, COVID has had a terrifying and far-reaching impact on human civilization and electoral politics. It has already changed the political landscape in many countries. This is sure to change the political agenda of India as well.

This new paradigm is forming around people's existential concerns and concerns, particularly those related to public health, health services, and infrastructure.

The distribution of resources such as medicines and vaccinations, the availability of hospital beds and treatment facilities, and new essentials such as oxygen masks, are becoming increasingly prominent in the sphere of politics and state power. Call it the "politics of medicalization", but it will determine the future of electoral democracies and put politicians to the test of power and opposition.

Acts of terrorism, economic disruption, and ensuing pandemics cause periods of growing uncertainty and anxiety in the affected

countries. People naturally gather in such situations to develop an understanding of their circumstances and learn how to respond. A large part of this process of 'social knowledge sharing' takes place online in modern times.

The most recent and perhaps the most notable example of the usefulness of online information during the crisis period is COVID 19.

No one expected that video conferencing between the prime minister and chief ministers, or between the prime minister and international leaders, would become so common that it would no longer be considered a break from the traditional physical format of the meeting.

The politics of social justice and people's rights are being reshaped around the problems of human life security. As a result, concerns like distribution of free rations, monetary aid to the needy in the form of political gifts, and so on, may become the foundation for health issues, at least for a few years.

Discussions on social media and other platforms are already showing this change in perspective. The desire to free society from the virus has reached the top of the priority list. As the pandemic spreads, caste, class, place, and other variables have become subject to the politics of body and life. The coronavirus could turn us into an "organic body-centered culture" for the foreseeable future.

Story of political transformation in India 2020-21

When the first case of Covid-19 was reported on January 30th, 2020, no one could have predicted that terms like "mahamari", "do gaj doori", lockdown, corona warriors, RT-PCR Covid-19 testing, Covishield and Covaxin vaccine, and "aatmanirbharta" will become a part of everyday discourse in India.

The election campaign is an important aspect of the democratic process which has been seen to be affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Political parties & politicians use campaigns to communicate their views on how public policies should change or remain the same in the future. Campaigns offer public debate and discussion on the future of the country. They enable citizens to examine their options more carefully upon arrival at the polling station. It is a set of rituals that herald the beginning of the democratic process.

The impact of COVID-19 is not limited to people's health; It has also had a significant impact on the socio-political and economic spheres of the world. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the world economy has experienced a slowdown.

There may not have been any significant change in power, but in terms of other methods and behavior, Indian politics also does not look untouched by the coronavirus. Whether it is the meeting of the Prime Minister with the Chief Ministers through video conferencing or the press conference through video conferencing itself.

The gathering of people due to the Corona crisis is not free from danger. In this way the era of virtual rally has started. It was the beginning of a new era in the political history of India when the Bharatiya Janata Party, through a virtual rally, created the assembly elections to be held in Bihar in November-December 2020. Despite the lack of dust, the sound of drums, convoys of vehicles, and the chirping of loudspeakers, the rally was taken out. BJP has contacted thousands of people and expressed their views.

Preparations for rallies in India used to be done months in advance. The workers became active. Various efforts were made to increase the number of people attending the event, and once they arrived, provisions had to be

prepared to accommodate and feed them. Corona has put an end to it all. In the virtual era, now open the link and join directly. The leaders also won't have to worry about attending multiple public gatherings on the same day. A lot has changed since then.

Objectives

The following are the study's key objectives:

- To examine the political impact of Coronavirus in India.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on election campaigning
- To make some appropriate recommendations for reducing the impact of Covid-19 in India.

Methodology

The research is descriptive as well as analytical. The data was gathered from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, & the internet, among other things.

Discussion

In mid-March 2020, the "Epidemic Diseases Act 1897" and the "Disaster Management Act 2005" were enacted. To curb the spread of COVID-19, several towns and states have indicated they will prohibit public gatherings, eat out at eateries and order the closure of some non-essential shops.

India is one of the worst-affected countries by Covid-19. With 29,300,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 & 367,081 deaths as of June 12, 2021, India has the world's 2nd highest number of confirmed cases & the 3rd highest number of COVID-19 deaths.

During the pandemic scenario (March-May 2021), assembly elections were held in India for 4 states Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, & West Bengal) & a union territory (Puducherry) in numerous phases.

The Election Commission of India released several health guidelines for conducting elections in the middle of the global COVID-19 outbreak. Masks should be worn, polling booths should be sanitized, thermal scanners should be used before entering polling booths, social distance should be maintained, and so on.

As a result of the global pandemic, the Indian government has come under attack from both citizens and opposition party leaders. Many have criticized the government's sudden lockdown decision, claiming that it has caused a lot of damage to them. According to some opposition figures, the government is reportedly playing politics over covid-19. Both social and economic structures were affected by the pandemic. If so, radical change cannot be separated from politics and governance. It's still too early to tell what the form and scale of the changes will be – India is still dealing with the outbreak. It's also easy to exaggerate the interrupt while reducing the continuity. However, it is undeniable that the pandemic has given rise to one of the most challenging problems the Indian government has ever faced. The state, like its citizens, will not remain the same when it emerges from the wound, but will also recover from it. In some ways it will be better, while in others it will be worse.

The Political Dependency on online platforms

In July 2016, the United Nations declared Internet access to be a human right. The importance of digital networks and service platforms has been demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It became apparent than ever during the Covid-19 pandemic that having internet connectivity & digital technologies can be a lifeline for many people across the globe. Healthy Lifestyle-related knowledge can aid in the prevention of the virus' spread or save lives, whereas a variety of web services can help us function normally when our activities are restricted.

The shift is visible in unexpected places as well, such as the government's ties with big tech. Political communication has become overwhelmingly reliant on digital communication, whether you are on the side of the ruling party, the opposition, or a member of civil society organizing rallies. While the conflict between sovereign states and online platforms has been building for some time, it is likely not coincidental that it has exacerbated in recent months as the value of digital platforms has increased.

To weather the COVID-19 storm, the world will increasingly depend on digital technologies. People can now access government information, participate in e-courses, find jobs online, transmit mobile money, and even receive telemedicine - regardless of where they live - Thanks for the digital platform.

The COVID-19 epidemic is driving governments and society to turn to digital technology to respond to the crisis in the immediate term, resolve socioeconomic ramifications in the medium term, and reinvent existing policies and instruments in the long term. Governments must adopt an open government strategy and use digital communication channels to give trustworthy information on global and national COVID-19 developments to navigate through these difficult times. E-participation platforms can be effective instruments for engaging vulnerable populations online and establishing digital campaigns to collectively discuss policy solutions to pressing social and economic issues.

During the Corona outbreak, the internet played an important role in keeping political events running smoothly, whether it's a virtual meeting of the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, an e-Rally, online dialogue with the people, or the Arogya Setu Application. During this time of fighting the clock, the internet has been extremely useful.

Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the global pandemic COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the social, political, and economic spheres of India. India's general economic structure has deteriorated as a result of the pandemic and will have a significant impact on the social, political, and economic aspects of the life of people in India in the future.

While this epidemic is infecting the entire globe, no single state or country can beat it alone, which is why all of the world's nations and territories must cooperate to combat this terrible virus. Besides, all states should unify and provide active cooperation to the central government to mitigate the effects of this dangerous virus at the national level.

The coronavirus outbreak has highlighted the need for internet and digital technology for all countries, regardless of socio-economic, political, geographical conditions. It is clearer than ever that having access to a diverse selection of Internet infrastructure and services, all of which are offered without discrimination, is vital to resilient and powerful societies.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 disaster, efforts to build digital government initiatives should promote data protection and digital inclusion policies as well as the policy and technical capabilities of public institutions. The epidemic of COVID-19 has highlighted the relevance of technology, as well as the critical role of an effective, inclusive, and accountable government.

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