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## Chapter 4

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### Political Awareness: The Concept and its Application for Dalit

#### Politics

##### 4.1 Introduction

Awareness simply means to have knowledge about certain things or phenomenon, meaning there by to be aware of certain happening through any mode of information. In other words we acquire information by contact with an individuals or group or people or through media. Similarly, we create awareness about so many events, incidents, happening of a phenomenon or phenomena. Awareness means knowledge or perception of a situation or fact.<sup>70</sup> Hence it is obvious that the awareness is a result of two way interaction, which includes give and take. Though this give and take process we acquire and create awareness about anything like environment awareness, save of water awareness, social awareness, and political awareness.<sup>70</sup> Awareness means consciousness about any issue or happening. Awareness means mindful or heedful: Awareness implies knowledge gained through one's own perception or mean of information.<sup>70</sup>

Eternal vigilance has been stated to be the price of liberty<sup>70</sup>. It emerges as a natural corollary from this statement that eternal vigilance is the price for democracy as well. That means democracy as a system will thrive only if the people of the country are vigilant. However, for being vigilant, people must be aware; aware about their political environment i.e. about the incidents, events and happenings, institutions along with their structures and procedures, decision-

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making processes as also about their rights and duties etc. in the section that follows, an effort has been made to understand the meaning of political awareness.

## **4.2 Political Awareness**

Any endeavor to understand and define the term ‘Political Awareness’ should be preceded with an attempt to understand the term ‘awareness’. As it is stated above the meaning of ‘Awareness’ is to know or to have knowledge about ‘something’; this something means our surrounding. Awareness about our surroundings is basic not only to the human beings but to the all living organisms including the plants and trees. In fact, it is basic instinct inherent in all the living organisms since their birth and is directly related to our survival; if we do not remain aware about our surroundings, our existence may be endangered. And to that extent, the animals and birds remain more aware about their surroundings because they always face the danger of life from the stronger and bigger amongst them due to the prevalence of the jungle raj.

Taken in this sense, the humans have to remain less aware because of prevalence of rule of law, they face less danger from other humans; of course they have to safeguard themselves from some of the animals and insects. But humans have to remain aware for some other reasons as well, among humans, awareness is a tool of empowerment; thus the more aware we are, the more empowered we would be. Meaning thereby, the higher level of awareness will ensure to develop the competitive spirit within themselves. In other words, in addition to ensure their survival and existence, humans have to remain aware to compete among themselves. Humans have a natural inclination to grow at a faster rate in comparison to the others. But our growth and development depends upon our knowledge of our surroundings, therefore, awareness is of great importance

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among humans due to some other reasons in comparison to the animal world. Among humans, awareness may relate to the society, the economy, the polity, the nature etc.

‘Political awareness’ may mean to be aware of the salient features of the constitution and the important laws; incidents, events, and happenings; its different structures and their functions; decision-making processes and procedures in these structures; relationship between different structures; person at the helm of affairs and their personalities; rights, obligations and compulsions of various functionaries; rights, duties and expectations of the citizens etc. in the field of politics.

In context to political awareness we acquire knowledge about political activities, which occurs at different political fronts. The Political awareness means to know about different mechanism of political activities of different political hierarchy. We acquire this awareness through different day to day political activities which begin at the local level for example, the functioning of local self government like Gram Panchayats, Block Sammitties, Zila Parishads at rural front. On the other hand the local self government related to urban local bodies which include Municipal Committee, Nagar Parishad and the Municipal Corporation and at the apex level the political awareness about state assembly, parliament and different structures of government and different functionaries of the government.

Similarly political awareness is also associated with different social groups like rural groups, urban groups e.g. awareness associated with different castes, economic groups, professional groups, community groups, civil society groups’ etc. Their involvements are varied and different, depends upon the levels of requirements of the information required from time to time. The level of awareness acquired in accordance with the objective laid by different groups.

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The level of awareness is determined by large number of factors, awareness indicators through which the awareness phenomena operate. It always varied from place to place and time to time. Some groups (individual) are better equipped than others to render political judgments, to political decisions and to process political information. In other words some individuals or groups are better equipped to exercise the duties of citizenship and hence to play a meaningful role in the deliberations of democratic politics. Others focus on the importance of partisanship and strong partisan orientations.<sup>70</sup>

Hence, Political awareness means people must have conscious or aware of their government's functions and functionaries e.g. they must aware of elections, vote, parliament and political safeguards of democracy and they must aware of all types of political process and activities. Some studies of public opinion indicate that most of the people are ignorant about the detail of politics and are simply unable to arrive at a considered vote. They hold that voters are ignorant about the ideological substance of politics, since their opinions do not appear to be constraint and are unstable over time. John Bartle further says that the opinion of more aware voter are subject to greater constraint and are more stable over time that those of less aware voters.<sup>70</sup> Hence it reveals that if a common person or a uncommon person, it is necessary to have consciousness about their political system, political process of the country. We must have aware of all the functions which are performed by government and also political parties, the functions and importance of elections and importance of vote in democracy. These all questions are related to the political awareness<sup>70</sup>.

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### 4.3 Political Participation and People Participation

Political participation is positively correlated with the political awareness. Meaning there by, voluntary activities by which the members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy is influenced by the political awareness. The political activities which include voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially and speech making, working in campaigns are all depend upon the political awareness of the people and it cumulatively affected the levels of political participation in the society.<sup>70</sup> All these are essential elements for democratic system which are as consent accountability, majority rules, equality and popular sovereignty in the present democratic system in India. Why do social scientists study political participation? To begin with, participation is an ingredient of every polity, large or small. Whether the society is an oligarchy or a democracy, someone must make political decisions and appoint, uphold and remove leaders.<sup>70</sup> Those who fail to participate whether out of neglect or exclusion, are likely to enjoy less power than those who are or have more political participation. People participate in politics whenever they do something to affect public policy. Although not all who participate possess or enjoyed effective power but those who do not participate cannot exercise or share power. It is possible to have a democracy when most people participate in politics only in a ritual fashion.<sup>70</sup>

Participation is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in democracy and rules are made accountable to the ruled. Since men can be equal and free only if they share in the determination of their own affairs, participation has been viewed as a mean for realizing these democratic objectives.<sup>70</sup>

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Political awareness is best explained by political factors such as political information, Education, economic condition, a feeling of political efficacy and holding of certain belief. It may well be noted that non-participation is also best explained by these political factors. We have seen that people who participate in the electoral process are better educated, wealthier and in general, better off than those who do not. But we have also seen that social and economic factors affect participation directly. They are mediated and shaped by political awareness.<sup>70</sup>

From Aristotle to John Dewey, Political philosophers have extolled popular participation as a source of vitality and creative energy, as a defense against tyranny and as a mean of enacting to collective wisdom. By involving the many in the affairs of the state participation should promote stability and order and by giving every one the opportunity to express his own interests, it should secure the greatest good for the greatest number.<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.4 Citizen Participation**

With few exceptions, the political problems of government are connected to the ignorance of and myths about politics which keep away the public from understanding the nature and cause of those problems. Ignorance and myths keep citizens estranged from politics when the only cure for the ethical problems of politics can come when there is increased participation. Only increased public participation will help. The need for a citizen of a democratic society is to understand generally what is going on in his government and to participate to some degree in its decision making processes.<sup>70</sup>

His needs for understanding the world in which he lives and for having some sense of control of his position in that world tend to be less than satisfied. The only way of satisfying these

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needs in contemporary society is through increased participation in some nationwide organization with power that can both interpret the large-scale events affecting the society and give him same share in dealing with these events. Participation in political organization can also serve needs for companionship and identification which participation in other kinds of organization equally well serve.

#### **4.5 Democracy and Political Awareness**

When we think about democracy, then question raised in our mind..... That what is Democracy? In simple wording we can say, “To protect the fundamental rights of individual and of the society is called democracy”. It is a rule of law, elections, vote and parliament, in other words a person who is well politically aware can protect the rights of individuals and of the society. This person or citizen can protect the society and democracy. Every step of political participation is taken by the people should be accordance with within the framework of rule of law.<sup>70</sup> In order to fulfilling the objectives laid by the people should be obeyed the rules, framed by the Indian constitution or the legal authorities. Only when we shall be in position to enjoy our democratic system in the society and it will lead to democratic stability too. It is possible to have a democracy when most people participate in politics only in a ritual fashion. There is a good relationship between political participation and democratic theory, public policy and public opinion.<sup>70</sup> Hence we can examine that Democracy is a system in which the rights and life of an individual and of the society would be secured by rule of law. Hence a well educated and well politically aware person can do the best for the society. So democracy or liberty of a man correlated with the political awareness of a citizen.<sup>70</sup>

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## 4.6 Significance of Political Awareness

Decision-making is at the core of all government activities, i.e. all government activities are directed to take decision relating to one matter or the other. But all the decisions taken at the political level affect the people at large though the intensity of the effect would certainly vary depending upon the nature of decision and the level of government at which the decision has been taken. Since the decisions are about us and affect us, we have both a right and duty to know what these decisions are; how these have been arrived at, whether they serve/harm our interests and how do they serve/harm our interests and the extent to which they serve/harm our interests. In a democracy, in case the decisions taken at the level of the government harm our interests, we are also provided opportunities to represent our case even before the decisions taken. Even after the decisions have been taken, there exist in a democracy adequate mechanisms for redress of our grievances. There is a system of approaching that mechanism and by following that procedure we can get our grievances redressed. But we can take advantage of all these opportunities only if we are politically aware. Alternatively, it can be said that if we are not aware, we are jeopardizing our survival, existence, growth and development.

If we are not aware about the decisions taken by the government, we may be deprived of the opportunity to raise voice against those decisions in case the decision has been harming our interests. Further, in case we remain aware about the time when the decisions are being taken and the persons who are at the helms of affairs in taking these decisions, we may be in a position to



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articulate and safeguard our interest. But all this can happen only when we are politically aware and know what is happening around us.

It is also a fact that present era is the era of specialization in which all of us specialize in some branch of knowledge. It may be concluded from the above that we cannot excel and specialize in all branches and fields of knowledge. Therefore, it becomes our responsibility to utilize the knowledge we possess for the good of the society. It is, in fact, a reciprocal relationship; we contribute to the society and the society will contribute to our well-being. It is quite possible that the decisions taken or being taken at the political level are going to affect us only remotely and distantly. If we have some knowledge about that specialized field in which the decisions are taken or are being taken, then we are duty bound to contribute. From this standpoint also political awareness is crucial.

There are some people who would be inclined to political participation, i.e., they would more inclined to participate in political activities be it contesting elections or be it interest articulation. But the path to political participation is routed through political awareness because unless we are politically aware we will not be in a position to analyze the political environment and find out the most conducive opportunity, level and nature for participation.

Political awareness has a vital significance in different walk of life. It has paved the way to know our rights and duties which experience in different front. Political awareness can be proved beneficial as follows:-

**Firstly-** Political awareness can be proved very significance for knowing and understanding our rights and duties towards society, individual and nation.

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**Secondly-** Political awareness among the citizen belongs to rural and urban society has enabled to take political participation at different levels. The levels of active participation in the political activities depend upon the level of political awareness or acquiring of knowledge gained from our surroundings. As a result the participation can be proved conducive to get the desired results.

**Thirdly-** Different levels of political awareness or political awakening has positive strong correlation with the development. It helps to develop a collective bargaining and public opinion formation for formulation a pro-public development policy at a different administrative hierarchy, e.g. at grass root level to state/National levels. It has been observed especially at village levels due to considerable political awareness of the villagers can often be beneficial for raising funds for development in their respective villages.

**Fourthly-** it is political awareness which helps to set the different targets for the development oriented 'action plan', which can be proved helpful to get the desired result at different levels. The citizens who readily think about politics in partisan or ideological terms are better able to employ these points of orientation as useful heuristic devices in making sense out of the complexity chaos of politics.<sup>70</sup>

**Fifthly-** A periodic feedback given by the villagers and the members belong to civil society depend upon the levels of political awareness among the people. If there is an adequate awareness among the people, as a result, they give a good periodic feedback to the policy makers. As a result, it can be benefited for the policy makers to formulate the policy in accordance with the local condition at the grass root levels.

**Sixthly-** Different studies indicate that the more political aware 'civil society' is more responsive to the development work, executed by the public authorities and it is vice-versa. That is why the

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political awareness has become a chief corollary of development administration at different administrative hierarchy. If one would observe the progress of social change and mobilization in Nepal over the past five decades, it would be noticed that the traditional caste rigidity no longer prevails. In spite of caste hierarchy those who have been able to attain economic, educational and political achievement have received greater acceptability in the society.<sup>70</sup>

**Seventhly-** The Political awareness has also paved the way to develop more transparency in execution system of the development projects, undertaken by the administrative technical authorities. It has also been observed that the political awareness among the people, belong to rural and urban society have been proved a good vigilance to have a ‘constant watch’ and watch dog for multi leveled transparency e.g. village/Block/District and micro and macro levels. And ultimately proved helpful to develop multilevel transparency, accountability and responsiveness at multiple levels. On the whole the political awareness has been proved ‘panacea’ for having a constant vigil at multiple levels.

**Eighthly-** It has been noticed that the political awareness has paved the way to make the judicious use of financial and human resources to get the targeted result. It has also been observed that the people who are more aware of different political activities, get best utilize their resource with ‘cost-effective’ way to fulfill the oriented development target.

**Finally-** Political awareness among the people, belong to rural and urban society has been playing a vital role for setting target oriented development work. It has paved the way to developing ‘constant vigil’ and multi-level transparency in the functioning different ‘development authorities’ working at different administrative level. It has also proved conducive to have fully transparency at formulation and execution of ‘social and development policy.’ The level of

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political awareness of the masses of development countries is very high because they take active participation in political activity, development programmes, decision making policies and they take active part in administrative and political administration.<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.7 Factor Affecting Political Awareness**

There are numerous factors which determine the level of political awareness of an individual. Here are some factors which always plays an important role to determine the level of political awareness of an individual as well the masses as a whole. These factors may be analyzed as follows:

***The Education-*** The Education is most prominent factor that influence all the political activities and many other activities of a man in the society. A politically illiterate person might unconscious who the president is or perhaps the governor of their State but they usually ignored things. They do not watch the news. They have no knowledge of the issue and do not know the difference between a republic and Democrat. These people have no interest in vote.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand the educated persons have more consciousness of their political system. They are aware of the rules and regulations, elections, parliament which are the basis of democracy. An educated person can take active participation in policy formulation and decision making process. Further, the level of political awareness of a more educated person is likely to be greater in comparison to a less educated person.

***Economic Condition-*** Political awareness of a man depends upon education as well as economic condition of a man. The person or a group who is economically sound they have full interest in politics and political activities. The level of political awareness is usually low of the

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economically weaker section or groups or strata in the society. On the other hand, the level of political awareness is usually high in a developed society or strata or group. So, it is clear that the level of political awareness is depends upon the economic condition of any groups or strata in the society. In the electoral process the Indian masses, particularly the poor and the socially disadvantaged, take a less more participatory role than in advanced industrial democracies.<sup>70</sup>

A person who is economically weak, he always remains in stress. He cannot think about politics, political process and political incidents of the country. Professor Laski said that “there is no mean of social freedom without economic equality. A man cannot eat social freedom”. Dr. Ambedkar always said that an economically weak person cannot progress socially and politically, so it is compulsory to uplift the weaker section of the society. If they are economically sound then they will take interest in politics, political activities and political power.<sup>70</sup> Hence we can say that a person, group or strata who is economically sound in society, they take active part in politics, government and political system and they are more awared, than that of those people, who are economically in weak position. For instance, in India the poor people do not cast their votes at the time of elections.

***Profession:-*** Profession of an individual, group or community in the society is most important factor to determine the level of political awareness, e.g. the Teacher Association, Association of Trade Unions, Commercial Association, Bar Association, Govt. Employee Association also affect the political activities of a man. All these profession, related to different professions or groups also help to create political awareness among the man belong to different strata or groups or profession. The people belong to scheduled castes, have found the opportunities of social and occupational mobility not only in their traditional occupations, but

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have also ventured into same other entrepreneurial activities which were earlier, reserve for higher castes. Therefore, it is predominantly the better off amongst the scheduled castes who have become businessmen and industrial entrepreneur.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, there are certain professions, where the people are more likely to be politically more aware. In fact, in some professions such as Journalism, it is obligatory for those who are involved in these professions to remain politically aware otherwise they will be not in a position to cope with the highly competitive environment. It has been observed that the children of those persons who are indulge in politics are naturally more politically aware than those of the children whose parents are not indulge in political profession.

***Social and Cultural Environment-*** Culture is a vehicle of civilization, there are various traits of culture such as architecture, folk and festival, language, castes, race religion, dance and drama, literature, arts and paintings, food habits, norms and values, attire for men and women, style of living and the traits of urbanism of an area. All these 'cultural traits' affect the 'political awareness' of the people, who live in an area.

Social and cultural environment also affect the political activities, political system and political interest of a man. The social environment also help to create political awareness among the masses. For example, we can see the recent example of 'Misazpur-Violence' in Haryana, which helps to create political awareness among the masses, particularly in weaker section (Dalits) of the country. Social hierarchy in terms of caste, occupation, caste barriers and untouchability are some of the distinct features of a Hindu society found now here in other parts of the globe. The roots of the caste system are so deep that, apart from its symbolic value, any caste does not have functional importance in the society.<sup>70</sup> In case of social equality, people may be inclined to be

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politically more aware. On the other hand a socio-culturally disadvantaged person such as dalits in India, are likely to be politically less aware. And secondly, the *cultural factors* also affect the level of political awareness of an individual as well as community as a whole. The relevance of cultural factors may be more effective in case of the people, who always tend to shift them from one place to another. As a result, they are not aware of political system rather than the people live a settled life. So, they have no much interest in politics and political activities because their culture and society do not allowed them to take active participation in politics and political activities. And third thing is their occupation which also affect their level of Political Awareness. There are numerous of communities belong to different culture i.e. the Tribals and Luhar (Rajasthani Luhar-Rajput from Rajasthan), these communities and their culture do not develop the favourable conditions to take an active participation and show no more interests in politics and political activities of the country. The occupation, where the people, belong to this society is differentiated them from the civic society..

The tribals, which are often lag behind the mainstream of the society with ‘cultural lag’, indicate a low level of awareness about political system and political activities due to their ‘isolated location’ give an adverse affect .

It has been observed from the several studies from the areas, where the ‘cultural diffusion’ has taken place, the voting behaviour is prone to change in according with changing cultural environment. In the metropolitan areas, where the ‘plural society’ has been developed at a massive scale. That is why, the percentage of polling of this type of residential areas are often lesser as compare to the areas where the ‘Cultural homogeneity’ is found at a large extent and it is Vice-Versa.

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Hence, it is obvious that the cultural factors also determine the 'Voting behavior' of the people, who live in a particular area. It has also been observed that the 'homogeneity' and 'heterogeneity' of culture affect the level of political awareness too. In case of 'heterogeneity of culture' which indicate a least probability of 'political awareness', as it has been noticed among the people, belong to 'plural society'.

***Availability of and exposure to political information-*** The level of political awareness of any society, community, groups or strata depends upon availability and exposure to political information. Most of Americans get what political information they receive from the television. The percentage of obtaining information from newspaper and magazines has remained relatively constant. The percentage for which radio was main source of political information has declined from 31.9% in 1952 to 3.7% in 1968. In the same time the percentage getting most of their information from television rose 36.2% to 66.0%<sup>70</sup>. Hence the exposure of political information is major factor to create the political awareness among the masses. The second thing is availability of information. There are many regions like remote areas, hill areas which always lag behind political environment of the country because of the lacking of the education and better economic condition. These areas are always remains cut off from the main incidents, and events which occur in political arena and politics of the country because of the problems of availability of information. Then the level of political awareness of the remote areas would naturally be relatively low.

***The Mass Media-*** In present era the print and Electronic Media played an significant role to increase the level of political awareness among the masses. Today mass media is a valuable source of public opinion formation. As a result, the mass media provide a "catalytic force" for



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creating political awareness among the masses to air the views of different political parties too. The different and multiple services rendered by different mass media indeed played an important role for creating political awareness among the people. If there exists an unbiased, free and effective media it will not only generate political awareness among the people but will also lure them to be politically more aware.

### ***Social Media and Political Awareness***

The role of social media has a vital significance for creating political awareness among the masses. In this context, the specially the electronic media, now a days is playing a notable role for creating public political awareness for their opinion formation on their views on various current issues.’ As we observe that the leaders of almost every political party have uploaded their photos with their events from time to time in various ‘social websites’ such as ‘face book’, ‘twitter’ etc. These websites act as a engine to expedite the views from one place to another. These web sites disseminate and give a ‘world-wide’ exposure of the views from one person to another person.

It has been observed that the ‘social sites’ have been paved the ways for ‘quick opinion formation’ on various issues occurring during different successive periods. As we are well aware of the facts that the leader like ‘Arwind Kejriwal’ who regularly make contact, especially with the youth, become most responsive for the views on socio-economic and political views and try to acknowledge individually for their latest political activity and action plan for raising the burning issue.

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Similarly, the BJP leaders like Narendra Modi, has a million of followers on his social website 'facebook'. The congress leaders like Depender Hooda, M.P. of Rohtak constituency, Ajay Chautala, The Rajaya Sabha M.P. from Haryana have a considerable number of followers on their social websites. The national leader such as Rahul Gandhi, has also a million of followers especially the youths, who have joined him from different parts of India and abroad. The social sites act as a true reflector to exchange the views on various subjects and issues in the changing scenario.

The Social sites, formed by Obama, the president of United States have been played a significant role for re-election of him as president. The issue such as occurred against Osama Bin Laden leading to killing him has been a major issue of the President election. As result, the 'Social Media' based action plan has been proved conducive to make a strong public opinion formation during last U.S. President Election. Similarly, his stand on 'international terrorism' has gained a world-wide support through 'social media' only. He has been airing his views on his some of selected 'web-sites' in the country. These sites have been given a 'chain reaction' throughout the world, as a result a 'worldwide response' has been received by the president Obama.

Hence, it is true that the 'social sites' (networking web) like face-book or twitter have been playing a vital role for creating political awareness. It has also been observed that such websites have a 'pernicious effect' too. The youth community which is very sensitive to not take the things seriously becomes a matter of serious thinking. It has been observed that the 'youth community' is occasionally misled by the shrewd politicians and follows the fallacious ways of political thinking on various sensitive issues. The 'blind follow' tendency of youth is some time

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blindly supported for the ‘vested political interests’. As a result, the shrewd politicians take a undue advantages of their ‘blind followers’.

Keeping in view, multifaceted problematic areas of ‘Social internet web sites’, it become imperative to be rational, so that a judicious and rational views may be disseminated through the ‘social websites’ and make best use of this ‘social media’ to inculcate the right things into the wrong minds, which may prove conducive to inculcate the ‘factual picture’ of the political awareness of the people, belong to different strata of society.

In this context, it also becomes very essential to follow the ethics and the values of media, so that the true information may be shared between the leaders and the followers. It also becomes imperative to work the people within the jurisdiction of ‘cyber laws’ laid down by the Indian Penal Codes. It is also needed some of constitutional amendments and legislative measure to have a ‘constant vigil’ on the information which are ‘uploaded’ on the social websites by the leaders as well as by the public, so that a fully transparency may be mentioned for functioning of ‘Social websites’ in the country. It is expected to pave the way for true opinion formation through different ‘social websites’ used by the leaders, belong to different political parties in India. Hence, social media is playing a very prominent role for creating the general awareness and Political Awareness among the masses.

***Political Environment-*** Political environment play a significant role to create political awareness among the people. A progressive political environment always provide a ‘supporting force’ to the people, who are engaged in different political activities. As a result this ‘supporting force’ always producing a ‘centripetal force’ for developing good governance, which is a permanent indicator of political environment. Hence it is obvious that the factors which are well

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knit cohesive and integrated political environment provides an environment, which suits most for creating political interests to achieve the desired results. The political environment was begun at the national level before independence in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to create the political awareness among the masses for the freedom struggle. The political environment was created at the national level by Jaiparkash Narain in 1975 to 1977 against Indra Gandhi Government at the time of emergency. The political environment was created again at the national level with BJP leader L.K Advani by organizing a Rath Yatra at national level to cultivate majority vote bank by exposing the cause of Ram Mandir Issue.<sup>70</sup> Prevailing political environment provide conducive conditions in generating political awareness among the people. In contemporary time the political rallies which are organized by BJP to win the election of Lok-Sabha of 2014 are creating a conducive political environment to create political awareness among the masses at large extends.

### ***Personal Inclination***

Political awareness of an individual is also a function of our personal inclination and interest. If an individual is more interested in politics and has interest for develop surrounding environment, then the individual is likely to be relatively politically more aware rather than those persons whose personal inclination remains in other professions. There are certain sections of society which usually have more inclination in politics and political activities in comparison to the others. It is usually seen that the women in rural area have less inclination to politics and political activities.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the level of their political awareness is likely to be relatively less. There are many examples of many peoples who belong to political family but they have no personal inclination in politics, their interest lies in other professions.

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## 4.8 Political Awareness in India

Before the advent of the British, substantial majority of population used to live in villages, which were self-sufficient units as most of their needs used to meet within their village. There was rarely any flow of information as means of communication and transportation were very slow. The State being authoritarian and dictatorial, except for collection of land revenue and taxes, there was hardly any connection between the state and the subjects. Further, mass illiteracy prevailed and whatever system of education existed, it was very traditional and destitute and different from western liberal ideas of liberty and equality. Obviously, political awareness among the people at that time was almost non-existent. But the establishment of British rule in the country changed the scene gradually and led to the creation of political awareness among the people of this country.

### **Political Awareness before Independence**

Some of the reason for the generation of political awareness during British period, has been discussed as follows:-

***Liberal Education*** -In the beginning of nineteenth century, the British replaced the traditional system of education based on theology with the system of education based on the western liberal thought. It was done with a view to popularize the western way of living and thinking, to transform the mind set of people, belong to different parts of India. The spread of western thought which has affected the religious and social aspects and social reformation, romanticism, enlightenment and rationalism in outlook were due to the study of English literature, philosophy and science.<sup>70</sup> However, this helped people to understand their rights and what are the duties of

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the State. In other words, the spread of western education thought increased political awareness among the masses of India.

***System of British Administration*** -With a view to rule India in a better way, they unified this country by creating a network of transportation and also by providing means of communication. Postal system and the railways may be mentioned in particular in this regard. They also created a unified system of administration in this country. As a result interaction among the people of different parts of the country increased and they came to know what is happening in different parts of this country as also in other parts of the world. This led to the generation of political awareness of the people of India.

***Impact of Freedom Movement*** -During independence struggle our leaders had created an environment conducive for political awareness all over the country. Our leaders like Lokmanaya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Azad, Madan Mohan Malviya and Pt. Nehru played a significant role for creating political awareness during independence struggle period.<sup>70</sup> As a result of the efforts of the leader of freedom struggle and environment of political awakening and awareness was generated. So, freedom movement played an prominent role in increasing the political awareness among the masses of India.

***Impact of Western Culture*** -The changing condition in the country, modern literature, the growing influence of the west, social and religious reforms, new forms of associations, the changing outlook of modern education and the pressing demands of new life developed national consciousness. The formulation of fresh social norms and political ideals made a profound impression upon the mind of the new Indian people.<sup>70</sup>

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***British Economic Policy Impact on Indian Economy*** -The British did not intend to bring any industrial development of the country; whatever industries were set up was the result of their compulsion. Trade, transport, communications were undergoing transformation but agriculture remained stagnant. The population continued to increase and the Indian masses were the periods of scarcity and famine. The new economic methods introduced by the British in India were not regenerative as their benefit was raped by the foreign rulers, industrialists and inventors. The poor population was affected by rising prices. The burden of taxation grew heavier though the national income increased.<sup>70</sup> Such a complexity trend in the Indian economy caused great distress among the poorer classes of population and discontent among the middle section of the society especially the educated and thus frontward political awareness in the whole country.

#### **4.9 Political Awareness in post Independence era.**

After independence, the process of political awareness among the masses has further expedited. In the post-independence period, there are numerous of factors which have contributed in increasing the level of political awareness among the masses. Some of these factors have been discussed as follows.

***Education-*** As it has been discussed earlier that the education is prominent factor that has the capacity of increasing the level of general awareness and political awareness among the masses. Post-independence India has seen vast expansion of education in various parts of the country. We have achieved 100 per cent gross enrollment ratio in the case of students up to fifth standard since the year 2004-05 and since 2007-08 we have achieved 100 per cent gross enrollment ratio in the

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case of students up to eighth standard.<sup>70</sup> This vast spread of education has been proved very helpful for increasing the level of political awareness in this country. It has been observed that the illiterate person cannot understand the functioning of Government bodies, political system, political leadership, about constitution and many incidents and happening, which are usually happened in political field.

**Mass Media** - Independent India has witnessed phenomenal growth of mass media, both print and electronic. In fact, the electronic media has been revolutionized the field of sharing and exchanging the information. Now, the electronic media is making all kinds of information instantly available to the people in part of the country. Internet has also a great role to play in the field of information generation and its spread amongst the people, which is just a click away from the users. All these have helped tremendously in increasing the level of political awareness of the people in the post-independence era.

**Urbanization** -India is presently witnessing rapid urbanization and it has been projected that by 2025, about half of India's population would be residing in urban areas. Urbanization is usually associated with increased level of awareness. Thus, increased urbanization has contributed to the increase in level of political awareness of the people. The main reason of increasing Political Awareness in urban areas is the exposure and availability of the information.

**Increased Interaction** -There has been tremendous growth of science and technology in India and this growth is also perceptible in the field of communication and transportation. This technological advancement in the field of communication and transportation has resulted into increased interaction among the people. In fact, the advancement in the means of communication and transportation has removed the boundaries of the world. As a result of increased interaction,



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both physical and through means of communication not only within India but with the outside world, there is considerable increased in the level of political awareness of the people.

***The Role of Public Relation Department Of Government***-Government has also been making efforts to increase the level of political awareness of the people. The Public Relations Departments of the state governments generate awareness among the people by way of their various programmes which are specifically aimed at this purpose. The government also gives wide publicity to the various programmes and schemes launched by it with a view to generate awareness about them. Besides, before the enactment of any statute in parliament or state legislatures, public comments are invited thereon. Further, after the enactment of the statutes also, government makes efforts to make the people aware about their features. Role of Public Relation Department of the State Government has a vital significance for creating political awareness. It has been observed that the mass media used by the personnel of public relation department play a significant role by acknowledging the public policy to the masses. It also includes the awareness of various development schemes and the action plans for execution at various administrative hierarchy. The mass-media, often used by the Public Relation department are film show, lectures, exhibitions and the public meetings for creating awareness about development work to be executed in the rural and urban areas.

In this connection, the vernacular media, like 'puppet show' make the show more interesting which helps to create a live 'demonstration effects' on the mind-set of the people, belong to different strata of society. The political leaders organize a public meeting and give their views on various socio-economic and political issues, faced by the masses. All these are

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helped by the public relation department and facilitate to create the favourable environment for pulling the public to hear their views on various burning issues.

In order to make the public more responsive to the development policy to be implemented in accordance with the prevailing local conditions, the role of public relation department become more significant and inevitable. The public meetings, organized by the public relation department has been giving an insight to the 'public opinion formation' on various political issues raised by the public. It also help to give a periodic feed back of the masses which may prove-conducive to formulate the public policy in an effective way. The role of civil society, which give a periodic review of the public policy, play a significant role for making the public policy more responsive and transparent for the people, belong to different strata of society. The relation between the public relations and the public should be harmonions, so that an adequate feedback way be given in an effective way. A well awareness on political issue are expected to pave the way to form a good 'pressure groups' which help to develop a effective 'collective bargaining' for decision making on public crucial maters to protect the rights of the people, belong to urban and rural society.

Hence, we observe that the role of public relation department in creating political awareness among the public has been remarkable. It is because of the role of 'public relation' gives a 'Multiplier effect' on solving the various socio-economic and political issues of the people, belongs to various strata of society.

***Right to Information Act and political awareness***-One such effort of the government, which needs special mention, is the enactment of the Right to Information Act, 2005. Under this Act, any citizen of India can seek information about any government decision by applying to the

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Public Information Officer (PIO) of the concerned department. The PIO has to provide the information sought within a period of thirty days from the date of application. This Act is providing a great source of information generation and is thus a great tool of generating political awareness among the people. Right to information Act 2005, has been playing a vital and significant role for creating more political responsiveness for the people living in rural and urban areas. Since implementation of RTI, the public administration has become more responsive to the public. It has paved the way to create mass public awareness for the development policy, formulated for socio-economic upliftment for the people, belong to different strata of rural and urban society. The RTI has opened the door for the people to have a 'constant vigil' on the functioning of government and non-government organizations. The RTI Act has been proved conducive to protecting the human rights. The Act has devolved the power to the farmers, women, children, students, teachers and the professionals, belong to different streams to know the information, which is directly or indirectly affect him/her.

It has been observed that RTI Act has made the political leaders more responsive and answer able to their deeds. The political leaders belong to different political streams are supposed to answer each and every question related to development works under RTI Act. All these become possible with emergence of RTI Act for protecting the right of the people. In this context, the political leader's under the executives deal with RTI, has to finalize the matter within one month. As a result, the RTI has expedited the administrative system and reduced the 'Red Tapism' from the 'Bureaucratic system'. All these become possible, when the people have become aware of their right through RTI Act.

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The annual reports of various departments indicate the number of cases of RTI Act, have been finalized. On the basis of these reports, it has been observed that the every department has been become more responsive with the implement of RTI Act for their concerned department. For the political leaders, now it become more answerable for his speech and the works which he has implemented in accordance with the speech, made earlier. Hence, it is obvious the RTI and the political awareness of the people has narrowed the gap between said and done by the political leaders.

In this context, various information receive from various department has paved the way to evaluate the development programme by pointing out the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat of the public scheme, implemented by the government machinery. It has also been paved the way to reform the social and economic public policy and eliminate all the ‘pitfalls’ in the public policy, so that the public policy may attain a TQM (Total Quality management) position for the services, rendered by the public authorities. In order to attain the TQM, it become essential to have a fully awareness on political agenda. Only then the people may get the full return for their tax, paid for formulation of concrete public policy and full utilization of natural and human resources, meant for welfare of the people.

Hence, it is obvious that the RTI Act has been playing a significant and vital role for creating political awareness of the people. It has been observed that the RTI has a indirect benefits too. It has a ‘multiple effects’ on the functioning of the political leaders, the administrative machinery, public representatives of local self governments of ‘Panchayati Raj’ and Urban local bodies. It has paved the way to have a fully insights of the functionaries of various bodies, engaged in implementing the public policy. It has paved the way to maintain

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fully transparency and constant vigil on the functioning of the officials belong to different administrative hierarchy. It is also expected to maintain the total quality management of the development works, executed by the executive officials at various administrative hierarchy.

***Caste Mobilization and Political Awareness*** -After Independence, there was a considerable change, which was experienced by the people, belong to different castes, religious groups & different class. Different political parties carve out their vote bank among different communities and champion of one's own community. In fact they are champions of their own political interests, rather than community's interest.<sup>70</sup> These political elites which assumed power in 1947, were drawn from the upper castes. The key institution that shaped political power, social status and economic privilege were hold by upper caste peoples in India. The national movement, the educational system, the bureaucracy and the system of land ownership were largely in the dominant caste's hand. After independence, various regional political parties came into existence and had a regional influence on the mind of the people belong to different strata of society. These regional parties have been influencing with their leaders particularly to their own people. Even as the upper caste leaders of congress created caste vote banks even though they spoke out against 'casteism'. Many congress leaders imagined an India free from the rancor of communal identities, caste politics and linguistic fervor. The democratic system created an incentive for political mobilization along the lives of caste, religion and language. Politicians mobilize caste grouping and identities in order to organize their power. Caste and community provides an extensive basis of r organization of democratic politics.<sup>70</sup>

***Socio-Economic Status of States and Regions*** -It has been observed that the political awareness in India has been influencing by three major factors- the literacy rates, economic status and the

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level of information technology availed by the people. All these indicators have been working singularly or together, and determined the level of political awareness among the people, belong to different strata of society. All these indicators had a positive correlation to the level of political awareness and vice-versa. In addition, the socio-economic levels of state/regions also influenced on the level of awareness of the political activities, for the people who live in that region. It has been observed from different studies which indicate a sharp difference in political awareness, especially the tribal areas where the general backwardness, isolation and the local disadvantages of the regions, have given rise to low level of 'political awareness' as compare to the areas which have been enjoying good locational advantage of good educational and communicational infrastructure which indicate a higher level of political awareness of the people. As Ramchander Guha points out 60 years after Independence they (tribal) have been unable to effectively articulate their grievances through the democratic and electoral process.<sup>70</sup>

**73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment and Panchayati Raj Institutions** -After Independence the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment has brought a radical change in the politics at a gross root level. There is now active political participation has been increased by many folds of people through 'Panchayati Raj Institution.' There is considerable growth of Dalits and woman has been experienced since its implementation at gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitti and Zila Parishad levels. It is because of growing trends of awareness of political activities at grass root level. Active participation of the people at the grass root level through decentralized democracy is a true democracy. It is all due to the traits of growing political awareness among the villagers who have been influencing by the different socio-economic indicators. Thus since the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment, a change has been engineered in the democratic rules governing panchayats which now have great power and resources to design implement anti-poverty programmes.<sup>70</sup>

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*Rising Pressure Groups and Political Awareness* -Various studies carried out for political awareness for urban as well as rural society, indicate a considerable resource mobilization has been taken place through these political and pressure groups. These pressure groups have been playing a very important role for creating the political awareness in different strata of the society. These 'political groups' acts as a pressure groups for raising funds from the governments for their respective areas. And their 'collective bargaining' also proved conducive to formulate a 'social' and 'economic' policy in accordance with the demand crated by majority of the people, who live in different areas.<sup>70</sup>

Thus we observe that the political awareness has been played a 'vital' and significant role in pre-independence and post-independence period for the masses. During pre-independence period a simple political awareness among different strata of society, have been playing a significant role for getting independence, and after independence, various leaders belong to different regional parties have been proved conducive to create a high level of political awareness among the masses. As a result, it has assisted to develop more transparency in the political system. It has brought more responsiveness for the masses and ultimately become conform to democratic system for country. For creating political awareness, Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir also advocate for urgency of political awareness among the masses.<sup>70</sup> It is because of it provide a cementing force for bonding, between various regions and sections in the states.

Keeping in view some of constraints which become a 'wet blanket' for political awareness in the country should be tackled with some of remedies suggested by some of political activists. The activists, who are blessed with good grasping power for political issues and well informed

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with abundance of information wherever possible, they can make aware of the people who seek active participation in the political activities.<sup>70</sup> In addition they can get help from the experts, who can understand the language of diplomacy and can strategize with institutions and community organizations when necessary.

In order to enhance the political awareness among the people, it is imperative to understand the political behavior to identify a citizen feeling about the effects of the person's belief that political change can be effected or retarded and that his efforts, alone or in concern with others can produced desired behavior on the part of political authorities.<sup>70</sup>

Hence, it is quite obvious that behavior of the people regarding political awareness for the pre-independence period and the post-independence period indicate a considerable change with passage of time. There have been numerous of socio economic indicators, which have been determining the nature and direction of political awareness of the people belong to different contemporary societies. In the present scenario, there are some of constraints about 'political awareness' which can be tackled through some of remedies, suggested by the political experts. Only then, the people belong to different strata of society may attain full awareness on different political issue in India.

#### **4.10 Political Awareness among Dalits in India**

In order to analysis of political awareness among 'Dalit' we have to review the multi-dimensional aspect of 'Dalit' participation in different political activities in India. The Dalit have faced exploitation since ages. They have been widely discriminated and as a result are the disadvantaged group of Indian society.<sup>70</sup> As a result, they have been socially, culturally,



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economically, educationally and politically deprived. They could not grow with the rest of the society and lagged much behind it and thus could not become integral part of the society. During the Indian renaissance, several social reformers tried to ameliorate their conditions. The British government during the pre-independence era also took certain steps for this purpose.

After India gained independence, several provisions were incorporated into the constitution to ensure equality for this section of society. Besides, a number of statutory provisions have been made by the Parliament and state legislature with this end in view and the executive has also initiated some efforts. There is no denying the fact there have been some positive results of these efforts. However, still the dalits have not been provided equality with the other sections of society, particularly in rural areas; they are facing discrimination in various forms. Consequently, it is widely believed that the level of awareness and political awareness of the dalits is relatively low in comparison of non-dalit.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>70</sup> Though it is widely believed that this statement came from Andrew Jackson, who in his farewell address on March 4, 1837, said, “But you must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing. It behooves you, therefore, to be watchful in your States as well as in the Federal Government.” However, the earliest statement that reflects this sentiment is believed to have been made by John Philpot Curran in a speech upon the Right of Election in 1790 (published in a book titled “Speeches on the late very interesting State trials: in 1808). For

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details, kindly refer [http://wiki.answer.com/Q/Who\\_said\\_eternal\\_vigilance\\_is\\_the\\_price\\_of\\_freedom#ixzzlWsR0XBgx](http://wiki.answer.com/Q/Who_said_eternal_vigilance_is_the_price_of_freedom#ixzzlWsR0XBgx)

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