



INDIAN YOUTH AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Dr. Shivali Agarwal

Asso. Prof., Department of Political Science, Ismail National Mahila PG College, Meerut

ABSTRACT

There was a time when politics was associated with only the middle-aged and senior citizens. It is the real truth that the presence of youth in politics was not welcomed with the exception of a few. In the past few years, there has been a huge rise in the involvement of students in politics, as we have the largest youth population in the world. Youth are coming ahead to raise their voices against the social injustice, women atrocities, reservations, freedom of speech and are giving new definition of patriotism. On the other hand, we have also witnessed incidents of rioting where students take the law into their own hands and disrupt daily affairs over a clash of political ideologies. In India, it appears that youth is by and large misdirected, short-sighted and immediate goal oriented. He has regional and parochial outlook. Caste, religion and other sub-cultural considerations have negative connotation on youth politics in the campuses.

KEYWORDS : 1. Indian youth 2. Politics 3. Political Participation 4. Political Consciousness

There was a time when politics was associated with only the middle-aged and senior citizens. It is the real truth that the presence of youth in politics was not welcomed with the exception of a few. In the past few years, there has been a huge rise in the involvement of students in politics, as we have the largest youth population in the world. Youth are coming ahead to raise their voices against the social injustice, women atrocities, reservations, freedom of speech and are giving new definition of patriotism. On the other hand, we have also witnessed incidents of rioting where students take the law into their own hands and disrupt daily affairs over a clash of political ideologies.

In India, it appears that youth is by and large misdirected, short-sighted and immediate goal oriented. He has regional and parochial outlook. Caste, religion and other sub-cultural considerations have negative connotation on youth politics in the campuses. The efforts to separate the centres of higher educational learning from the extramural influences seem to have totally failed in our country. These extra-mural agencies make advantage of the vast mass of misdirected youth by making false promises and throwing incentives in some or the other form. Politicization of youth is helpful in understanding the youth from the point of limits of defiance, dissent, range of conformity with political system, public roles and responsibilities. It is directly related with the youth problem like attitude for authority, competition and cooperation of political adaption of political system validation of concept of power etc.

The exception of youth as a dynamic force today is by no means a phenomenon peculiar to our country. It is rather a universal phenomenon. The peculiar problems of present day society, particularly in case of our country, have made the youth much more activist as compared to a few decades ago. Youth is living in an age of uncertainty, insecurity and uneasy calm. While in the college and university, he is not only confined to his educational attainment but on the contrary he is also involved in various such activities which may not be very much desirable in the opinion of many people. Such activities may adversely affect his educational involvement.

Youth's political consciousness and political participation may be taken as one factor from which he either derives immediate gain or hopes something for the future. Because of the peculiar and fast growing problems, university and college students have been attracting the attention of all the important segments of the society in modern times. JNU incident, Madras and Hyderabad incidents are the examples that these higher educational institutes are witnessing changing scenario of youth eagerness, impulsiveness and turmoiling attitudes. Something which is liking invisible is going on among universities youth. The pace of this change is more rapid among the youth in the sphere of higher education.

Our youth problem is multi-dimensional in nature and has been a perennial one for the university and college administration.

The persistence of unplanned education is far from being job oriented and the changes of values, leading to inter-generational conflict, have spread the clouds of uncertainties in the student community. The insecure future has made them more uneasy and engaged in sporadic out-bursts of direct action. We also notice that indiscipline and insecurity is more a problem for those institutions and disciplines of learning which have low job possibilities. For example, various educational institutions like IIT, Engineering and Medical Colleges and other technical institutions have comparatively less problem of student indiscipline as compared to the centres of liberal education. Student's exposure to the political influences and their involvement in politics has also some relationship with the family's political background.

The professional politicians use educational centres as their important bases simply with a view to fulfil their own selfish ends. Various students' agitations and other movements which manifest a political outlook are rarely political, if a systematic analysis of these events is made. The penetration of political parties into campuses as pointed out by M.N. Srinivas has a two way effect: "Every campus issue may erupt on the campus leading to strike and violence. Every political party has its students' wing, and there are reports that in some universities students politicians regularly receive money from political parties. The widespread politicization of students ensures that peace is not likely to return to our campuses".¹ Thus, the youth politics has put the university and colleges in a state of turmoil, whose solution does not seem to have been conceived either by the university administration or by the higher agencies of power who have a say in this matter. This has made the higher educational institutions more and more unmanageable.

Thus, the prevailing socio-economic conditions play an important role in shaping our youth and their orientation. Here politics exercise a strong attraction and a potent pressure among students. As we know our Constitution includes formal minimum age for holding high offices in central government e.g. 35 for Presidency and 25 for the Member of Lok Sabha. These are the rules of minimum age which must be followed by the candidates. Presumably these rules were instituted in the belief that sufficient maturity and experience are necessary to fulfil the duties of these offices. One interesting point is that none of these laws, state or central, imposes a maximum age for officeholders. This point should be cleared in our mind that whether the process of aging, period events of the flow of cohorts influences political behaviours such as voting, participating in campaigns, and running for office. An extension of this thought has to do with the issue of political power among the aged. As societies age, is there a potential or likelihood that the older

population will take over the political process and control the direction taken by the government? The issue is an important one, because political control determines who fashion the policies of any government. If The reason for lack of interest in politics among the youngsters is their parents and elders. They feel that politics is not their cup of tea and that they would rather want their sons and daughters to have a secure life. In other words, they want their children to choose a career that has more security and more potential, i.e. a good job with good money. Due to this, many ebullient youngsters who have the real potential to change the political scenario of the country's in their air-conditional offices, doing a more 'secure' job and deriding and despising the politics of the country. Of course they disparage the politicians too. There is little space and resources for one to enter politics. Moreover the political environment as not as clean as it is presented.

Politics has become a professional endeavour of the few and the political space is already occupied by the political landlords of the country and hence there is little encouragement for any new entrants.

This inevitability of impossibility drives the youth to other vocations such as crime, terrorism or some other occupation for money and power.

High Time to Clear the Air for Youth

'Youth can change image of ugly Indian politician' senior BJP leader L K Advani said one way of making this possible was by encouraging more young people to join politics.² "I tell my fellow politicians, particularly those belonging to my own party, that it is our duty to ease this image of the 'ugly Indian politician'...it is necessary for the best and the brightest among the youth to join politics and serve the nation," Advani said.

The 81-year-old leader cited Transparency International's annual reports where India ranks high in the corruption index and the United Nations report in which India ranks low in the Human Development Index. He held responsible for the lack of professionalism among politicians as the reason for this state of affairs. "Politics was a noble profession during the freedom Movement...After Independence, the spirit of mission got gradually diluted...Unfortunately, in India today politics is seen neither as a mission nor as a profession, but as pure commerce," Advani lamented.

However, the senior leader pointed out that it was not just in politics that the values had gone down. "The lack of integrity and professional ethics is seen among lawyers, judges, doctors... and even security personnel. It is seen even in the media, and though the intelligence quotient of an individual could develop lifelong, his emotional, moral and spiritual quotient developed mostly between the age of 15 and 25 years. "It is necessary for the young to join politics and serve the nation," These words of an eminent elderly leader shows the frustration and mourn on the worst condition of Indian politics created by the so called eminent veteran and elderly sharpen leaders and the lack of interest shown by the Indian youth are equally responsible.

The latest census 2011 data released shows that around 41 percent of India's is below the age of 20 years. According to [The Times of India, half the population is in the 20-59 age group while 9 percent is above the age of 60.](#)

According to the data, Muslims in the country have the highest proportion of children and teenagers among all religions. While 47 percent of the children and teenagers are Muslims, 40 percent are Hindus and 29 percent are Jains, the report said.

The report also said that there are trends of declining proportion of children and increasing share of elderly across all religious communities.⁵

Hence, the empowerment of the youth only shall bring about wholesome changes. Times has come for the old to yield place to the young. As Congress's youth icon Rahul Gandhi said "sycophancy and money power in the party's youth this would be brought down to unleash the youth power for the country's development. The youth leader said "From tea stall owner to dhabawala, everybody said they did not know how to enter politics." He said "We will break this wall between the youth and politics". He said the youth organisation suffer from two main problems." It is easy for those who can use influence and money power, while the doors are closed for ordinary people. And once somebody joins an organisation by using influence, he can only rise through sycophancy". Addressing the national convention of the Congress district and block committee presidents, Mr Gandhi said this.³

The Indian youth want clean people in politics⁴ and they are not interested to take part in politics. Politics, no matter under what rhetoric it is presented, is a game of power. This game of power manifests itself in the form of a fight for the space among the political aspirants and the, lucky, own who occupies this space seldom vacates or retires. The political arena with the span of time becomes a highly crowded sphere, where every bit of space gets filled and the possibility of some space for a new entrant becomes impossible. Even then, for, those who want to enter this sphere has to wedge a battle where only the fittest can survive. It is interesting to note here that in the West, whom we have often copied in content but flattered in character, there has evolved a disciplined political culture and where the political sphere is routinely vacated.

Hence, there is always some space for the new entrants. We have the example of USA, UK and other developed western countries. In the USA George Washington, the president, set the trend by not contesting for the third term and instead opted for farming. Moreover what is special about western polity is that the political leaders graciously accept their defeat or their inability to rule further and walk through the exit route for the successors.

The case has not been same for India. We have the example of our first prime minister who ruled for seventeen years even then he did not retire rather he was stripped of his post by nature, the great traveller-death. Not only this, politics over the time has become a game of political dynasties in India. Though this phenomenon started once as a single case, for the Nehru-Gandhi family, has now developed geometrically and has engulfed the entire Indian political sphere. It happened as though the spoils of the system belonged, only, to family of the politicians and gradually this has made Indian politics- a murky tale of father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, etc's achievements. It can be said that the already compact political sphere was squeezed to near perfection so that no fresh air (new political aspirant) can pass through it. As we can see who are ruling the roost in the Indian political sphere. A blind survey will find that eighty per cent of political parties are maliciously practicing as well as propagating this phenomena. It is in this background that youth of the country has lost their interest in politics.

Youth in India today is going to dog's some say. Some other say that youth in India today is a symbol of a new progress called the new India. In the present Indian conditions, there are various challenges to be faced by the Indian youth. Print among them is the removal of corruption and reforming the country's political systems. Gone are the days when the leaders of the nations were the real examples to follow. Today, the major challenge is to set the example before the youth but no one is accepting this challenge so the young people have to do it on their own. The degradation of values is another major challenge which the youth of our country is facing today. There was a time when values stood first than any other virtue but today, they are kept perhaps at the last pedestal of human system of life. The future of the country is definitely in the heads of the young. Another major challenge before the Indian youth is to keep an close eye on every developmental aspect of the country. To contribute to its wealth as best as possible and to support ways and means

through which Indian comes out of the developing group to the developed.

Besides, the most important thing which today's youth must think about and put their heart and soul into it is to raise the voice against the ongoing terrorism in and around the country. The youth of today has to discover ways and means to find out a feasible and plausible solution to this cancerous evil on the face of our nation. Last, but not the least, to nurture love for and to look after the environment of the country, to try all possible ways to keep the environment pollution free and natural is the most vital responsibility and also a challenge for today's Indian youth.

India is a country of young people and the day is not far when these young heroes will overtake and overpower in making the country a better and healthier place to live in. The day is approaching fast. Youth in India today are ready to bring about miracles.

References and Notes

1. Kumar, P. Ramesh 1989-"NYKS Educating New Voters", The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Thursday, Oct. 26.
2. L.K. Advani was Speaking at a Seminar on "National Value Crisis and its Redressable" Organised by the Foundation for Restoration of National Values, November 18, 2008 Indian Express.
3. 8 February 2009, Times of India.
4. The Indian Today- Youth and Politics Survey 2009 was conducted between January 14 and 22 in eight cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmadabad, Lucknow, Kochi and Indore.
5. FirstPost 16 Jan 2016.