

An analytical study of youth politics in India

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ABSTRACT

Indian freedom was obtained by, amongst others, a large cohort of young people. Thousands took on leadership roles based on the principles of patriotism and sacrificed their careers and lives for the common good. Of course they rode on the guidance of adults in their own generation and the groundswell created by actions of youth in preceding ones. Swami Vivekananda, on the role of youth says, 'Supreme value of youth period is incalculable. Youth life is the most precious life. Youth is the best time. The way in which you utilize this period will decide the nature of coming years that lie ahead of you. Your happiness, your success, your honor and your good name, all depend upon the way in which you live now, in this present period.

The major problem of Indian democracy is to widen its scope by increasing the involvement of youth in the democratic process. It will result into rationalization and legitimization of political outcomes. This means, broadening of opportunities for political participation beyond the traditional sphere of electoral politics.

1. Introduction

The importance of youth in a country is quite obvious. More young people are an advantage for a country. India is one of the countries of the world which is having a large population of youth. Until 2040 India will remain one of the youngest countries in the world. By 2020, nearly half of the voting population will be under 25 years of age. A demographic change of this magnitude and nature is not only significant but will have ramifications for the democracy. More young voters will lead to younger leadership as well as fresh perspective on policies to be pursued by the country.

India accounted for substantial share of world population. By 2010, India accounted for 17.8% of the world population, recording an increase of 2.7% in its share since 1970. This growth is projected to continue and by 2030, Indians would account for 17.97% of global population. India's share in the decennial addition to global population increased from 18.13 during 1970-1980 to 22.87 during 1990-2000 and is projected to decline to 18.69 by 2020-2030.

2. Participation of youth in Political System

India is the youngest nation in the world. Almost all political parties are trying to bring the youth of the country into their fold. Young Indians are concerned about their future and the future of this country. Adults aged 18 to 30 comprise eligible young voter pool of the country. Young people offer a significant source of vitality and grass-root organizing ability, as well as tangible votes. The youth not only show a high level of interest in politics there is no decline in this interest across generations. There is a reasonably high level of interest and participation in all forms of politics- direct, indirect, formal or non-formal- as well among the youth. Their trust in democracy is also significantly high. Educational level and media exposure appear to clearly influence their reflections on democracy and politics. Youth violence is a serious problem that can have lasting harmful effect on victims and their family, friends, and

communities. The goal should be for youth violence to stop from happening in the first place

The emergence of youth as a new political class has flowed in part from the creation and prolongation of youth as a distinctive life-stage with its attendant cultures and social arrangements, and in part from the relatively rapid build-up of the educational system. In India, student politics tend towards congruence with national politics. Unlike industrial workers, peasants, or capitalists, students have not aspired to be a ruling class; they lack the ideological identity and mission in the political system. Student politics in India has an issue as well as an interest orientation. The relevant political arenas for issue politics are the State and the nation, not the educational institution. And the issue themselves - unseating the Nambudiripad government in Kerala, opposing Bengali in Assam, agitation against the Patnaik government in Orissa, opposing Hindi (or Tamil) in Madras, demanding a steel plant for Andhra - are usually State or national in origin and implication.

3. Political engagement of student

Student politics has a programmatic dimension through its connections with political parties. The major ones, particularly the SSP, Jan Sangh, Congress, and CPI-M and CPI, attempt to penetrate, organise, mobilise, and recruit students as a social category and a political class by taking an interest in student demands and grievances and by establishing or patronising student or youth organisations and leaders. After the 1967 general election, which marked the temporary end of the Congress dominance and ushered in a period characterised by the politics of coalition and defection at the State level and, in time, by minority government at the Centre, the frequency of disturbances and the level of violence (outside Bengal) in national and student politics appear to have declined despite an increase in industrial and civil service strikes and the party-led "land grab" movement of 1970.

4. Youth politics and Mobilisation

What implications then does the lack of stable, secure employment have for youth politics and mobilisation? The work of Jeffrey (2010) is insightful in this context. It shows that despite parental strategies and investment on education of the youth, there emerged an entire generation of unemployed youth, "who had spent long periods in formal education but who failed to acquire secure salaried work" Jeffrey understands this as a form of 'waiting', during which unemployed young men hang out in spaces like tea stalls, street corners and intersections etc. in a wait for secure employment ('timepass'). Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age- group. "Youth is often indicated as a person between the age where he/ she leaves compulsory education, and the age at which he/ she finds his/ her first employment by different countries/ agencies and by some agency indifferent contexts. Young and educated people form the backbone of a growing nation. Since they are young, their minds are fresh and innovative. They are more prone to take risk and accept challenges. They are less vulnerable to corruption. Therefore their work is inevitable for the growth of a nation. Their courage can contribute to the development of the society.

5. Gandhi Views on Youth in India

Mahatma Gandhi began his working life in India as an obscure and unsuccessful small town lawyer, and went on to become the self-appointed champion of Indians in South Africa, turning law-breaking and jail going into a political strategy and religious act. On his return to India he became both a Nationalist leader who attempted to refashion a whole society and polity in opposition to British imperialism, and a religious visionary widely known as Mahatma, 'Great Soul'. Finally by his death as an assassin's victim, he became both a myth and inspiration to his countrymen and to the widely differing individuals and groups round the world who came to see in his beliefs and actions a remedy for hopelessness in their own situations.

6. Political Culture and Democracy

The relationship between political culture and democracy is very old. Classical Greek political thinkers talked about it. Aristotle pointed out the importance of moderation and tolerance and also warned about the dangers of political extremism and unfettered populism. These elements of political culture were necessary conditions to copy with one of the central dilemmas of democracy, namely, to balance division and conflict with the need for consensus (see Lipset 1981, Almond/Verba 1963, Diamond 1990). These elements can be induced by structural and institutional incentives and disincentives. However, these orientations cannot survive unless they are deeply embedded in the system of beliefs and values not only of elites but also of the masses (see Lipset 1990, Inkeles 1961, Almond/Verba 1963 and Dahl 1971). Youth have lost confidence in the political system especially in political elites and political parties. A tendency to use violent methods to influence the political system cannot be ruled out. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life; dream of it; think of it; live on that idea. Let the brain, the body, muscles, nerves, every part of your body

be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced."

7. Youth and the National Movement in India

The youth in a way were the first to be sensitized and respond to the colonial exploitation in India and bestir national awakening. Benedict Anderson has demonstrated how this process was at work in Africa and Asia. One can say that a similar process was at work in India as well. National awakening began to simmer around educational institutions that came to be established in the 19th century. And the educated youth were its immediate bearers. A view of this can be seen in the work and inspiration offered by Henry Derozio.

8. Youth for Democracy and Justice

The movement for the expansion of democracy in the latter part of the 19th century in Britain leading to the Pitts Reforms was led by the young workers. A socialist movement everywhere saw them in large numbers drawn from such diverse constituencies as workers, peasants, writers and teachers. The role of youth however in the recent expansion of democracy after the late 1980's has been very significant. The Democratic Movement in Eastern Europe had its main contingent from among the youth. In fact it has been argued that the withdrawal of the youth from those systems went a long way in de-legitimising them. If you look at Asia itself the events of the last one decade in large parts of Asia were shaped by the youth. In South Korea and Thailand the youth were successful in bringing down Quasi- Military regimes and introducing Multi-Party Systems. Their battle against corruption attempted to translate transparency in government into a workable proportion.

9. Conclusion

The youth of our country has always been told by the elder politicians to 'give something back to society', to 'contribute to the development of the country'. It is a well-meaning inspiration that has always been our politicians discourse with the youth for decades. And the youth, right from the freedom struggle to the latest anti-corruption movement of Anna Hazare, has always followed their advice. In order to engage a large number of mainstream youth to work for common social and political spaces, we need to help them understand how to connect their own self with the society. In this way, they can make their contribution to the society and politics. During the course of study we have come to the conclusion that the perception of the elders towards the role of youth in political participation changed after the independence. The point to be noted here is that a nation is made up of its people (youth in case of India). If there is development of its people is taking place, only then a nation can walk on the path of progress. Almost all the schemes launched by the government focuses on what the country wants from them, for community service etc. It therefore requires an investment in the development of the youth to ensure their preparation for the roles of society that can continue their engagement with the organization or the movement for a longer duration. Generally, youth centric approach is a journey from 'me' to 'we' through a process of self-awareness and engagement with society

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