



Political awareness and democratic governance in India: challenges and prospects

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ABSTRACT

Political awareness constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the effective functioning of democratic governance. It enables citizens to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, hold public institutions accountable, and contribute to the legitimacy of democratic governance. The present article is an attempt to conceptualize the idea of political awareness and the process of democratic governance and analyze the role of political awareness in democratic governance. It examines the interrelationship between political awareness and democratic governance, as well as the challenges and prospects of political awareness in the context of democratic governance, both generally and with specific reference to India. Moreover, the study provides practical recommendations to improve democratic governance through increase in political consciousness. Methodologically, the study is based on secondary sources, including books, scholarly articles, journals, newspapers, and relevant online materials. Both historical and descriptive approaches have been employed to analyze the subject.

Keywords: *Political Awareness, Democratic Governance, Participation, Citizens, Accountability.*

Introduction

Political awareness is the key to establishing a democratic society based on accountability, transparency, and good governance. Democracies, thus, depend upon active and informed citizen participation for their development and continuity. Politically aware citizens contribute to democratic sustainability by critically scrutinizing government actions, inactions, programs, and policies (Badaru, et al., 2021). Political awareness encompasses citizen's understanding of political systems, governance mechanism, rights, duties, and the institutional processes that influence public life. It empowers citizens to make informed decisions, participate actively in democracy, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to the stability and development of democratic societies.

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In a democratic society, the legitimacy of authority stems from the informed participation of the people. Politically aware citizens are integral to the cultivation of a robust and healthy democracy, as they remain well-informed about governmental actions, initiatives and policies. While active engagement in formal political processes is not obligatory for every politically aware individual, it is not nonetheless essential for citizen to remain informed about ongoing political developments within their society. Informed citizens are better equipped to make rational decisions during elections, understand policy debates and hold leaders accountable. By holding leaders accountable and advocating for long term public policies, aware citizens help reduce political apathy, corruption and instability.

In India, political awareness has evolved in tandem with democratic governance and has played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's political institutions and participatory democratic practices. The roots of political awareness in India can be traced back to the pre-independence period, when the freedom movement mobilized large sections of the population against colonial rule. Early socio-religious reform movements and political organizations-initiated discussions on rights, representation and self-governance. However, political awareness became more organized and widespread during the Indian national movement under the leadership of Lokmanaya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, B. R. Ambedkar, Subas Chandra Bose, among others (Ramsharan, 2014). The freedom struggle mobilized diverse sections of society across regional, social and economic divisions through movements such as non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and other mass protests. This period witnessed the emergence of mass political consciousness, which laid the foundation for democratic governance in independent India.

In the post-independence era, political awareness was institutionalized and strengthened through constitutional and democratic mechanism. The adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950 established universal adult suffrage, guaranteed fundamental rights, and created a parliamentary system of governance, thereby ensuring citizen participation in political processes. Extension of education and literacy has helped to improve citizen's knowledge about democracy and governance processes. Mass media and the speedy development of digital communication channels have broadened the reach of political information and enhanced the participation of the public in politics. In addition, the role of civil society organizations, social movements, has increased and democratic awareness with decentralized governance including through Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies has been strengthened. The democratic governance of a country is only, going to take root if citizens have knowledge and information in relation to their political surroundings. This system is based upon the premise that people are well aware and able to elect best

representatives to run the government. Without awareness of people no democratic governance can be successful (Kaur, 2022).

As a component of citizenship, political awareness will be critical to active and meaningful involvement in democratic governance processes. The civic education of its citizens is essential to make governance legitimate, open and beneficial to the community. But a number of structural and socio-political impediments remain in the way of political consciousness building. They embrace deep-rooted inequalities, stark regional differences, inadequate political knowledge, misinformation being peddled and a general loss of faith in political processes. Educational opportunities, systematic fostering of youth engagement, strategic use of digital governance platforms and increase of democratic participation of civil society organizations can all help raise political awareness and enhance democratic participation (Thakur & Negi, 2024). On the other hand, insufficient political consciousness can lead to the development of political apathy, loss of individuals' political efficacy and be an enabler of undemocratic influences. So, politics is an unavoidable precondition of maintaining a democratic polity which is accountable, responsive and firmly rooted in human rights and social equity principles.

Conceptual framework

Awareness originates from Germanic roots, specifically the old English word 'waer' meaning "wary" or "cautious." The term denotes a state of continuous perception or cognition- a condition of knowing and understanding ongoing events or circumstances. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, awareness is defined as the state of being fully conscious of relevant stimuli and genuinely engaging with a task or situation. Grammatically, awareness functions as a noun derived from aware, which signifies possessing knowledge, consciousness, or information concerning particular phenomena, processes, activities, or issues. According to Carter V. Good (1959) awareness means the "state of being aware" or "consciousness of situation". Awareness is the totality of individual's assessment, knowledge and even understanding of things. It develops and grows together with the growth and development of human life. Awareness is understood as the perception of the self and his surrounding environment (Hermosa, 2021). Awareness refers to the ability to perceive, experience, and maintain conscious understanding of events, objects, thoughts, emotions, and sensory patterns. At its core, awareness encompasses the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and respond to one's environment and experiences. Political awareness refers to an individual's informed understanding of political processes, systems, rights and civic duties, serving as a crucial factor in shaping democratic participation. It acts as a key determinant of active engagement in political life, influencing both personal empowerment and broader societal progress. Political awareness refers to the knowledge and information of persons about their political system (Kaur, et al., 2019). It encompasses a practical grasp

of how politics operates on a daily basis and how it affects citizens' lives. Moreover, political awareness involves the capacity to think critically about the political system- its organization, decision-making processes, and overall effectiveness in addressing societal needs. According to Mukhopadhyay (1977) 'political awareness constitutes a critical determinant in comprehending the political system and serves as an impetus for political participation.' Luskin (1990) defines political awareness 'as a composite construct encompassing three key dimensions: the degree of exposure to political information, the cognitive capacity to process, retain, and organize such information and the motivational disposition to seek and interpret political content.'

Similarly, Carpini et al. (1996) define political knowledge as the range of factual information about politics that is retained in long-term memory or acquired through interpersonal discussion. For Ahmed & Ahmed (2011) political awareness refers to 'the overall vision or individual's cognitions and ideas that include political interest and knowledge which facilitate the individual's ability and understanding of society's problem. This process stimulates the individual's responsibility towards participating to change the society's future and political process through participating in social and political aspects.' Political awareness encompasses access to political information, engagement in political participation, media exposure, interest in political affairs, and education attainment (Rahman, et al., 2018). Political awareness involves having an understanding of basic constitutional issues, key pieces of legislation, major socio-political events and current political activity that help to influence society. Broadly, political awareness embodies an informed and reflective engagement with political phenomena, an active involvement in civic and political processes, continuous monitoring of political discourse through various media, and an enduring intellectual interest in political issues.

Democracy and governance

The term 'democracy' was first used in the fifth century BCE by the Greek historian Herodotus to denote the concept of rule by the people. Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from two Greek terms: *demos*, meaning "the people", and *kratein*, meaning "to rule". Thus, democracy refers to a form of government in which ultimate political authority is vested in the hands of people. Abraham Lincoln famously defined democracy as "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people". Janda, et al., (1992) emphasized that 'democracy denotes authority that resides in or is exercised by the people'. According to Guy Hermet (1991), 'democracy should not be understood as a type of society but, more precisely, as a form of political system'. Huntington (1991) further argued that 'democracy exists where the principal leaders of a political system are chosen through competitive elections in which the majority of the population is afforded the opportunity to participate.'

The concept of governance is not new. However, it has assumed particular significance in recent years, especially within the literature on African development. The term governance is derived from the Greek word 'kubernao', meaning "to steer" or "to guide." Originally, it referred primarily to the act or manner of governing, guiding, or steering conduct and was largely synonymous with government. Governance may be understood as the process through which authority and power are exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources (Halder, 2004). According to the Webster Dictionary of the English Language, governance denotes control or authority. The Oxford English Dictionary defines governance as the act of directing and controlling actions and affairs, whether political or constitutional. It further describes governance as the manner or process of governing, controlling, directing, or regulating. In broad terms, governance refers to the exercise of authority by the state to promote the well-being of its citizens. It encompasses both the processes through which decisions are made and the mechanisms through which those decisions are implemented. In the 1990s, the United Nations further defines the concept of governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in the management of a nation's affairs. Gerry Stoker argues that governance is fundamentally concerned with establishing the conditions required for ordered rule and effective collective action.

Democratic governance is a system of governance in which the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, inclusivity, and the rule of law inform and regulate decision-making processes and the exercise of authority. It ensures that political institutions function with legitimacy and that governments remain accountable to the citizenry. In contrast to authoritarian systems, where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, democratic governance advances people-centered policies, thereby enabling citizens to participate meaningfully in shaping the political, economic, and social development of their country. The effectiveness of democratic governance is evidenced by a nation's capacity to sustain political stability, attract economic investment, and ensure equitable opportunities for all citizens (Kumari, 2025). Democratic governance may be defined as the collaborative interaction between the state and citizens, including civil society actors, aimed at fostering partnerships, networks, coordination mechanism, negotiation processes, dialogue, consensus building and inclusion in the process of formulation and implementation of public policies (Bevir, 2006; Ingrams, 2019; Strebel et al., 2019). Democratic governance serves as one of the key building blocks to foster political stability, grow social equity, and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic development, especially when alongside structural constraints and institutional barriers.

Relationship between political awareness and democratic governance

Political awareness and democratic governance are linked directly, deeply, and in a mutually reinforcing way. Political awareness leads to strengthening of

democratic institutions and their working efficacy. If citizens are unaware, ignorant and unable to meaningfully engage in politics, democracy would not work. The essence is political awareness and the process of democratic governance that is sustained by it is the outcome. It can be explained in multiple ways that are all interrelated, each of which provides insight into the ways in which an informed electorate supports and contributes to democracy. Political awareness allows citizens to take a role in the political process by helping them to understand their rights, responsibilities, political systems and policies, so they can take advantage of the democratic system, such as voting in elections and sharing their voices in other democratic processes. It enhances accountability and transparency, enabling informed citizens to monitor government operations, challenge policy choices and hold their leaders accountable through the conventions of the constitution and democracy. Further, political awareness helps to uphold the rule of law and the protection of rights through a mindset of respect for constitutional values and resistance to arbitrary and authoritarian use or exercise of power. It fosters participatory and inclusive governance by helping to drive some civic involvement in governance, for instance, after the next elections, and gives voice to neglected groups of society in decision-making.

Democratic governance also gives institutions and structures for political awareness, in turn. The free flow of information, expression and the citizen's ability to gauge government activities through their own agency and opinions is fostered by constitutional protection of freedom of speech and expression and the right to information in India. The universal franchise for adult and regular, competitive elections also actively fosters political consciousness as adults can be directly engaged in election for their representatives and in political campaigns, policy discussion and party manifestos. Besides, democratic institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, the Election Commission, and local government institutions perform a very significant role in raising political awareness through transparency and outward participation. Citizens gain knowledge through debates in parliament, a better understanding of constitutional principles and the rule of law from judicial decisions and participation in local governance institutions at the grassroots level. Democratic governance and a free and independent media also play a supporting role in the development of political awareness: Information is disseminated, informed debates are promoted, opinion is formed. These factors show that political consciousness and democratic governance go hand-in-hand, and that the two together create a 'virtuous cycle', which is necessary to the effectiveness, stability and quality of democratic government.

Empirical studies in political science have over and over again shown robust and consistent link between political awareness and the quality of democratic government. Almond and Verba (1963) have maintained that democracy is most

likely to work when citizens are politically knowledgeable and oriented toward public life. They refer to this mixture as a 'civic culture,' which involves informed citizens participating in political processes to strengthen the stability, legitimacy, and responsiveness of democratic processes. In the work of Robert Dahl, (1971), informed participation can be heard in a similar guise; Dahl parlays the concept of "polyarchy." Dahl identifies 'enlightened understanding' as one of the prerequisites of democracy requiring that citizens are provided with information that is accurate and that they can, critically evaluate. It is political awareness that allows us to make a reasoned judgement, to have a wider inclusion, to be able to contest, in a meaningful way, the public sphere, and for which he aimed in making this product," he said.

Likewise, building on this, Seymour Martin Lipset (1959), lays solid empirical foundations for the relationship between education, political consciousness and democratic stability. Liberalism, economic development, and political awareness are factors that lead to the long-term preservation of democratic institutions, argues Lipset. In these societies people are better informed and thus more capable of participating responsibly, assessing the government, and resisting tendencies toward authoritarianism. From the Indian perspective, the concept of Rajni Kothari (1970) is nuanced in terms of the deepening of political awareness that is conducive to furthering of democracy. He notes that political consciousness among marginalized communities (such as lower castes and rural masses) has made participation more inclusive than the traditional elites. It has made Indian democracy more inclusive and participatory, as before former times, the excluded segments are asserting their voice in the political process and exercising their political rights.

Another piece of empirical evidence for this is the study carried out by Amartya Sen (1999) which stresses the importance of political sensitivity to render the government accountable. Democratic freedoms, especially access to information, a free press, and public debate, place power in the hands of citizens to check on the government's handlings of matters, and to push for change, argue Sen. He notes that intelligent and attentive people can force policies to be taken seriously by governments and avoid the widespread devastation in policy implementation. Yet there are some complexities in the connection between political awareness and democratic governance. Political awareness can be misinformed and media-manipulated, as cautioned by Noam Chomsky and Herman (1988). In this instance, citizens might feel they are receiving good information when they in fact are receiving a skewed or misleading set. In this case, citizens could think that they are receiving good information, but, in fact, they may be receiving biased or incomplete information. This "manufactured" awareness can have deleterious effects on democracy, influencing democratic decision making, even in democracies, and increasing polarization. As a whole, such academic ideas have demonstrated that political consciousness is a critical

aspect rather than a secondary element that supports democracy. It allows better participation, better decision-making by the public, better accountability and better inclusiveness. Meanwhile, the ability of the political awareness to drive effective change depends on the quality of the political awareness itself, whether it is accurate and balanced information or manipulated by misinformation. So that for the working of the democracy to be effective it is not only necessary to broaden this political awareness but it is equally essential to keep it informed, critical and known to all segments of the society.

Political awareness in action

Political awareness is an important component of the democratic system and its development. Yet it builds the intellectual and analytical abilities of citizens which allow them to participate in political institutions and processes in an educated and meaningful way. Political awareness helps resolve the psychological tension of conflicting beliefs and values as different elements of an individual's self-image conflict, paving the way to rational thinking and thoughtful participation in civil society. Moreover, political awareness also helps the citizens to obtain knowledge about their rights, responsibilities and mutual commitments with the nation and society. It fosters political activism-whether in the countryside or in the city-and motivates involvement in Parliamentary decision-making and governance. The extent and intensity of such participation is directly tied to the extent and depth of the educational and socialization process with exposure to civic discourse which provides the springboard to political consciousness. Political awareness, apart from enhancing the democratic participation, also plays a role in the overall trajectory of development of the state.

Political awareness maintains the vitality of democratic processes in that it helps contribute to civic apathy's transcendence, to the responsiveness of the government to the citizens, and to the progress of society through citizen participation. Political awareness gives empowerment to citizens through an overall understanding of the working of the political institutions. An informed electorate enables it to make informed decisions at elections, hold public officials account, and engage in meaningful in civic processes and enhances the core principles of democracy. Engaging in public dialogue expands political awareness, which can lead to engagement in policy formation, and can help to build transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within leadership. It fosters critical thinking, allows citizens to judge politically conflicting information on a balanced basis and respect the other viewpoints of society – which are elements of an inclusive and participatory political culture. Furthermore, politically aware people acquire a good sense of civic efficacy, knowing that they can influence governance outcomes by their actions. This awareness is driven by the actions of participation in voting, advocacy, and community development.

Political awareness also helps to foster civic responsibility through an appreciation of diversity, tolerance and the rule of law. Citizens understand that democracy is more than just rights obliged to its responsibilities, such as participation in the civic life and respect for fair and democratic results. Moreover, it serves as a safety net to counteract techniques of manipulation and misinformation. Citizens in societies which are lacking in political literacy are vulnerable to the propagandists, populism and divisive talking points. Politically knowledgeable citizens on the other hand are better able to communicate between fact and falsehood, better able to make decisions based on evidence, ability and policy and not on emotional or sectarian appeals. The responsive attitude of the public to policy is also strengthened when citizens are aware of their needs and expectations and can articulate to policy makers. If government institutions have continual and constructive input from people, they will be more likely to make policies that are empowering, fair and effective, that meet people's desires. In a democratic system, political awareness is crucial as it enables citizens to make informed decisions, hold leaders accountable and participate in meaningful political discussions (Tomy, et al., 2022). It helps to ensure that governments operate and are responsive to the people in a democratic manner.

Politically aware citizens are the real pillars of democracy in participating in various political activities. They play an active role that leads to positive social and political change, supports institution building and that upholds the democratic process. Citizens may be unaware of their political rights and not be motivated to properly use them or take part in political debates without awareness, which can lead to a weakening of democratic governance. Thus, democracies can be successful and the will of citizens with political awareness is decisive for their course. Political awareness also bears a decisive role in the formation of public opinion and in its participation in the political process. It enables people to be active participants informing themselves especially when it comes to voting or civic activity. Individuals with a political consciousness will be challenge dominant norms and to promote progressive reforms, positively impacting on their families, communities and society in general.

Political consciousness helps them to think wisely about election and elect worthy leaders that best serve the public interest. It fosters wider political engagement – those who feel they understand political systems are more inclined to cast their vote, engage in political discussion and hold their policymakers to account. It helps citizens to critically read, discuss and raise their voice on behalf of a democratic discussion on the decisions that have been taken by the government. A conjoint and widespread political awareness not only promotes the strengthening of collective bargaining but creates the informed public opinion, which, taken together, helps in the development of a people-oriented policy both at the grassroots and at the national and state levels.

Political awareness informs citizens to respond to political system critically, maintaining democracy that is responsive, resilient and truly representative. The more politically knowledgeable they are the greater their propensity to take part in democratic processes like voting, advocacy and public discussion. This involvement not only promotes quality democracy, but it also contributes to accountability in government institutions. As formal education and exposure to the media increase, the knowledge and understanding of citizens regarding political system and institutional responsibilities and policy implications are becoming increasingly complex. In general, political awareness enhances the quality of governance, increase civic participation, and acts as a check on the authoritarian tendencies. In contrast, ignorance of politics, on the other hand, reduces the vitality of democracy by reducing the level of democratic awareness through a process of apathy, misinformation, polarization and political inequality.

Political consciousness likewise is essential to determining people predispositions and impacts on their political orientations. Predispositions and receptivity to information among individuals are likely to be stronger when political awareness is high. Political awareness is likely to lead to more responsibilities and policy implications are becoming increasingly complex. In general, political awareness enhances the quality of governance, increase civic participation, and acts as a check on the authoritarian tendencies. In contrast, ignorance of politics, on the other hand, reduces the vitality of democracy by reducing the level of democratic awareness through a process of apathy misinformation, polarization and political inequality.

Politically aware are less likely to accept information contrary to their beliefs, and less likely to be swayed by outside factors like election campaigns and media scandals, than are those with less awareness. This result, then, into political messages and events having more effect on less politically aware people. The highly informed citizens on the other hand, are exposed to more political information but consume less of it because they critically assess the congruence of the information with their existing beliefs (Kristensen, et al., 2022). Political awareness not only helps raise awareness of the political environment, but also widens the scope of political thinking. More highly aware people have more and more integrated (and coherent) justifications to inform their judgements about politics. Such mature deliberations are more like their dispositions and in turn, shape more stable and coherent political dispositions.

Political awareness fosters overall capability of informed political participation, wider critical communication and increased political tolerance and respect for different points of view. In relation to the concept of democracy, the awareness level would be an essential part of the good citizen within this model of the government. When a population is informed, it has knowledge about the functions and duties of political institutions- such as those of the Executive, the

Legislature and the Judiciary. This awareness can help citizens make informed decisions about their governors, and use the democratic process of elections, referendums or public petition to hold them to account. The better citizen's political awareness leads to better advocacy for policy reform favorable to the public good and hence to governance outcome.

An informed public exercises pressure on policies that are more “inclusive, sustainable and evidence based” than short term “populist policies” for a limited slice of the population. For instance, greater political awareness of issues such as climate change, public health or economic inequality can drive more comprehensive and long-term policy solution. Besides, political awareness equips the quality of governance through innovation and promoting processes that leaders can turn to the problems they are facing. A politically consciousness electorate is more likely to seek innovative and visionary solutions, to hold the government responsible for solving urgent social problems. On the other hand, if the government is unaware of or disinterested in politics, then there may be stagnation in the policy making process as public needs may not be by the government.

Political awareness also underpins the effectiveness of democratic institutions. By fostering a more engaged citizenry, political awareness strengthens the legitimacy of institutions, ensuring that they remain responsive to the needs and concerns of the public. Furthermore, citizens with high political awareness are more likely to demand transparency and accountability, thereby promoting good governance practices. Political awareness has also paved the way for the development of a more transparent system for the execution of development projects undertaken by administrative and technical authorities. The level of political awareness among people in developed countries is generally high because they actively participate in political activities, government development programmes, decision making processes, policy-making and engage meaningfully in administrative and governance processes.

Politically aware citizens develop positive attitudes toward the functioning of the state and contribute voluntarily to the welfare of society, without waiting for directives or coercive measures from authorities. Political awareness promotes political freedom, mutual tolerance, civic responsibility and an appreciation of the guiding principles and values that define a society. It nurtures mutual trust and enhances political participation, laying the foundation for a just, fair and equitable social order. So, it is essential for every citizen to remain informed and engaged with political developments, not only within their own nation but also at the global level.

Educational studies in the discipline of Political Science and Public Policy in India have shown that the awareness of the political is the backbone of a good democratic government. The findings from research clearly indicate that

awareness among citizens regarding political issues, party manifestos and political party profiles, play an important role in increasing the electoral participation significantly as revealed through the findings of the large-scale research conducted by Yadav (2020) and Kumar (2019). This connection is further enhanced as evidenced by the efforts taken by the Election Commission of India (ECI) through programmes like the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP), which have been working effectively to create awareness and strongly encourage more people, especially the youth and first-time voters to cast their votes in every assembly and election. This way, voter apathy is reduced and active civic participation is encouraged.

Political awareness, which is improved by greater participation, also increases the quality of electoral decision making. As revealed by research conducted by the researchers Chhibber and Verma (2018), informed voters chose to vote based on governance performance, public policies and development outcomes as opposed to only focusing on narrow identity factors like caste religion. This transition from party-oriented to issue-oriented voting increases entrusting of substantive aspects of democracy, which encourages political actors to focus on policy and performance rather than identity.

Political awareness is also key in consolidating accountability and administrative responsiveness. The examples from field experiments in the articles by Banerjee and Duflo (2011) illustrate that when citizens hear or read about their entitlements and rights, and about government policies and programs and the importance of having the information accessible in front of them, they are more likely to suspect irregularities and demand transparency from government officials. The Social audits with schemes like MGNREGA (now VB-G RAM-G) under the processes of increasing awareness can act as a mechanism towards lowering corruption and moulding service delivery. Political awareness thus changes the passive attitude of citizens into an active one in governance.

Moreover, political awareness promotes participatory and inclusive governance through making citizens engage beyond voting. This empowers citizens to participate in public deliberation, community decision making and local governance institutions like Panchayati Raj. It is especially important for women and those that belong to marginalized communities such as the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, who have gained more awareness to be represented and have become more engaged, which has improved the inclusiveness of the democratic process.

Key challenges

Political understanding is an essential ingredient for good democratic reform. But it is hampered by several difficulties. One of the primary obstacles with regard to political awareness is that spread of false and misleading information

is also one of the major challenges to political awareness. Today the dissemination of unverified political information can occur quickly through modern means of communication, particularly social media. Widespread misinformation can result in political opinions that are incorrect, and this can lead to democracy undermining itself. Moreover, there is a lack of good information on political processes and democratic values in many education systems. Therefore, the citizens generally lack knowledge about the working of government and the processes used to make policy and about active involvement in processes of government.

Media influence is growing and deepening polarization are also having a severe impact on public discourse, resulting in the rise of polarization of ideas and lack of meaningful deliberation and thus impacting on overall quality of democratic governance. Further, long-term economic difficulties and social inequality reinforce a lack of political awareness and civic involvement. Those who are primarily concerned with lack of money or job are not only free enough to stay well-informed, but they may well have the resources and information they need. There are deeply entrenched socio-cultural practices in some societies which restrict open and active political engagement and discussion, particularly amongst women. Citizens are sometimes reluctant to voice their opinions openly because of the fear of facing social criticism, or even possible repercussions at the political level. They are barriers that impact individuals, women, and minorities more than others and that limit inclusive democratic participation.

Besides, political apathy occurs when those who are citizens take a very negative attitude towards public affairs. This often stems from issues of corruption within the system, distrust in governmental structures and power – and failure of governments to reflect on people's concerns. Consequently, less people turn out for voting and citizens turn away from substantive political discussion, in the process undermining the basis of democratic participation. Further, institutional drawbacks such as opacity, a cumbersome bureaucracy and information gaps between the state and the people hinder political awareness and meaningful public engagement. Such conditions are a combination of misinformation, lack of awareness about civic, polarization, economic disparities, cultural differences, unresponsive political participation, institutional and process limitations and have a reinforcing effect on lessening dalliance of governance in Indian democracy.

Analysis and discussion

The analysis, thus, there is a direct, deep and mutually reinforcing linkage between political awareness and democratic governance. Political awareness not only promotes democratic institutions, but also helps to ensure their proper operation. Democratic governance also, in turn, gives rise to the institutional and constitutional framework for the development of political awareness. In India,

has grown significantly in recent decades, stimulated by increasing literacy rates, the general diffusion of mass media and the quick growth of digital communication platforms. The expansion in political information have greatly increased the scope available to political information users, which has helped improve citizen involvement in public life.

Civic and democratic participation have been driven to a great extent by democratic institutions, particularly electoral processes, political parties and civil society organizations. On numerous occasions, they have affected participatory norms, public discourse, political mobilization, and competitive elections, which have had a profound impact on strengthening democratic accountability. This means citizens have a greater sense of themselves as players of the political game and as citizens with an agenda. The enhanced awareness is seen in higher political participation in the forms of voting, greater participation in political discussions in public space, and more citizen's involvement in local, regional, and national democratic processes.

The participation of the youth, women and civil society organizations further highlights the ongoing rise in political consciousness and extension of democratic engagement among Indian society's various groups. Notwithstanding these promising advances, the study notes several disabling structural socio-political and socio-economic issues that prevail in limiting the potential development of political awareness. There are limitations to meaningful and informed participation due to socio-economic inequality, stark regional differences, inadequate access to high quality political education, and the wide diffusion of misinformation. They disproportionately impact on marginalized groups such as the rural population, women and economically disadvantaged groups, reinforcing inequalities patterns of political exclusion and marginalized.

Furthermore, political disengagement, institutional corruption, the mobilization along ethnic lines, and citizens lack of faith in political and administrative structures hinder the effective operation of democratic governance, as well as citizen's political awareness and awareness of political issues. When the credibility and confidence of institutions, or peoples, erodes, that means people have less incentive to engage in deliberation and that decreases the normative bases of democracy. In sum, although political awareness has clearly improved in India, it must consolidate through working on structural inequalities, improving civic education, educating young people on how to resist spreading misinformation and restore trust in democratic institutions. Insufficient depth, legitimacy and resilience in democratic governance and low levels of citizen's political awareness can be achieved only by means of ongoing institutional reform and participatory practices that are fully inclusive to citizens.

The future prospects and policy recommendations

The political transparencies and democratic governance in India are encouraging and are likely to grow, with further steps expected as educational opportunities grow, involvement of youth rises, digitalization of governance model expands, and civil society emerges as a force to be reckoned with. But, unlocking this potential will need a focused portfolio of actions that will empower citizens to participate, and promote informed citizen's participation at the same time developing the accountability of institutions. To maintain and consolidate the democracy in India, it is integral to deal with structural and socio-political solutions through holistic civic education, better transparency and greater accountability mechanism.

The constitutional system, institutional framework and socio-political development of the state will remain central to political awakening in a democratic state. The Constitution of India has certainly laid a vibrant foundation for citizen's participation through various fundamental rights, e.g., freedom of speech and expression, Right to Information and universal adult suffrage. These will not only enhance partnership but will also bring the principles of accountability, transparency and representation to the forefront.

Education and public awareness regarding these rights will continue to be an important key to consolidate democratic practices. Adoption of civic education into the education program, including its incorporation into the school and higher education curriculum can provide excellent opportunities for further improvement in political literacy for all segments of society. It should be complemented with promoting media literacy that will allow citizens to be effective with evaluating information and also challenging misinformation. Further initiatives of the Election Commission of India as the SVEEP should be enhanced for increasing the awareness regarding the electoral processes and responsive voting behavior of the people among institutions.

The fast and rapid transformation of digital media and E-governance initiatives, such as Digital India, will continue to bring new freedom of access in terms of information, transparency and communication between the State and citizens. These benefits can be maximized through ensuring inclusivity in digital and promoting responsible and informed public discourse on digital spaces. At the same time, civic education should be promoted by civil society organizations and grassroots movements to increase civic engagement and rights awareness to demand accountability and hold power to account.

Furthermore, the active involvement of citizens through community forms of citizen's engagement (public forums, consultations and local governance platforms, amongst others) ought to be encouraged to ensure that citizens are afforded the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the development of policy. Greater transparency, streamlined administrative processes and provision of

public information will further foster citizen's confidence in the State. Overall, educational reforms, digital innovations, institutional strengthening and engagement in civic life contribute to educating Indians to become politically aware and engaged. The resulting improved accountability, better governance and open, inclusive and responsive democratic processes will, in turn, strengthen the democratic tenure.

Conclusion

Political awareness is essential to the proper working of democratic government. It contributes to informed, responsive citizenship, increases transparency in institutions and encourages all-inclusive participation, which in themselves are key to building the effectiveness, legitimacy and resilience of democratic governance in India. Political awareness is however beset with many hurdles such as dissemination of misinformation, poor civic education, socio-economic inequality, political apathy and lack of transparency, which all have a negative impact on political empowerment of citizens. Promotion of civic education covering all aspects, free and responsible media and improving inclusive political participation will be a key component in fostering democratic governance in India which will directly contribute to the development of political awareness. Finally, democracy and awareness of political issues are inter-dependent, with the failure of democracy depending on factors other than institutional strength, including the political awareness and maturity of citizens, in their willingness and ability to take an active part in politics.

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