Youth's Role in Democracy: Strategies for betterment in Indian Politics

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Abstract

Indian Democracy was the largest democracy even at the time of the first general elections in 1951-52. The founders of modern India and members of the Constituent Assembly adopted universal adult suffrage, thus reposing faith in the wisdom of the common Indian to elect his/her representative to the seats of power. The right to vote is irrespective of caste, creed, religion or gender. Those who are deemed unsound of mind, and people convicted of certain criminal offences are not allowed to vote. Voting is not compulsory in India. But, there has been a general increase in the number of people voting in Indian elections. From 44.87% in the first general elections (1951-52), it has steadily increased to 58.21% in the 15th general elections (2009). To date, India's youth bulge has been at odds with its political system dominated by older leaders in their late 60s, 70s, and even 80s. The fielding of younger candidates, extensive use of social media this election, and efforts by political parties to build a youth following in rural and urban areas is an effort to play catch up. But going beyond these elections, key to India's economic growth and development over the next decade will be its ability to tap into and channel the aspirations and energy of the youth.

Keywords: Indian democracy, caste, Religion, Gender, Constituent Assembly, Youth.

Introduction

India, considered by the forefathers of our generation as the common man's heaven, stands for the unity and integrity of cultural and social values like peace, harmony and progress entwined with each other like flowers of a garland by means of a thread symbolized by tolerance. Political communication in India is essentially election communication. Political

parties always come out with their roadmaps only ahead of polls. To actively engage the voters these parties have been extensively using public meetings, election rallies, and door-to-door campaigns, local hoardings, print advertisements, and small exhibits in their election communication. India is the biggest democracy in the world. The real power lies in the hands of the people who elect the people who rule the country. The basic principle of democracy is that it should have a wide participation by the people. The more is the percentage of voters out of the total population of the country, the stronger is the base of the democracy because the mandate given in the elections would have a popular sport. By making the age of casting of vote as 18, the government brought crores of people within the ambit of active participation in elections thus giving a broad base to the democratic processes.

A good politician should be of a well discipline personality with selfless service to make live better for his people. This should be reflected in the community where he lives in all ramifications. Discipline is necessary for an orderly society and political life, without it, the social life would become miserable. A selfless service is putting the welfare of the people representing before your own. Winston Churchill described it as "the first of all human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others". A good politician firmly believes in taking care and maintaining the community of his people. He believes that community service is about giving back. According to Theodore Roosevelt, "the most successful politician is he who says what the people are thinking most often in the loudest voice"

Good Governance

Good governance is accordingly associated with accountable political leadership, enlightened policy-making and a civil service imbued with a professional ethos. The presence of a strong civil society including a free press and independent judiciary are pre-conditions for good governance. Politics has got a ton of connotations over the years which are mostly negative. And this is quite understandable, of course, given the level that politics has been made to stoop down to in our country. Politics is often considered as a filthy practice of cunning

people. It has almost become synonymous with corruption, polarisation and crookedness, all at the same time. Of course the politicians play all these dirty games to gain power. But are these the only things that politics can yield? Aren't there any positive sides to politics? The common belief on it is quite dispiriting.

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, religiously. The level of education of youth is a key to both the successful functioning of democracy and socio-economic development of the country. Today it is better and is on the rise. Universal literacy, according to 2011 Census, is risen to 74.04 per cent, 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.

Essential Conditions for Democracy

There are certain essential conditions for the success of democracy. All people must be able to experience a participatory role in decision making. There may be two major categories: (a) political conditions, and (b) social and economic conditions – the fulfilment of the first leads to political democracy and the second as social democracy. Obviously, the first and the foremost is political conditions of democracy. It is essential that for a system to be democratic, we must adopt a Constitution and laws that vest supreme power in the people. The human rights and fundamental rights, such as equality, liberty of thought and expression, belief, movement, communication and association must be protected by the Constitution.

India has universal adult franchise as the basis of electing representatives at various levels of the government. Opportunities for political participation of all the citizens not only in elections at regular interval, but also in other aspects of the political process have to be made available.

Challenges confronting the Indian democracy

The Democratic polity in India has been confronted with challenges like Naxalism , Corruption , Linguism , Separatism , Unemployment , Poverty , Illiteracy , Voting Behavioural Pattern (Casteism) , Multiparty system(Coalition government) , Insurgency , National decisions affecting due to Globalization , Political Criminal Nexus , Money factor playing important part in elections –Cash for vote system.

Democracy requires respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. It requires as well a deeper understanding and respect for needs of more vulnerable groups of society, especially women and children. The social stability needed for productive growth is nurtured by conditions in which people can readily express their will. For this, participation of strong domestic institutions is essential.

Media's role in Indian democracy

Media is the "fourth estate" of democracy and it plays a pivotal role in ensuring justice and benefits of the government policies reach the interior sections of the society. They act as a chain between the government and the citizens of the country, people have faith in media as it has an impact on the audience. The changing dynamics of Indian politics has increased people's expectation from media as in this phase of transition, it is pretty easy to believe in a particular belief. The older generation of the country is still fixated on tradition and culture, while the present-day youth is more interested in the fast-moving world of technology and social media. Thus, it becomes important for media to ensure that the information that they are broadcasting should not be a biased or tampered in a way to boost the channels TRP.

In a diverse country like India, it is difficult to have detailed legislation on the role of media in the democracy, as was pointed out by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar.News Broadcasters Association (NBA) is a government body that has laid down the guidelines to be followed by media houses, to disseminate the information across the audience. The guidelines focus on ensuring credible news reaches out to the public with impartiality and objectivity

Youth Participation for a Representative Democracy

The 21st century India of today is blessed with half a billion strong mega young generation of hope and it is time for putting them at the top of democracy promotion and electoral participation. About 42% of youth in the country are in the age group of 13 to 35 and the number is growing. It is estimated that by 2025 India will be the youngest nation of the world as an average Indian will be only 29 years old by that time. Bulk of the increase in the country's working age population will be in the relatively younger age group of 20-35 (Economic Survey, 2011-2012). The emerging demographic scenario would also influence the democratic profile of the country. According to the World Democracy Index, today, about two-third of the countries in the world are democracies, precisely 123 countries out of 193. Significantly, 42 of the 48 high human development countries are democracies which shows the close relationship between democracy and development.

Yet the scale of youth participation is not reflected in the age profile of Parliament and Legislatures. A report says with just 53% of its members under the age of 55, the 16th Lok Sabha has become India's oldest ever. India's parliament has been growing steadily older over time, as the data compiled by PRS Legislative Research and shared with The Hindu, shows. It says there are just 71 new MPs who are under the age of 40 and another 216 are under the age of 55. In comparison, 212 members are between 56 and 70, and another 41 are over 70. In comparison, the first two Lok Sabhas had the highest proportion of young MPs under the age of 40

Conclusion

In today's context perhaps it's again time for the youth of the country to lead the way and educate these very leaders on how the country shall be administered. The country needs a platform where the youth can unite and put forward their mandate in order to reach out to the ones in power, to make them heard. There is an impending need for a platform where the youth can debate, discuss and deliberate to redesign the destiny of this nation, and in the modern world, they also need a platform which would attain the purpose without pelting stones, bringing cities to a standstill and rioting in the streets. Let the country witness participative effort from the youth to be active stakeholders in the nation-building process let the agenda for the country be decided by its youth and let the leaders follow.

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