.#Introduction

In this study we aim to:

* Analyze the growth of right wing nationalism in India, its impact on India’s politics and the social fabric.
* Understand the roots of right wing politics and creation of a political ideology through it.
* Track the spread of Right wing political narrative through the internet and social media.
* Perceive other factors involved in the rise of nationalism like economy, development and corruption.

We will analyse different literature present around the same aspects and try to give a conclusion and analysis of what is generally not present in it.

.#Review of literature

.**Right wing politics in India: By Archana Venkatesh.**

Right wing politics in India are manifested in the form of Religious nationalism. The Term Hindutva or Hindu nationalism is closely attributed to right wing politics and the current ruling party BJP has centered two of its election wins around the same political ideology.Although it has been in the fringes for most of 20th century, the ideology has its roots from the late colonial period. The Indian National Congress was at the forefront of India’s political mission for independence but despite its claim for inclusiveness most fringe groups felt marginalised, leading to formation of the Muslim League. Both political organisations were at loggerheads towards the end of British rule. While the British were uninterested in solving any communal discord, the Congress inclined more and more towards inclusive Nationalism, to protect the integrity of India. The Hindu Mahasabha was formed to oppose congress-styled nationalism. They believed that the rights of the majority were compromised for appeasement of minorities. Further through the 20th century the political philosophy was laid down by Savarkar. Hedgewar formed the RSS and the philosophy was further strengthened by influences from various figures which included Benito Mussolini and the fascist party of Italy. The Hindutva ideology used issues like Kashmir and Babri to mobilise its support. Furthermore they strongly opposed the partition of what they called a united Hindustan, and viewed muslims as outsiders and the rulers as occupiers who aim to take out fractions from hindu nation.

BJP rejuvenated the fringe Hindutva ideology by integrating it with neoliberal ideology and focussing on development at any costs which gained Narendra Modi his popularity as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, although his tenure has been marked with deadly communal riots and violence.

**.Former BJP data analyst on how the party wins elections and influences people: The Caravan and Shivam Shankar Singh**

Following the dawn of the digital era in India, with the Internet playing a vital role in the spread of information, the Indian political landscape was heavily shaped by messages, posts and media being propagated through platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and the like. The Narendra Modi and Amit Shah led Bharatiya Janata Party was quick to capitalise on the internet, which was essentially an alien concept to most other parties and political factions. Infographics made the rounds of WhatsApp groups, while pages like “We Support NaMo” garnered millions of followers on Facebook. The neverending stream of propaganda was undoubtedly vital to the rise of the right-wing narrative, and by extension, the RSS and its ideological brethren. Shivam Shankar Singh, a former data analyst with the BJP’s infamous IT Cell describes in detail how the party used social media to fuel narratives out of thin air in order to further radicalise their voter base to their advantage. The party maintains data on their voter bases and targets their propaganda based on what is most likely to instigate nationalistic and communal sentiments. For instance, during the Uttar Pradesh elections, the BJP identified the Yadavs, an OBC community, as the primary voter base of the incumbent Samajwadi Party. It therefore targeted their efforts at courting non-Yadav OBCs, in a successful attempt at instigating anti-Yadav sentiments. However, the BJP never uses official media handles to propagate their narratives, in an attempt to absolve themselves of any blame leading from communal disharmony arising from their misinformation, and utilizes several burner pages like “Kattar Hindu Sena”, etc.

# **.What Explains The Rightward Shift Of Indian Polity?:** [**By**](https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/author/sourabh_bhati/) **Sourabh Bhati**

# In the article by Sourabh Bhati, he talks about economic factors that lead to increased support to right-wing leaders rather than it being just a religious and traditional dynamic shift in modern politics. We all have seen the recent gains that right-wing parties have made in the past decade in various modern democracies like in the USA, UK and India where we see right-wing leaders as heads of states. Around the globe many secular leaders have talked about wealth distribution in different parts of the society but the labor class in developed countries have seen their jobs move to developing countries. This has led to mistrust between common people and secular leaders paving the way for right-wing leaders to rise.

# His definition of progressive politics is about liberties, freedom and rights given to all people, and many rights have been legislated under the UPA government. Thus, the rise of the right-wing does not give a progressive direction to modern politics in India. According to Sourabh Bhati, the economic progress in both BJP and Congress tenure has been more or less the same. To understand the rise of BJP, we go back to the formation of right-wing organizations in India.When we look at India’s right-wing organizations, in 1915, the Hindu Mahasabha was the first. The RSS was founded in 1925, whose political wing is the BJP. These organizations and parties came into being just decades before the independence of India. During those times many Muslim organizations like the Muslim league had members who where dominant aristocrats, who also had British protection as they did not want be neglected in a Hindu majority state. This led to the partition of India in 1947, just as it gained independence from British rule. The partition was on the basis of religion which created a permanent rift in the society on religious basis. Successive leaders tried to unify people of all religions and castes, using terms like “unity in diversity” and teaching children about Akbar and Ashoka being fair and just to all communities. But their main focus was to gain more power and outclass their political opponents which left the rift in society to be used by the right-wing as a ladder to political power.

# He concludes that the rise of the right-wing in India has more to do with India’s past than with economics or general dynamics in global politics.

**.Countering the rightwing offensive in India: By Prakash Karat**

The change in political aligning of India is a very interesting topic. Everyday people are talking more about the things on the right side of politics.The right wing is generally considered as conservative, majority pleasing, etc.

This review focuses more on the receiving end of rightwing offensive in India and its relation to all of the domains, regions along with the repercussions of it. This lecture was delivered by Prakash Karat

He mentions a few things namely-

The 1990s is when the power started to shift to the majority and it witnessed the rise of Hindutva forces. These started to question the dominant ruling Congress.

He observes the effects of radical Hindutva forces in different aspects of society.

· Financially, the administering classes in India grasped the neo-liberal medicines provided by colonialist capital and its worldwide educate just like the IMF and the World Bank.

· Socially, the partisan system polarized society. It gave rise to divisive forces asserting partisan identities which is additionally a response to the authoritarian effort to have a centralized, anti-feudal structure.

· Culturally, the thrust of Hindutva forces was towards a society which does not contain multiple beliefs.

He mentions that the obsession with 5 year ruling has led to proposals which include fixing the term for the government in power.

.#Research Gap

1. Current literature more-or-less fails to examine the role played by the internet and digital media in the rapid spread of right-wing politics in India. This fact could perhaps be attributed to the arduous task of studying the sheer extent and convoluted nature of the various web-like interconnected networks across possibly every social and messaging network under the sun. Thousands of messages and other media are streamed throughout the citizens of the country. Any attempt to dismantle the infrastructure that modern misinformation and propaganda is built on relies on building an understanding of how the behemoth of political media works in a massive democracy like India.
2. The literature usually fails to address two crucial things concerning the so-called rise of right-wing politics in India. How did an ideology that was on the fringes ever since the independence of India suddenly become the most followed in India? What remains unaddressed is that the system of democracy in India is such that to have a monopoly over decisions in Lok Sabha by having the brute majority, a party or, in this case, ideology does not require a proportional amount of vote share. Another point mostly unaddressed is the significance of leaders in Indian politics and how they overshadow their respective ideologies during the elections.

.Objectives

1. To study how the right-wing uses the internet to propagate its narrative and rally people to its cause
2. To study systematic factors, including the electoral system in India and how it affects the government formation.
3. To showcase the impact of leaders over ideologies in Indian elections.

.Analysis

1. The Indian National Congress won 206 seats with a 28.55% vote share in the 2009 Lok Sabha Elections, leading the Unified Progressive Alliance (UPA) to a majority, thereby forming the government under the leadership of the incumbent Prime-Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. In the 2014 elections, however, the UPA garnered the lowest number of seats in its entire history, and the government was formed by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), who came into power with a massive 336 seats, more than enough to form the majority government.

The massive difference in voter share may seem to be an unexpected upset, to the extent that one would expect the UPA had committed grave errors during its 5-year tenure. A look at Gallup polling for approval ratings shows a steady decrease in approval for the government, falling from 53% in 2008 to 30% in 2013. Contrarily, the UPA’s governance had been largely uneventful in terms of any significant destructive administrative moves. Despite this, the results of the 2014 elections were not surprising. In fact, they were very much expected. The BJP’s campaign, with its loud and brazen speeches, catchy advertisements, and unprecedented promises, had captured the imaginations and interest of practically every Indian voter.

The kryptonite to the UPA’s campaign could be found in the vast array of scam and corruption allegations levelled against their government. The forefront of these were the 2G spectrum case and the Indian Coal Allocation scam. The revelation of these scams led to the India Against Corruption movement, led by the activist Anna Hazare. The IAC movement was one of India’s highest publicized civilian protests and simultaneously unified people from all over the nation with the common intent to form the Jan Lokpal bill. The country’s citizens were understandably fed up with the culture of corruption that had almost been normalized and rallied against the government. The movement crippled the UPA administration and would permanently damage its leaders' credibility, including Dr. Singh. The Indian right-wing instantly capitalized on the protests and became a vocal part of it. Even in its heyday, the movement was accused of being an instrument to dispose of the incumbent government. Today, several of its leaders are part of then-opposition parties to the UPA, along with the newly formed Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The massive success of the movement can be attributed to the involvement of the Indian public. The movement effectively utilized IT and media to propagate its message. And the right-wing has continued to use strategies employed then to achieve the success it has today.

It is no secret that for better or, more plausibly, worse, online propaganda has become a large part of modern political discourse. No one is a stranger to the exaggerated WhatsApp messages that make bold and, to the even slightly critical mind, obviously false statements and are spread like wildfire across groups and chats, or to the Facebook posts shared by close family and friends intended to instigate feelings of nationalist pride or communal hatred. A population that spends more and more time online is bound to come across posts like these at least once every day. While one may disregard these messages as harmless in the grand scheme of things, the truth could not be further from this.

Before every election season, the intricate mechanisms set in place are put to work, orchestrating propaganda on a scale that would make Goebbels shiver. The election commission of India does not track a party’s spending on social media. The Right used this to its advantage in 2014. The BJP outsourced the creation of Facebook pages, with lakhs of followers, each spreading content with questionable credibility but unquestionable motives.

Other parties were late to catch on to the scale with which social media could be used, perhaps too late. According to former IT-cell worker Shivam Singh, by the time other parties caught on to the trend, the WhatsApp policy changes had made it impossible to create groups on the scale as which the BJP had done.

Of course, the other side does try to level the playing field. But, as journalist Barbara Fister writes in her article, “Why the Right Is Better at the Internet,” ‘On the right, the fight was for freedom, and digital evangelists used the internet to get their truth out there, feeling their take on reality had been ignored or distorted by the press. This gave grassroots organizations like the Tea Party something in common with more traditional and well-funded conservative organizations; a constellation of right-wing outlets shared messages about their truth, amplifying it. On the left, the fight was for fairness, a much harder concept to agree on. There was more inward-focused negotiation among organizations, an aversion to making disagreements public and less of a coherent message across them.’

While the above was written in the context of the American elections of 2016, the principle could be applied to the BJP’s usage. The right plays on feelings that are personal and sacred to the people. The statement “Refugees are here to seek asylum from terror” is a lot less eye-catching than “Refugees here to steal your job!”. Implying threats to the majority’s identity and convincing them that they are in danger is a sure-shot way to win their support, a fact that proved to be the BJP’s winning strategy. Therefore, it is no surprise that some of the right’s biggest opponents and threats are mere fact-checking platforms.

And thus, through eye-catching messages and headlines, the BJP made their messaging a lot more effective. Shivam adds, *“The BJP… identifies the Hindu communities that are strongly anti-Muslim across the state. For them, the messaging is that the Muslim population will overtake the Hindu population—this is not true, but through their narrative the party tries to intensify that sentiment. Fake news is combined with this—for instance, a video from Syria or Bangladesh is circulated with text that says, “Look at what’s happening in Muzaffarnagar.” People cannot tell the difference because the men in the video have beards and are wearing skull caps.”*

1. 2014 Lok Sabha Elections in India are widely regarded as the sprout of Right-wing populism in India, the sudden expansion of an ideology over all other presents. The fact that BJP follows a vehemently fanatic religious ideology and its actions from authoritarianism against dissent to the sudden rise of riots and lynchings during their reign strengthen the same fact. The BJP government's absolute brute majority in Lok Sabha means they can pass laws with little opposition in the parliament, but most of their controversial bills, which get quickly passed in the Lok sabha, have faced stiff resistance on the ground. CAA and Farm Laws are examples of the same. This signifies that while all of the 300+ MP's in parliament may be hardcore right-wing ideologists, the people who voted for them might not. In a nutshell, BJP's absolute majority in the parliament does not reflect the majority of right-wing religious ideology among the Indian ordinary people. Two different aspects of it need to be analyzed in detail.

2.1) Role of leader figures in Indian politics:

The main point to be emphasized here is that the votes gained by a party in an election are not all based on ideology. Same people voting for different parties in different elections within a couple of months reflects the same. In Delhi during the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, BJP won all seven seats with a vote share of almost 57 per cent, but in the Vidhan Sabha election a couple of months later, BJP succumbed to 8 out of 71 electoral seats, with the vote share also dropping significantly to 38 per cent. This showcases the importance of leader figures over ideology. The 20 percent of voters who changed their choices in two elections most probably felt that Narender Modi was the man to lead the country at the national stage while Arvind Kejriwal was the man for their local Delhi government and subscribed to the ideology of neither of the two.

2.2 ) A weaker opposition and Indian political system helped BJP'S rise more than an ideological advantage.

In an electoral system like India, a majority in the popular vote is not necessarily required to gain a majority in the decision making of the country. That is, for laws to be passed in parliament, a party needs more than fifty per cent of the seats, but to get those more than 50 per cent seats, it does not require more than 50 per cent of the vote. While practically the winning party accompanies large vote shares but it can always not be the case. The most extreme example is from the 1991 and 1996 Lok Sabha elections. While BJP won a 20.1 vote share accompanied by 120 seats, INC, on the other hand, won 36.4 giving them 244 seats and a clear advantage to form a government. Fast forward five years in 1996, INC vote share decreased to 28.8 per cent, and their seats to 140, while BJP's vote share just increased by 0.2 per cent to 20.3 per cent, but their seats saw an increase to 161. Moreover, giving them a significant advantage to form the government. So BJP, for no work of their own, became a significant player in government formation. This highlights two factors. One is that democratic arrangement in India is such that with a minute change in actual support on the ground, a particular political party and hence ideology can gain power. As congress had more popular vote than BJP by 7 per cent but still lagged behind by 21 seats. Furthermore, that lack of unified opposition, any group, party or ideology with significant support can take the power of the whole government. The BJP government of 2014 had 282 seats in the parliament and an absolute majority to pass the laws but on the ground just had 31 per cent vote, so even if 69 per cent of the population is against them, just because they are not unified means, they will be governed by the 31 per cent's will and right-wing ideology.

1. The author looks at the rise of right-wing politics in modern India as a problem and disease, which was due to the lack of the UPA government to perform while they were in power for many decades after the independence and partition of India. One of the major reasons for the rise of right-wing politics in India is the way and manner in which the UPA or Indian National Congress rule the post partition India. They should have been able to deliver for the people especially the poor and middle class of India who have been the victim in every scenario. When we look at India initially it was a somewhat communist state, in line with the Soviet Union, but after the Cold-War ended capitalism took over the world and India was no exception. As we know in the major critique to it is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. For highly populated country like India it is a problem as a majority of the population is poor or middle-class, who were expecting the government to uplift them from their present state. When the common people of India read about the many scams that have been associated with the UPA from the time of purchase of Bofors guns to the 2G scam in recent times, one would try to find an alternative party like BJP more suitable or at least give them a chance as well. Also the past of India with the partition on the basis of religion in the formation of a somewhat secular yet majority hindu India and a muslim national in the from of Pakistan and later also Bangladesh, with all the partition wounds would prove to be a very useful tool to mobilize the hindu masses of India into believing that the present India should be a “HinduRashtare,” a hindu state as we have not been given our due right when it comes to making our own state. A comment made by prime minister Narendra Modi when BJP came to power in 2014 was “We got our own government after 700 years” implying that the previous elected governments were not for the people and also the Mughal rule was that of foreigners like the British Raj.

.#Conclusion

1. We have seen how the Right uses the internet and other social media to create a stronghold on the digital space, where people spend a lot of their time. Through creating and propagating narratives intended on instigating fear of identity, they obtain the support of the majority who believe the misinformation and propaganda targeted at the minorities. Due to the election commission not targeting social media spending, the BJP can spend an obscene amount on setting up elaborate networks for the spread of information. It uses these to instigate communal hatred and even violence to increase its voter base significantly.
2. In order to have any hope of regulating and stabilizing the current state of the Indian populace, the spread of misinformation must be curbed. Fact-checking should be intensified and encouraged, and the populace should be taught how to properly research information they may come across on the internet instead of believing it immediately. Most importantly, people and political organizations need to be held accountable for blatant misinformation. This does not involve clamping down on dissent, as the recent IT Rules would do, but instead curbing the spread of media that intends to cause communal or any other disarray amongst the populace. Accountability is critical for any hope of peace to exist.
3. The rise of right-wing religious nationalism in Indian politics does not mean the rise of right-wing extremist religious ideology among the typical Indian society; there are several factors, including better organization of the BJP to collect more seats than the proportional vote share and lack of an alternative that has helped their cause and made them gain a political monopoly in India.
4. In the case of India it could very well be true that the right-wing rose to power on a ladder build by the incapability or inadequate policies put forth by the UPA to help India become a developed state rather than to just aim at the votes of the people, who would not be pleased with such a performance from the ruling party for a long time and will look to other parties as well.

.#References

1. Bhati, S. 1st January, 2020. What Explains The Rightward Shift Of Indian Polity?. Youth Ki Awaaz(YKA).

<https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/01/what-explains-the-rightward-shift-of-indian-polity/> .

1. Kumar, S. (2015). *The Transformation of India’s Anti-Corruption Warriors*. Thediplomat.com. Retrieved 28 November 2021, from<https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/the-transformation-of-indias-anti-corruption-warriors/>.
2. Caravan, T. (2019). *Former BJP data analyst on how the party wins elections and influences people*. The Caravan. Retrieved 28 November 2021, from<https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/shivam-shankar-singh-as-told-to-bjp-data>.
3. Udupa, S. (2019). *The wannabe victims: India’s online right*. mint. Retrieved 28 November 2021, from<https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/the-wannabe-victims-india-s-online-right-1550165952378.html>.
4. *Why the Right Is Better at the Internet | Inside Higher Ed*. Insidehighered.com. (2019). Retrieved 28 November 2021, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/library-babel-fish/why-right-better-internet>
5. A. Venkatesh. Origins: *vol. 13, issue 1 (October 2019). Retrieved November 2021 from*

<https://origins.osu.edu/article/right-wing-politics-india-Modi-Kashmir-election>