



The Social Impact of Political Slogans in India's General Elections (2014–2024): A Cognitive, Discursive, and Sociopolitical Analysis

Jayadratha malik

*Former Student, Department of Political Science
The University of Burdwan
West Bengal, India*

Date of Submission: 14-03-2026

Date of Acceptance: 27-03-2026

Abstract: Political slogans constitute a crucial yet understudied dimension of electoral politics, particularly in large and heterogeneous democracies such as India. This paper examines the cognitive, discursive, and social impact of political slogans used in India's general elections between 2014 and 2024. It conceptualizes slogans as condensed ideological narratives that simplify complex socio-political realities into emotionally resonant and communicatively efficient forms. While slogans contribute to electoral mobilization, the study argues that they do not independently determine electoral outcomes; rather, they operate within broader political, economic, and institutional contexts. Drawing on theories of political communication, cognitive linguistics, and discourse analysis, the paper highlights how slogans function as instruments of framing, identity construction, and voter engagement. The study further analyzes the dynamic interaction between slogans and counter-slogans, demonstrating how such discursive contestation shapes public perception while simultaneously intensifying political polarization. It introduces a conceptual distinction between state-centric slogans, which emphasize collective goals such as development and welfare, and individual-centric slogans, which foreground leadership personality and charisma. Through a qualitative analysis of major electoral campaigns, the paper identifies a shift in Indian political communication from developmental narratives (2014) to leader-centric and nationalist rhetoric (2019), and toward majoritarian assertion and discursive fragmentation (2024). The findings underscore the dual role of slogans as instruments of democratic mobilization and agents of socio-political division.

Keywords: Political slogans, electoral politics, political communication, discourse analysis, India, cognitive linguistics

I. Introduction:

Political slogans constitute a central component of political rhetoric and communication, particularly within democratic systems where the need to convey complex political ideas to diverse populations is paramount (Entman, 1993). In a socio-culturally heterogeneous country such as India, slogans function as powerful communicative tools that translate intricate policy agendas, ideological positions, and leadership appeals into concise, memorable, and emotionally resonant expressions (Lakoff, 2004). Despite their ubiquity in electoral campaigns, political slogans remain a relatively understudied dimension of political discourse, often overshadowed by broader analyses of campaign strategies, media influence, and voter behavior. This study addresses this gap by examining the role and impact of political slogans in India's general elections between 2014 and 2024. It conceptualizes slogans not merely as rhetorical devices but as multi-functional instruments operating across cognitive, discursive, and sociopolitical dimensions. From a cognitive perspective, slogans act as heuristic devices that simplify complex political information, thereby shaping voter perception and decision-making processes. From a discursive standpoint, they contribute to the construction of political meaning, identity formation, and the articulation of power relations (Fairclough, 1995). At the sociopolitical level, slogans play a significant role in mobilizing support, structuring political narratives, and influencing patterns of democratic engagement.

The period between 2014 and 2024 represents a transformative phase in Indian political communication, characterized by the growing centrality of personalized leadership, the expansion of digital media ecosystems, and intensified electoral competition. Within this evolving communicative landscape, political slogans have undergone notable shifts in form, content, and



function. This study identifies a transition from development-oriented narratives in 2014 to leader-centric and nationalist rhetoric in 2019, followed by a more fragmented and competitive discursive environment in 2024. To analytically capture these transformations, the paper introduces a conceptual distinction between state-centric slogans, which emphasize collective goals such as development, governance, and welfare, and individual-centric slogans, which foreground leadership personality, charisma, and authority. This distinction provides a useful framework for understanding the increasing personalization of political communication in contemporary India. Additionally, the study examines the interaction between slogans and counter-slogans as a site of discursive contestation, demonstrating how competing narratives shape public perception while also contributing to political polarization. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in discourse analysis of electoral slogans and their representation in media narratives. By integrating insights from political communication theory, cognitive linguistics, and discourse analysis, it develops a comprehensive framework for analyzing the communicative and societal functions of slogans. The study argues that while political slogans are highly effective tools for electoral mobilization and narrative construction, their impact is contingent upon broader political, economic, and institutional contexts. Furthermore, their dual capacity to foster collective identification while simultaneously reinforcing social divisions highlights their complex and ambivalent role within democratic processes.

IV. Literature Review:

The study of political slogans intersects multiple strands of scholarship, including framing theory, cognitive linguistics, political discourse analysis, and election communication research. Framing theory provides a lens to understand how political communication shapes public perception by highlighting certain aspects of reality while minimizing others. Scholars such as Erving Goffman conceptualize frames as cognitive structures that guide interpretation, while Robert Entman emphasizes their role in defining problems, attributing causality, and suggesting remedies (Entman, 1993). In electoral contexts, slogans act as condensed frames, simplifying complex policy issues into accessible narratives that influence voter cognition and agenda-setting. Cognitive linguistics further illuminates how language structures political thought. As George Lakoff notes, political messages activate conceptual metaphors and mental schemas,

and slogans, through brevity and repetition, serve as cognitive heuristics that reinforce specific associations and facilitate decision-making under bounded rationality (Lakoff, 2004). Emotional resonance, metaphor, and symbolic language enhance their effectiveness, enabling voters to navigate complex political environments. Political discourse studies foreground the relationship between language, power, and ideology. Drawing on Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough, discourse is understood as a mechanism through which authority is exercised and social hierarchies maintained. Political slogans function as discursive instruments that construct political realities, legitimize particular viewpoints, and marginalize alternative perspectives, shaping collective identities and framing conflicts. Research on election communication emphasizes the strategic crafting and dissemination of political messages. Scholars such as Pippa Norris highlight the increasing role of concise, memorable slogans, amplified by digital media, in capturing attention and facilitating public engagement, including through counter-slogans. Despite their ubiquity, political slogans remain relatively underexplored as a distinct analytical category, particularly in large, heterogeneous democracies such as India. This study addresses this gap by examining slogans as integrated cognitive, discursive, and sociopolitical phenomena, contributing to a nuanced understanding of their role in contemporary electoral politics.

Theoretical Framework: This study draws on insights from political communication, cognitive linguistics, and discourse theory to analyze the role of political slogans in India's electoral politics between 2014 and 2024. Political slogans are conceptualized not merely as rhetorical devices or campaign tools but as multi-dimensional instruments operating at cognitive, discursive, and rhetorical levels, shaping public perception, identity construction, and electoral behavior (Lakoff, 2004; Laclau, 2005).

1. Slogans as Cognitive Tools: From a cognitive perspective, political slogans function as heuristic devices that facilitate the efficient processing of complex political information. In a diverse democracy like India, where voters encounter vast and heterogeneous streams of political communication, slogans provide cognitive shortcuts that simplify decision-making. Drawing on George Lakoff's work in cognitive linguistics, language structures thought through mental schemas or frames, which influence how individuals interpret social and political realities (Lakoff, 2004). Slogans



selectively foreground particular aspects of political life—such as development, welfare, or anti-corruption—while obscuring others, shaping perception rather than merely reflecting reality. In contexts characterized by low-information rationality, voters often rely on heuristics rather than detailed policy analysis. Slogans reduce cognitive load, enable rapid judgments, and act as accessible reference points for political evaluation. This aligns with Herbert Simon’s concept of bounded rationality, where individuals make decisions under conditions of limited information, time, and cognitive capacity. Beyond their informational role, slogans also operate at an affective level: they are designed to evoke emotional responses such as hope, pride, fear, or moral outrage, which significantly influence political attitudes and behavior. Development-oriented slogans generate optimism and aspiration, nationalist rhetoric evokes pride or insecurity, and anti-corruption messaging can trigger anger, often preceding and sometimes overriding rational deliberation. Consequently, slogans shape the cognitive architecture through which individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with political reality, influencing both electoral preferences and patterns of participation.

2. Slogans as Discursive Instruments: Political slogans also operate as instruments of discourse, where language actively constructs social and political meaning. Rather than serving as neutral communicative devices, slogans participate in the production, circulation, and legitimation of political knowledge. Drawing on Michel Foucault, discourse is understood as a site of power that governs what can be articulated and recognized as legitimate (Foucault, 1972). Slogans define dominant narratives, legitimize specific ideological positions, and marginalize alternative viewpoints. Through repetition across media platforms, they establish the boundaries of acceptable political discourse. Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony emphasizes the role of ideology in shaping consent rather than coercion. Slogans contribute to this process by normalizing particular political ideas, such as development, nationalism, or welfare, embedding them into everyday linguistic practices, and facilitating their internalization among the electorate. They also construct collective political identities by invoking inclusive categories like “the people” while simultaneously delineating adversarial groups, often framed as elites, outsiders, or corrupt actors. Social identity theory underscores how such categorizations shape political attitudes and behavior, fostering both belonging and opposition. Slogans exist within a contested

discursive field, continuously challenged by counter-slogans, producing dynamic claim and counter-claim interactions. This discursive interplay intensifies polarization, reinforcing binary modes of thinking and structuring political debate around simplified moral oppositions.

3. Populism and Rhetoric: Political slogans are central to populist communication, which seeks to simplify complex political realities into emotionally resonant and morally polarized narratives. Drawing on Ernesto Laclau, populism operates as a discursive logic constructing “the people” through empty signifiers—flexible terms capable of encompassing diverse interpretations (Laclau, 2005). Political slogans often function as such signifiers, broad enough to appeal to heterogeneous groups while remaining ambiguous to sustain multiple readings. A key feature of populist slogans is rhetorical simplification: complex socio-economic and political issues are reduced to binary oppositions, such as “the people” versus “the elite” or “honest” versus “corrupt.” Detailed policy debates are often displaced by symbolic language emphasizing clarity, emotional resonance, and immediacy. Contemporary populist rhetoric increasingly centers on leader-personalization, presenting political leaders as embodiments of popular will. This personalization transforms politics from institutional to individual domains, reinforcing charismatic authority and positioning leaders as central agents of political change. Emotional mobilization is a hallmark of populist slogans. Messages prioritize affective appeal over rational deliberation, invoking hope, fear, pride, or anger to galvanize mass support. Metaphors (e.g., the leader as protector), hyperbole (claims of absolute transformation), and repetition enhance recall, credibility, and the perception of decisiveness. While such strategies foster political participation, they may also undermine deliberative norms by constraining critical engagement and privileging symbolic identification over policy analysis.

The cognitive, discursive, and populist-rhetorical dimensions of political slogans are analytically distinct but deeply interconnected. Cognitively, slogans guide perception and simplify political information; discursively, they structure narratives, construct identities, and reproduce power; rhetorically, they mobilize emotions and foster affective identification. Together, these dimensions illuminate the dual-edged nature of slogans: they enable democratic engagement by simplifying complex messages and mobilizing mass participation while simultaneously contributing to



political polarization, oversimplification, and the personalization of authority. Consequently, political slogans are not merely communicative tools but multi-functional instruments of power, shaping both the terms of public discourse and the cognitive and emotional frameworks through which citizens engage with electoral politics. In India's recent electoral context (2014–2024), they illustrate how political communication can simultaneously foster collective identification and exacerbate social and political divisions, reflecting the ambivalent and transformative role of slogans in contemporary democracy.

V. Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the cognitive, discursive, and sociopolitical impact of political slogans in India's general elections from 2014 to 2024. Given the symbolic and context-dependent nature of slogans, an interpretive research paradigm is employed to analyze how language constructs meaning within political communication. Rather than focusing on quantitative measures, the study prioritizes meaning-making processes, exploring how slogans shape public perception, construct political identities, and influence electoral narratives in a complex democratic context. The research utilizes qualitative discourse analysis, informed by elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as its primary methodological framework. This approach enables a systematic examination of how slogans function within a broader discursive field, where political actors deploy language to articulate ideologies, negotiate power relations, and mobilize public support. The analysis focuses on key dimensions, including linguistic structure, rhetorical strategies, issue framing, identity construction, and the symbolic and emotional appeals embedded in slogans (Fairclough, 1995). Additionally, the study investigates the interaction between slogans and counter-slogans, highlighting the dynamic and contested nature of electoral discourse. The study is based on secondary qualitative data, ensuring analytical depth through triangulation of multiple sources. The primary dataset consists of a curated corpus of prominent political slogans from the 2014, 2019, and 2024 general elections, collected from official campaign materials, speeches, advertisements, and party documents. Selection is guided by prominence and discursive visibility. To contextualize these slogans, the study incorporates media reports from print, television, and digital platforms. These sources provide insights into the dissemination, interpretation, and contestation of

slogans, enabling a comprehensive understanding of their role in shaping electoral communication and public discourse.

Analytical Framework for Understanding Political Slogans in India (2014–2024):

This study adopts an interdisciplinary analytical framework that integrates insights from political communication theory, cognitive linguistics, and discourse theory to examine political slogans as complex communicative phenomena. From the perspective of political communication, the concepts of framing and agenda-setting are employed to analyze how slogans selectively foreground particular issues while marginalizing others, thereby shaping public perception and influencing the salience of political narratives (Entman, 1993). Drawing on cognitive linguistics, slogans are conceptualized as heuristic devices that condense complex political realities into cognitively accessible and emotionally resonant forms. Through mechanisms such as metaphor, repetition, and linguistic compression, slogans facilitate rapid information processing and reinforce pre-existing belief systems among voters (Lakoff, 2004). For instance, the slogan “Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain” (2014) encapsulated a broad promise of socio-economic transformation within a simple and memorable phrase, enabling widespread cognitive uptake. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, slogans are treated as discursive practices that contribute to the construction of political identities, the articulation of power relations, and the production of dominant ideological narratives (Fairclough, 1995). They not only reflect prevailing socio-political conditions but also actively shape them by legitimizing particular forms of authority and governance. A key analytical contribution of this study is the classification of political slogans into two categories: state-centric and individual-centric. State-centric slogans emphasize collective goals such as development, governance, and welfare—for example, “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” (2014)—projecting an inclusive and policy-oriented vision. In contrast, individual-centric slogans foreground leadership personality and authority, as seen in “Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai” (2019), reflecting the increasing personalization of political communication. This distinction provides a useful lens for tracing shifts in electoral discourse across the general elections of 2014, 2019, and 2024. While the qualitative approach enables a nuanced and context-sensitive analysis, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study does not establish direct causal relationships between political slogans and electoral outcomes; rather, it offers an



interpretive account of how slogans function within broader political, economic, and institutional contexts. Additionally, the focus on prominent national-level slogans—such as “Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar” (2019) and “Abki Baar 400 Paar” (2024)—may not fully capture regional variations and localized political dynamics. Despite these constraints, the study provides meaningful insights into the evolving role of slogans in shaping electoral discourse in India. The analysis identifies a significant transformation in the thematic orientation and communicative function of political slogans between 2014 and 2024. In 2014, slogans were predominantly development-oriented, emphasizing governance reform, economic growth, and aspirational change. Phrases such as “Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain” and “Minimum Government, Maximum Governance” functioned as cognitive frames of optimism, projecting a future-oriented vision centered on efficiency and progress. These slogans simplified complex socio-economic challenges into accessible narratives, resonating with a broad electorate and contributing to a relatively unified national discourse. By 2019, electoral communication shifted toward nationalism and leader-centric messaging. Slogans such as “Main Bhi Chowkidar” and “Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai” foregrounded themes of national security, integrity, and strong leadership. This transition marked a movement from policy-based appeals to identity-driven narratives. At the cognitive level, these slogans activated emotions such as pride and collective belonging, while discursively reinforcing the personalization of politics. The emergence of counter-slogans, including “Chowkidar Chor Hai,” intensified discursive contestation and contributed to ideological polarization. The 2024 general election reflects a further transformation characterized by assertions of political dominance and increased discursive fragmentation. Slogans such as “Abki Baar 400 Paar” employ declarative and quantitative language to project inevitability and electoral strength. Simultaneously, opposition narratives like “Judega Bharat, Jeetega INDIA” attempt to construct alternative coalitional identities. Unlike earlier electoral cycles marked by relatively coherent narrative frames, the 2024 landscape is defined by multiple, competing slogan regimes targeting diverse constituencies. This fragmentation is amplified by digital media platforms, which facilitate rapid dissemination, reinterpretation, and contestation of political messages. Consequently, slogans function not only as tools of mass mobilization but also as markers of ideological

division within an increasingly polarized democratic public sphere.

Counter-Slogans and Political Contestation in General Elections (2014–2024): Political slogans do not operate in isolation; rather, they function within a dynamic field of discursive contestation in which competing political actors generate counter-slogans to challenge, reinterpret, or delegitimize dominant narratives (Chilton, 2004). In the context of India’s general elections between 2014 and 2024, this interaction has emerged as a critical dimension of electoral communication, shaping both political discourse and public perception. Slogans such as “Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain” (2014) and “Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai” (2019) did not remain uncontested; instead, they provoked counter-slogans that sought to question their credibility and reframe their underlying claims. Counter-slogans play a central role in the articulation of opposition narratives. They function as strategic communicative tools through which political opponents critique ruling party rhetoric and expose perceived discrepancies between promises and outcomes. For instance, the slogan “Main Bhi Chowkidar” (2019), which aimed to construct a collective identity around vigilance and integrity, was directly countered by “Chowkidar Chor Hai,” a phrase that inverted the original message by alleging corruption and duplicity. Such counter-slogans often replicate the linguistic structure, rhythm, or key lexical elements of dominant slogans, thereby ensuring recognizability while simultaneously subverting intended meanings (Norris, 2000). This mirroring technique allows opposition actors to occupy the same communicative space and compete effectively for public attention within a crowded electoral landscape. The interaction between slogans and counter-slogans generates a form of discursive conflict characterized by ongoing processes of claim and counter-claim, affirmation and negation. In this context, political communication becomes a contested arena in which meaning is continuously negotiated rather than fixed. For example, the aspirational framing of “Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain” was met with critical reinterpretations questioning whether such promises had materialized, thereby shifting the discourse from hope to accountability. This dynamic contributes to the polarization of political narratives, as competing actors deploy simplified and often antagonistic messages to consolidate support. The repetitive circulation of slogans and their counter-forms reinforces binary oppositions, structuring political debate in terms of mutually exclusive ideological



positions. The proliferation of counter-slogans also carries significant social implications. On the one hand, it enhances democratic engagement by fostering debate, encouraging political participation, and enabling diverse voices to challenge dominant narratives. On the other hand, it risks intensifying political polarization by reinforcing group identities and deepening ideological divides. The rise of digital media platforms has further amplified this phenomenon, enabling rapid dissemination and reinterpretation of slogans across vast and segmented audiences. As a result, political discourse becomes increasingly fragmented, often confined within echo chambers that limit exposure to alternative perspectives. Overall, the interplay between slogans and counter-slogans underscores the inherently interactive and contested nature of political communication. Slogans function not merely as instruments of message transmission but as sites of struggle over meaning, legitimacy, and public perception. This dual role highlights their significance as both facilitators of democratic contestation and potential drivers of socio-political division in contemporary electoral politics.

Conceptual Framework: State-Centric vs. Individual-Centric Slogans: This study introduces a conceptual distinction between state-centric and individual-centric political slogans to examine the evolving nature of electoral communication in India. This framework provides an analytical lens to explore how political messaging oscillates between institutional, policy-oriented narratives and personalized, leader-driven appeals, reflecting broader transformations in democratic discourse.

1. State-Centric Slogans: State-centric slogans foreground the role of the state, public policy, and collective goals, emphasizing development, governance, welfare, and national progress. These slogans position the state as the primary agent of socio-political transformation rather than individual leaders. Linguistically, state-centric slogans are typically impersonal, focusing on institutional action and programmatic outcomes. Their appeal lies in rationality and aspirational visions, projecting inclusive development and national progress that resonate across diverse social groups (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). Examples include slogans emphasizing economic growth, poverty alleviation, and institutional performance, such as “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” (2014), which underscores collective progress and governance effectiveness. Such formulations contribute to the construction of a unified national narrative, transcending particularistic divisions and fostering a sense of

shared responsibility. State-centric slogans also encourage voters to evaluate political actors on programmatic criteria, reinforcing democratic accountability and legitimacy. However, their abstract and impersonal nature may limit affective engagement. Unlike personalized appeals, state-centric slogans often struggle to evoke strong emotional responses, which can affect their capacity to mobilize immediate political support. Nonetheless, they play a vital role in articulating policy visions and fostering collective political imagination, particularly in large and heterogeneous democracies such as India (Norris, 2000).

2. Individual-Centric Slogans: Individual-centric slogans foreground political leaders as the principal agents of change, emphasizing charisma, personality, and decisiveness. These slogans attribute policy achievements, promises, and political outcomes to a specific leader, thereby personalizing governance and transforming complex institutional processes into narratives of individual agency (Laclau, 2005). Linguistically and rhetorically, they rely on emotional resonance, symbolism, and identity construction, fostering a direct connection between leaders and voters. Illustrative examples include “Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai” (2019) and “Main Bhi Chowkidar” (2019), which construct the leader as both the embodiment of national aspirations and the central source of political legitimacy. Individual-centric slogans facilitate mass mobilization and strengthen perceptions of decisive leadership. They are particularly effective in media-saturated environments, where visual representation, personal branding, and narrative immediacy amplify their reach. Despite their mobilizational advantages, individual-centric slogans raise normative concerns. By privileging leadership over institutions, they may weaken accountability mechanisms, diminish substantive policy debate, and contribute to personality-driven political cultures. Such slogans often align with populist communication strategies, emphasizing direct, affective relationships between the leader and the electorate while bypassing institutional intermediaries (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

3. Analytical Significance of the Distinction: The distinction between state-centric and individual-centric slogans offers a critical lens to analyze structural shifts in political communication. First, it highlights a transition from institutional to personalized politics. While state-centric slogans reinforce governance structures and collective responsibility, individual-centric slogans reorient legitimacy around charismatic leadership, reflecting



the personalization of democratic authority (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). Second, the distinction illuminates a shift from policy-oriented discourse to symbolic and affective communication. State-centric slogans encourage deliberation over governance and welfare, whereas individual-centric slogans prioritize emotional resonance, identity affirmation, and symbolic identification, often simplifying complex policy debates. This shift has implications for democratic deliberation, potentially amplifying affective polarization while reducing substantive engagement. Third, individual-centric slogans reveal an increasing alignment with populist rhetorical strategies, which emphasize direct leader–citizen connections and simplify institutional complexity (Laclau, 2005). By collapsing distinctions between representation, governance, and authority, such slogans heighten communicative efficiency but risk undermining institutional accountability. Importantly, these categories are not mutually exclusive. Political campaigns frequently employ hybrid strategies, blending state-centric development narratives with individual-centric leader appeals. The relative dominance of one form over the other signals shifting political strategies and contextual priorities—for instance, periods of economic uncertainty may privilege state-centric messaging, whereas competitive electoral contexts may favor leader-focused narratives. Finally, the framework highlights normative implications for democratic engagement. State-centric slogans promote collective political imagination and programmatic evaluation, whereas individual-centric slogans foster emotional identification and mass mobilization but may exacerbate polarization and erode institutional trust. Examining the interplay between these two forms offers a nuanced understanding of how political narratives are constructed, contested, and transformed within changing electoral and media environments in contemporary India.

Social Impact of Political Slogans: Political slogans exert significant social influence by shaping voter perception, political participation, and broader public discourse. Their impact can be understood along both positive and negative dimensions.

Positive Impacts:

1. Political Mobilization: Political slogans serve as powerful tools for mass mobilization, facilitating collective action and participation. By condensing complex political messages into memorable, emotionally resonant phrases, slogans create a sense of urgency and engagement among voters (Lakoff, 2004; Norris, 2000). For instance, slogans such as “Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain” (2014) or “Main Bhi

Chowkidar” (2019) encapsulate aspirational and participatory narratives, fostering identification with broader political projects. State-centric slogans, in particular, can enhance civic awareness by foregrounding governance and policy issues, encouraging voters to engage with programmatic agendas rather than merely personalities.

2. Awareness and Political Education: Slogans also contribute to the dissemination of political information across socio-culturally diverse populations. In a vast and heterogeneous democracy like India, where literacy levels and access to detailed policy analysis vary widely, slogans function as heuristic devices, simplifying key messages and enabling citizens to grasp ideological positions, party priorities, and socio-economic promises (Entman, 1993). Through repeated exposure across media platforms—print, broadcast, and digital—slogans cultivate a shared linguistic repertoire, enhancing public familiarity with political issues and fostering a participatory culture.

Negative Impacts:

1. Polarization: While slogans can mobilize and inform, they also have the potential to intensify political polarization. Their rhetorical simplicity and emotional appeal often reinforce binary oppositions, delineating “in-groups” versus “out-groups,” and framing political debates in morally charged terms (Laclau, 2005). The interaction of slogans and counter-slogans, such as “Main Bhi Chowkidar” versus “Chowkidar Chor Hai”, exemplifies how discursive contestation can consolidate ideological divides and contribute to affective polarization within the electorate. Digital media amplification further accelerates this effect, segmenting audiences into echo chambers that limit exposure to alternative perspectives (Norris, 2000).

2. Oversimplification of Complex Issues: The cognitive efficiency of slogans while enabling accessibility—can also lead to oversimplification of intricate socio-political and economic realities. Individual-centric slogans that foreground charismatic leadership risk displacing nuanced policy discussions with symbolic and affective appeals, potentially undermining deliberative engagement and critical scrutiny of governance (Fairclough, 1995). Consequently, while emotionally resonant messages facilitate mobilization, they may simultaneously diminish the depth and quality of democratic discourse.

Balancing Mobilization and Deliberation: The social impact of political slogans is therefore inherently ambivalent. State-centric slogans tend to foster collective awareness, rational evaluation, and programmatic engagement, contributing to



democratic deliberation. Individual-centric slogans, in contrast, excel at emotional mobilization and identity formation but may exacerbate polarization and reduce institutional accountability. Understanding the interplay of these dimensions is essential for assessing the broader societal consequences of political messaging in contemporary India.

Conclusion:

Political slogans constitute a central and multifaceted instrument within India's electoral landscape, operating at the intersections of cognition, discourse, and populist rhetoric. This study demonstrates that slogans are far more than superficial campaign tools; they function as cognitive heuristics, discursive instruments, and affective mobilizers, simultaneously shaping voter perception, structuring political narratives, and influencing democratic engagement (Entman, 1993; Lakoff, 2004; Laclau, 2005). By condensing complex socio-political realities into concise, emotionally resonant, and easily memorizable phrases, slogans enable citizens to navigate the complexities of a heterogeneous polity. They provide interpretive shortcuts that reduce cognitive load, activate pre-existing conceptual frames, and guide electoral decision-making in contexts characterized by low-information rationality. Development-oriented slogans, for example, foregrounded narratives of economic growth, governance reform, and social welfare, enabling voters to evaluate political performance on programmatic grounds. Leader-centric and affective slogans, by contrast, foreground charisma, authority, and symbolic representation, evoking emotions such as hope, pride, or vigilance while personalizing political accountability. The analysis of Indian electoral campaigns between 2014 and 2024 highlights both the functional versatility and the ambivalent social consequences of slogans. In the 2014 general election, development-focused narratives such as "Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain" and "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" emphasized programmatic governance and collective aspirations, cultivating civic awareness and promoting engagement grounded in policy deliberation. These state-centric slogans served as instruments of rational mobilization, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and reinforcing institutional legitimacy (Norris, 2000). By 2019, however, political communication shifted decisively toward leader-centric and nationalist rhetoric. Slogans such as "Main Bhi Chowkidar" and "Modi Hai Toh

Mumkin Hai" exemplify this transition, emphasizing leadership charisma, moral authority, and identity-based appeals over programmatic policy discussion. This evolution illustrates a broader trend toward affective mobilization, in which emotional resonance and symbolic identification increasingly mediate political participation. The subsequent 2024 electoral cycle reflected further intensification and fragmentation of these communicative strategies. Slogans such as "Abki Baar 400 Paar" employed assertive, quantitative messaging to project electoral dominance, while opposition narratives like "Judega Bharat, Jeetega INDIA" sought to contest and reconstruct collective identities. This landscape underscores the interplay of competing slogans and counter-slogans as a central feature of contemporary Indian politics, wherein discursive contestation both stimulates civic engagement and amplifies polarization. The distinction between state-centric and individual-centric slogans provides a critical framework for understanding the societal impact of political messaging. State-centric slogans foreground institutional action, collective goals, and inclusive development, promoting deliberative engagement and programmatic evaluation. In contrast, individual-centric slogans foreground leadership personality, charisma, and direct emotional appeal, facilitating mass mobilization and identity formation while often eclipsing institutional accountability and nuanced policy discussion (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). While both forms enhance electoral participation, they operate through distinct mechanisms and produce divergent social effects. State-centric slogans contribute to rational civic discourse and programmatic evaluation, whereas individual-centric slogans prioritize symbolic representation, emotional resonance, and leader-focused narratives, often heightening affective polarization (Fairclough, 1995; Laclau, 2005). The interaction between slogans and counter-slogans further highlights the contested and dynamic nature of political communication. Counter-slogans operate as strategic tools of opposition, challenging dominant narratives, reframing ideological claims, and producing ongoing discursive negotiation. While this contestation can enhance democratic deliberation by fostering debate, exposing discrepancies, and encouraging critical engagement, it simultaneously risks reinforcing binary oppositions and deepening societal polarization. Digital media amplification magnifies these effects, creating segmented public spheres or echo chambers where exposure to alternative perspectives is limited. Consequently, the proliferation of slogans



and counter-slogans exemplifies the dual-edged nature of contemporary electoral rhetoric: simultaneously a facilitator of democratic participation and a potential driver of ideological and social division. This study also underscores the significance of broader political, economic, and institutional contexts in mediating the effects of slogans. Slogans alone do not determine electoral outcomes; rather, they operate within a complex ecosystem that includes party strategy, media environments, institutional performance, and socio-economic conditions. Their influence is therefore contingent, shaping public perception and engagement while interacting with structural and contextual factors to affect political behavior. In sum, political slogans in India between 2014 and 2024 have evolved from development-oriented, programmatic appeals toward personalized, leader-centric, and affectively charged communication, reflecting broader shifts in electoral politics and media ecosystems. They exemplify the dual potential of political messaging: as instruments of civic mobilization, political education, and collective identity formation, and simultaneously as catalysts of oversimplification, polarization, and personality-driven political culture. Recognizing the cognitive, discursive, and populist-rhetorical dimensions of slogans is essential for a nuanced understanding of their societal impact. The state-centric versus individual-centric framework provides a critical analytical lens for assessing how electoral communication structures democratic engagement, ideological contestation, and socio-political division. Ultimately, political slogans are both mirrors and constructors of the contemporary Indian electorate tools that shape participation, perception, and polarization in ways that are emblematic of the evolving dynamics of democracy in the twenty-first century.

References:

- [1]. Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge.
- [2]. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- [3]. Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- [4]. Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [5]. Laclau, E. (2005). *La raison populiste [The logic of populism]*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- [6]. Lakoff, G. (2004). *Don't think of an elephant! Know your values and frame the debate*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- [7]. Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W. (1999). "Mediatization" of politics: A challenge for democracy? *Political Communication*, 16(3), 247–261.
- [8]. Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [9]. Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in postindustrial societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.