

Social Media and Politics - Role of Media on Separate Statehood of Telangana Movement

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Abstract: Social media has become a fact of life for civil society world over, involving many actors -- regular citizens, activists, non-governmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers, and also governments at large. Social media revolution in the Indian political scene is real, tangible and accelerating. Keeping an eye on upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the objective of this article is to study the impact of social media viz. Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and You Tube on Indian politics. Social media has gained importance with the rise in youth population in India. As they are the one who use internet the most in India. Will this social media & youth change the wave of Indian politics? This article will cover these and some more issues related to Indian politics. The term "social movements" was introduced in 1850 by the German Sociologist Lorenz von Stein in his book "History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present" (1850). Social movements are large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change. Telangana has been an everlasting and simmering issue for over a period of 41 years projected by the politicians in general and students in particular. The demand for a Separate Telangana State is deeply rooted among all the sections of society in Telangana region. However it is a fact that it continued to be a political issue in one form and succeeded. Social media like Folk Media, Audio cassettes / CDs, Video / Film, Mobile Phone, blogs, wikis, social network services, social book marking, and peer-to-peer networks. Telangana movement websites could connect the Telangana people residing across the nations in attaining separate statehood to Telanagana.

Keywords: Social media, social media and politics, Socio, Political Movements

Introduction:

Media plays an important role in politics as it influences public opinion and helps define and take up the issues. It can keep the powerful in check by seeking transparency in their actions. Suppose if a government were to control all the information regarding its own actions. Thus, an independent media is an effective check on government's power and influence over its citizens. In fact, with the emergence of TV and Radio networks, many governments in Europe and America brought about legislations so that the broadcast media did not deviate from neutral position. Social Media mirrors the real world and is all about conversations. Social media facilitate the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with social graph, other users and the public. Social media has emerged as a major tool where citizens are able to talk about the issues of day to day life and also of national importance. In 21st century, Facebook, Twitter and You tube are not just innovations in the internet world, but are fast emerging as influencers and opinion creators.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." A social networking service is a platform to build social networks. These social network services are web based and these provide means for users to interact over the Internet .Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network. Thus, social media is a two-way avenue that doesn't just give you information, but interacts with you while giving you that information and enables interaction with other visitors also. This interaction can be in the form of asking for your comments or letting you vote on an article, or recommending movies to you based on the ratings of other people with similar interests. Social media also allows information and opinions to travel across networks, like ripples in a pond, amplifying ideas and allowing each person to participate as an opinion leader through media production and distribution, not just by passive consumption.

The Social and Political Movements

The term "social movements" was introduced in 1850 by the German Sociologist Lorenz von Stein in his book "History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present" (1850). Social movements are large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change. Social change refers to the notion of social progress or socio-cultural evolution; the philosophical idea that society moves forward by dialectical or evolutionary means. Social change may be driven by cultural, religious, economic, political, scientific or technological forces. Change advocated by social movement, may also be radical or revolutionary; demanding fundamental change in the existing social / institutional structures and relationships. A Socio-Political movement demands a structural change in the system. It may be organized around a single issue or set of issues, or around a set of shared concerns of a social group or community. It aims at convincing the citizens and /or government officers to take action on the issues and concerns which are at the focus of the movement. Political movement is an expression of the struggle of a social group for the political space and benefits.

Communication in Social movements

Social movements begin with unequal distributions of wealth, power, and privilege, effects of social policy, and cultural change or transgression. Aggrieved / desiring groups may organize to pursue their shared beliefs and interests. For socialization and social change, communication is a prerequisite. Social change refers to the notion of social progress or socio-cultural evolution; the philosophical idea that society moves forward by dialectical or evolutionary means. In order to mobilize support for their causes, social activists strategically draw communication plans to make their demands to be at the forefront of the public debate. To explain the widespread existence of social movements, sometimes members make extreme sacrifice on their behalf. Telangana movement is one among such Socio-Political movements, which used various communication methods to mobilize support for their causes.

Social Media and Indian Politics

What is the impact of social media in politics of a democratic country like India? With so much 'buzz' being created about social media and as more youngsters are joining in, the political parties have finally woken up to its importance. Everyone is recognizing this new and powerful medium to interact with the masses and make them participate and thereby enabling better communication. Indian politicians, be it young or old have started experiencing the impact of social media in one form or the other. Now, almost every political party used the social media to get their message across the masses.

Political campaigns are in no way just limited to buttons and banners for politicians to reach their constituents. The new political arena is full of commercials, blog posts, and hundreds of tweets. Through social media, politicians are now able to constantly display their message through endless commercials, see direct responses to their actions via Facebook or Twitter, and connect with public (Foley, 2013). Social media creates a new political dialogue. It takes the power of political messaging away from the mass media model and places it firmly into peer-to-peer, public discourse. The word of mouth advertising—a recommendation from someone you trust—is the most powerful form of persuasion and social media creates multiple levels of trust based on relationships.

Social Media and Political Parties

In recent times, Indian political landscape has seen two major national parties, Indian National Congress and BhartiyaJanta Party fighting an online political battle. Online propaganda is aggressively used against each other. Each and every medium is used to wage war of words. One tweet leads the other to respond immediately. The most famous tweets from both sides were, BJP calling Rahul Gandhi as 'Pappu' and Congress calling NarinderModi as 'Feku'. Both the parties try to downplay the achievement and exaggerate the failures of each other. Both sides claim to have large number of followers.

The political parties have their own websites which was not seen some years back and some of them also use other social mediums to interact with people. With every party having its own website and leaders being active on different media it makes the citizens feel that they are within their reach. The need to take appointments or wait for them to talk is no longer required. The leaders are accessible at the click of a button.

The Congress party's new vice president, Rahul Gandhi who is one of the icons of youth in India has used almost every social medium apart from actual communication to interact with the people and especially the youths. He has used social networking websites like Facebook to talk to people and prominent people as well as common man interacts at the same time. He also writes blogs to share his views with people. Mr. L. K. Advani of BharityaJanta Party has his own blog. Mr. Shashi Tharoor of Congress Party, was one of the first politicians to start tweeting. Mr. Narendra Modi, chief minister of Gujarat, has used all media to interact with people. He has been effectively using social media to disseminate information and remain in touch with the young population of India. He has often quoted that power of social media should be harnessed to involve youth in democratic process. The impact of his approach is visible in Gujarat elections

Classification of Social Media Websites

Social media websites can be grouped as Social Networking sites, Social Bookmarking websites, social news websites, Social Photo and Video Sharing and Wikis. Social Networking sites like Facebook, Hi5 and Last.FM interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions. Social Bookmarking websites viz., Del.icio.us, Blinklist, Simpyinteract by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people. Social News websites Digg, Propeller, Reddit interact by voting for articles and commenting on them. Social Photo and Video Sharing sites YouTube, Flickr etc. interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions. Wikis. (Wikipedia, Wikia) interact by adding articles and editing existing articles.

Social Media and their Effects

Social media have influenced many aspects of our life be it education, culture, administration, marketing, businesses or politics. Social media have been able to make profound impact by means of news, interaction, learning and marketing. Social media has become an important source of news. Various news channels tweet or give updates on significant happenings all over the world and the news quickly gets passed around the networks in ways never experienced before. It allows people to keep in touch more regularly. People in different cities, countries and continents can keep in touch effortlessly and it creates an opportunity to experience different cultures and exchange opinions.

Social media have also played a large part in fostering learning. Children who start using the social media platforms develop early communication skills, and generally become more literate. The whole dynamics of marketing have been changed. Companies are becoming more consumer-centered through interactions made over social media. They are able to understand the needs of the market from the market itself.

Telangana Movement

The recent development on Telangana issue depicts a clear picture of how the social media is influencing administrative issues. On 30 July 2013, the Congress Working Committee approved recommending a motion for a separate Telangana to the central government accepting the 57 year old demand of people of region. The Telangana movement was bolstered with the active participation of students way back in 1969. Since then, students movement has been a backbone to spread the movement across the 10 districts of Telangana and making it a people's movement. Social Media has played a big role in student movement. Several facebook communities have been set up which helped bring the people together. Facebook status update or twitter update flared up the communication on the state hood issue. It also helped provide feedback on what is going right & what is wrong. You-tube also proved to be a great platform with videos of the protests & movements getting thousands of views.

Social media has also enabled greater political awareness and organization, which has in some cases rewritten entire political landscapes. The impact has been seen both in Indian political scenario and overseas. Before studying the impact of social media on Indian politics, we need to look at its impact in context of developed countries, where there is high literacy and higher prevalence of internet users.

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON TELANGANA MOVEMENT

Folk Media

More than 80 percent of the people in Telangana live in the villages and depend upon the agricultural or agrarian economy. To communicate with the intelligibly, Telangana organizations adopted the folk media which is native and intimate to Telangana folk. Folk arts and literature are integral parts of the Telangana culture. Telangana organizations selected the folk media as right and appropriate channels to communicate with rural masses. The poet-singers and artists from Telangana adopted the folk media as persuasive communication to motivate the people Telangana about the exploitation of Andhras. Through Telangana Dhoom-Dham, they brought awareness among the people at the grass roots level and sent the message to every heart and every hut.

Audio cassettes / CDs

Telangana movement also depended upon the audio cassettes and CDs to disseminate the movement related speeches and songs. Audio cassettes / CDs are widely heard in buses, cars, autos, lorries and trucks and at tea stalls and all kinds of people have listened to these songs umpteen a time. Some of the songs like Amma Telanganama – aakalikekalanaganama, Jaya Jay He Telangana, Mandentapotundu Elamanda, Iddamvidipote- bhoomi baddalavutunda, Avvodiya nuv Ayyodiya telanganodiki toti paalodiya and speeches of leaders inspired and motivated the cross sections of Telangana to take part in the movement.

Video / Film

Video CDs are produced on the present plight of Telangana. The movement related documentary production, distribution has been radically opened by the net, peer to peer software, streaming capability, and most recently by innovations in social software that enable greater ease of use in video uploading, tagging, rating and sorting and downloading. Latest developments are the ability to shoot and share video clips via mobile phone, and experiments in collaborative editing. Telangana activists also produced Batakamma cinema.

Mobile Phone

Mobile phones are the multimodal tool par excellence. In Telangana Movement, SMS has been used to organize mass mobilizations, action alerts, public pressure on elected officials, and win political victories. Ringtones of Telangana Songs by mobile service providers like Air-Tel, have been used to enhance and strengthen popular mobilization. Current developments in the use of mobile phones by Telangana movement include the enhanced ability of phones to create and transmit content other than SMS. High quality photo and video capability in the newest generation of mobile phones has led to several software tools that allow people to publish photos, audio, and videos from mobilizations directly to Telangana movement websites. Bulk SMS are also being sent through mobile.

Social Software or New Media

While the definition of social software is contested, most seem to agree that the category includes software tools that allow participation in collective content production, filtering, modification, commentary, and/or distribution, that facilitate community building through connecting people with similar interests, that allow community standing based on participation, reputation, and trust and that involve bottom-up governance styles. These include blogs, wikis, social network services, social book marking, and peer-to-peer networks. Telangana movement websites could connect the Telangana people residing across the nations.

Blogs

Telangana movement websites could connect the Telangana people residing across the nations. Regularly updated, personal or journalistic websites have existed, the term blog has grown in popularity.

Social Network Services

Another type of social software tool that has been used by Telangana movement is social network services. Social Network sites like Face book, Twitter, Orkut and others operate on the principle of networks of trust, enabling connections between groups of people with similar interests, however esoteric, and links between „friends of friends of friends“.

In the erstwhile Hyderabad state, during the Nizam regime there was only a little importance for telugu newspapers and magazines, since the Urdu was the official language. Nevertheless very few newspapers and periodicals published from Telangana like Telugu Patrika edited and published by Oddiraju brothers from Warangal, Neelagiri Patrika from Nalagonda, Golconda Patrika, from Hyderabad, Warangal, Vani and Jandharma from Warangal, Jeevagadda from Karimnagar and Poddu from Nizamabad could not survive by various reasons, particularly the competition from Seema Andhra media.

Mean while several newspapers and magazines were started by the Telangana activist and organizations like “Ma Telangana” a magazine was launched by Telangana Information Trust, Jai Telangana, Mana Telangana, Telangana Times, Golkonda Times. They were either closed down after some time or brought out on and often due to financial troubles. But, the interpersonal communication and the interaction among activists are intrinsically satisfying, generating an effective approach.

When the state of Andhra Pradesh was at cross roads and at this crucial hour, to decide in which directions the state would have to move HMTV provided an opportunity to people of Andhra Pradesh through its “LIVE SHOW” on “ANDHRA PRADESH DASA-DISA”. It created a platform for people of both the regions to express their views and aspirations. It made the world heard them more loudly and clearly than even before. Why are the people of Telangana demanding a Separate State? What are the injustices meted to them? What advantages would they get through a separate Telangana State? In deed HMTV made it possible for people of Telangana to express their miseries, troubles, agonies, legitimate desires and aspirations to the people of Seemandhra region. At the same time the live show “Andhra Pradesh Dasa – Disa” provided an opportunity for asking various questions; why are the people of Seemandhra demanding that Telangana should not be formed as a Separate State? What Advantages would they accrue if the sate would keep united? What are the disadvantages to people of Seemandhra if a Separate Telangana was formed? What are their fears? What are their objections? what are their desires and aspirations ? to make the people of Telangana hear all these issues HMTV gave a wonderful opportunity through the Live – show “ Andhra Pradesh Dasa-Disa”.

This Live Show created a peaceful, harmonious, friendly and cordial atmosphere to people of both the regions to express mutual opinions, desires and aspirations so as to understand each other.

The First Live Show

HMTV conducted its first live show on “Andhra Pradesh Dasa-Disa” in Hyderabad Jubilee Hall on December 20, 2009 in which the peoples elected representatives, intellectuals and people of all walks of life of both the regions took part in an extensive debate in a cordial atmosphere. This live show made the viewers cling to TVs. At the end of the show, the Chief Editor, Mr. Ramchandra Murthy announced that similar live shows would be conducted in all the twenty three districts of Andhra Pradesh to collect the public opinion on this never ending issue.

CONCLUSION

Media and politics are the integral part of democracy so both must be taken with positive notes to make the smooth and prospective run of the country. From the above discussion it can be gathered that democracy is the body where media and politics are soul and mind. To sip the real delicacy of democracy the proper balance of media and politics are expected. From the above dis conclusion we came to the solution media cannot be separated from the politics and if it is separated the democracy will definitely be handicapped. For the squire development of the society media must be added with positive note and with the help of media every information, policies and ideas of the political parties can easily be disseminated to every nooks and corner of the society. The Telangana issue has been simmering and rocking the entire India for quite a long time. Telangana has been an everlasting and simmering issue for over a period of 41 years projected by the politicians in general and students in particular. Social media like Folk Media, Audio cassettes / CDs, Video / Film, Mobile Phone, blogs, wikis, social network services, social book marking, and peer-to-peer networks. Telangana movement websites could connect the Telangana people residing across the nations in attaining separate statehood to Telanagana.

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