

## Internet Democracy in 'New' India

Written by Pratick Mallick

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PRATICK MALLICK, FEB 15 2019

This era in India earmarks the journey of globalisation that began formally in the wake of the LPG (Liberalisation Privatisation and Globalisation) Policy in 1991. This is controlled almost entirely by means of information technology. It was initiated first by Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. That initiative was, however, vehemently criticised by the Leftists. It does not actually explain if there is essentially any linkage between technology and richness. Alternatively speaking, it fails to identify if technological prosperity promotes or lessens poverty. Albeit a polemic issue, it has to be accepted that technology gives a poor person the opportunity to eclipse manual labour to a great extent and prosper better. Even Marx never suggested use of improvised and rudimentary articles. What he meant for was rather socialistic management of industrialisation instead of its abolition altogether.

Whatever the case, information technology entered the Indian economy gradually in the wake of the LPG (Liberalisation Privatisation Globalisation) Policy that was undertaken by the P. V. Narasimha Rao regime in India with the help of the then Finance minister and later Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh. This Policy ushered a *new* era to India. Apart from the economic changes, it was also due to the versatile uses of information technology. It justifies globalisation as an extent of capitalism particularly in the sense that this is an age of finance capitalism where the movement of values is in terms of *invisibles*. The national income is well generated, the national growth is well quantified and the national power is well articulated particularly in terms of trade and commerce except the lacunae in the mode of that change. In other words, jobs are plentiful but most of them are volatile. As a result, pressure on the public jobs is continuously high on rise. Therefore, the worries of unemployment haunt the youth. Yet, it being the age of true competition, it requires every individual to be excellent on his/her capability to contribute to the cause of *globalism* of growth. Information technology is indispensable equipment in this regard.

Internet does have so many tentacles, positive as well as negative. It gives people convenient medium of exchanging news of different locations across the globe itself. As a result, any unethical incident happening at one place gets spread very fast through internet, that is, by means of various Social Networking Sites (SNSs). In this way, the emotional outburst gets the opportunity to take place in the forms of movements. These are mostly *new social movements* which are basically *anomic* in nature and mobilise people who irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds take to march in manners of civil disobedience. Thus, in case of the Nirbhaya Incident and the Anna Hazare Movement, the civic movements across the country in general and in New Delhi in particular invited State to come to terms with them in such a way that they would yield more fuel to continue their protests. Therefore, it can be said that the role of the SNS(s) ranged from public corruption to harassments of women. The magnitude of these movements was so decisive that they promoted change in political power through the General Election to the Lower Chamber (Lok Sabha) of the Parliament of India in 2014. In this way, the role of internet highlighted its communication potentials to the tune of supposing Indian democracy with strong *cybernetics*, which is more of a viable merit of globalisation that helps democracy being limited not only to politics but to social and economic aspects, too, that veers round again to reflect upon *political democracy*.

Internet is also exploited by some people with perverted characteristics. This is one of the toughest challenges to the State to overcome. In order to bridle such obnoxious usage of internet, India made legislation of the Information Technology Act in 2000 with necessary amendments following the first enactment. In 2015, the Narendra Modi regime took a commendable initiative by issuing a notification to all Internet Service License Holders regarding blocking access to the pornographic sites. But in the face of protests, that mainly took place through the SNS(s), the

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government had to step back by proscribing the child pornography sites only. Only legislations and strict implementations thereof cannot ensure prosperity. The proper sense of responsibility of the common people has to be very honest and respectful towards the moral aspects of life.

In conclusion, in today's India, information technology has given primacy to the citizens the opportunity to harness their personality out of self-assessing their conditions of living amidst the surrounding happenings. This is no more an item of refreshment rather an essential equipment to move at par with the government. The government(s) nowadays are oriented to be digital. E-governance becomes an important orientation in the public sector nowadays. While on the one hand, it aims at dissolving the minimum chances of corruption, on the other, it appears to be universally accessible. E-governance aims at upliftment of the poor for whom reduction in transport cost, time and labour to that effect becomes invisible primarily but very much significant at the roots. It also makes the governance reach the citizens continuously, without any regular interruption that was a usual thing in case of providing utility services manually. Thus, there is an opportunity of utilising a 24-hour-day in its entirety. In this age of globalisation, when the public sector becomes a serious competitor of the private ones, digitisation is also a basic item that equips the public sector in that way by right. Therefore, the internet has given privileges as well as challenges to India which is *new* in the sense of the economic and according socio-political transformations. Overcoming challenges should be an essential target not only on the part of the State itself but also its members, that is, the citizens, even the imminent citizens as this group of population is now well versed in using internet at will.

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