



Role of youth in Indian politics

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Abstract

The country desperately needs some young leaders who personify energy, enthusiasm, morality, and diligence. No doubt we have progressed a lot in the last 62 years but the development pace would have been completely different had some young torchbearers led this process of development. At the time of independence, Gandhi called upon the youth to participate actively in the freedom movement. Young leaders like Nehru came to his reckoning and led the movement. But this is not the case now. Nowadays we have only a handful of young leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Sachin Pilot, Varun Gandhi etc, but they are in the political scenario because they belong to influential political families. It is next to impossible to find a young leader with no political family background in the politics. A campaign by Young India Foundation has been raising awareness on the importance of youth rights and the essential representation they need in a country with over 670 million people below the age of 25. YIF is also leading in the Age of Candidacy campaign which is working on decreasing the age of candidacy in India from 25 to something lower.

Keywords: youth, Indian politics, freedom movement, leaders, YIF, development

Introduction

The percentage of youth (the 18-24 age group) 'very' or 'rather' interested in politics in India rose from around 35 per cent in 1990 to around 50 per cent in 2000, the study notes, after analysing data from a World Values Survey. There can be two reasons for this deplorable state of Indian politics. One may be that the youth today are not interested in actively participating in the political field. They are content with what they are doing and how the country is being governed. But this reason seems to hold no ground in view of the discontent shown by the country's youngsters towards the establishment during the protests against reservation and the Jessica Lal murder. The youth of modern India are aware of the problems facing our country and the world at large. Given a chance they would be willing to change the political condition of the country for the better.

The second reason may be that young people are not given opportunities to prove themselves with the excuse that they are not sufficiently experienced to participate actively in the governance of the country. Almost all the major political parties seem to be functioning under the monopoly of old leaders. Old people should realize that they must make way for younger people to take control of the activities.

Power of youth

The Government of India is conscious of the need to tap youth power. With lowering of the voting age to 18 years, India's youth have become politically important because they can determinedly slope the political scales in an election. This realization has encouraged all political parties to attract the youth by including related issues in their political agenda. However, it is important that youth exercise their political

choices judiciously as they are likely to play a decisive role in choosing their leaders.

Youth is also the spring of Life. It is the age of discovery and dreams. India has one of the largest youth population in the world today. The whole world is eyeing India as a source of skilled low cost technical manpower. Indian youth has the capacity to become a forceful political power if it works in close unity with the working class. They have the potential to make India a developed nation. Indian youth has the power to make our country from developing nation to a developed nation. This possibility is not in the realm of dreams.

Youth Development index

The Youth development Index was developed by RGNIYD, The YDI study also acknowledges that youth are now a population group which is particularly vulnerable to social and economic issues of the country. This study not only throws light on the situation of India's youth and their needs; it will also help to recognize that they need special consideration.

National Youth Policy

Considering the energy and human resource potential of youth, the United Nations Organisation passed a resolution in 1980 designating the year 1985 as the International Year of the Youth. The United Nations Organisation directed its member countries that IYY programme should begin in 1980 itself and that the year 1985 should see the culmination of the programmes. The UNO also requested member countries to work out the programme details themselves. The UNO also provided meaningful themes for the IYY programmes Peace, Participation and Development (Rao, International Year of the Youth, 1984). In line with the UNO's principles and directives

on the implementation of IYY programmes and with objective of fulfilling the aspirations of youth and empowering them as the active and constructive agents of positive change, a separate Department of Youth Affairs & Sports was established under the ministry of Human Resources Development in 1985. This department is responsible for implementing several programmes for Youth.

Role of Youth in Nation Building

Indian youth played an inspiring role in the freedom movement. Post independence, youth power changed the fate of several state governments. The Gujarat and Bihar agitations are notable examples. More recently, Anna Hazare's movement against Corruption could not have gained momentum without support from Youth, which led to quick government action on the Ant corruption Bill. Nation building is an enormous task and, to achieve the desired results, must be done in stages. There will be some work for everyone. All the young people can be involved in a manner that will suit their capacity and capability. They should be made to understand the given project and its importance to society; and the part they are expected to play. With enthusiasm and commitment, they are sure to work hard for its fulfilment. Success results in a sense of fulfilment with the realisation that they have played an important role. This will motivate them further. This is not a difficult task.

Role of Youth for Better India

Here comes the responsibility of the future of the nation. There is a large population of youth in India. More than 50 percentage of Indian people belong to the age below 35 years. This is a great hope for the nation. They are looking for a better India, and a new world order. Significant social changes can come through them. They are for socio-economic development. India is a very large country full of diversities – linguistically, culturally, and religiously. The level of education of youth is a key to both the successful functioning of democracy and socio-economic development of the country. And perhaps, more importantly, it is an essential condition for human dignity. But the state of formal literacy was almost dismal when India achieved independence. The literacy rate in 1951 was mere 18.33 per cent and female literacy was negligible with 8.9 percent. Today it is better and is on the rise. Universal literacy, according to 2011 Census, is raised to 74.04 percent, the female literacy rate is still lagging at 65.46 per cent. Only right education makes them conscious of the principles of liberty, equality, secular and democratic. Recently, the Right to Education is provided as a fundamental right. We hope that this will help the cause of educating the children universally. Lack of education is the root cause of all kinds of deprivations and inequalities.

Youth and Participation

Young people have shown they are capable of cooperative activity and helping others. A nationwide poll in England in 1984 showed that 78 percent of the youth favoured a voluntary scheme for community service. WHO's rehabilitation unit has pioneered a service in some 25 countries where young people act as local supervisors and motivate, instruct and guide the young disabled and their

families. With training, the young can take part in screening people for health programmes and also can provide paramedical help. Indian youth have an amazing capacity for understanding issues and often take principled positions. Today's youth want to participate in health and development programme as active participants rather than remain passive recipients (Nair, Vemuri, & Ram, 1989, p. 263)

Youth can be an Antidote to Bad Governance and Corruption

They have power to change. Education programs should aim to teach and young minds right from the school level the importance of choosing right people who would take charge of governance. Conventionally, youth have been asked to keep away from politics. Youth should be motivated to consider politics as a means to serve the nation. They should be oriented on anti-corruption drives with focus on prevention, education, and strategies for fighting corruption. Good governance is realistic with youth empowerment.

The pivotal role of youth who are afresh with ideas and not ideals, will help in this movement towards a transparent civil society structure which can influence the political administration for the benefit of the society. For Eg: Youth Arts and Sports Club once a prominent site in Kerala's villages had a dual role to encourage youths participation in social and political activities through awareness and also empowering the people for rights and assisting them at various levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of the youth in the nation building is crucial. They are problem solvers, have a positive influence on other young people and the nation, and are extremely ambitious. They have the ability to create an identity for themselves and move the nation forward. However, they will not be able to do this without the support of their Government and fellow youths. So the youths can make their beautiful land flourish and shine in success.

There are a few things which I would like to suggest. There should be a retirement age for politicians as well which may be around 65 years. There should also be some educational qualification for politicians. How can we give those illiterates the key to our country whom we cannot give the key to our house? People with serious criminal background should not be allowed to contest elections. As for the youth of our country, they can contribute in more ways than just contesting elections. Much can be done in areas like educating people, raising awareness about various social ills, and many other areas. The Election Commission is sincerely trying to get more citizens to participate in the democratic process. Educational institutions, NGOs and the corporate sector have also pitched in to encourage our young citizens to vote. Political leaders of all hues should play an active role in inspiring young minds to vote. But, at the present moment, their deeds do not inspire our youth.

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