



A CRITICAL STUDY ON YOUTH POLITICS IN INDIA

Ricky Singh Yadav

Student, B.A. (Hons)

Political Science, Galgotias University

Dr. Subal Kumar Bagh

Assistant Professor,

Department of Political Science, Galgotias University

DECLARATION: I AS AN AUTHOR OF THIS PAPER /ARTICLE, HERE BY DECLARE THAT THE PAPER SUBMITTED BY ME FOR PUBLICATION IN THE JOURNAL IS COMPLETELY MY OWN GENUINE PAPER. IF ANY ISSUE REGARDING COPYRIGHT/PATENT/OTHER REAL AUTHOR ARISES, THE PUBLISHER WILL NOT BE LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE. IF ANY OF SUCH MATTERS OCCUR PUBLISHER MAY REMOVE MY CONTENT FROM THE JOURNAL WEBSITE. FOR THE REASON OF CONTENT AMENDMENT /OR ANY TECHNICAL ISSUE WITH NO VISIBILITY ON WEBSITE /UPDATES, I HAVE RESUBMITTED THIS PAPER FOR THE PUBLICATION.FOR ANY PUBLICATION MATTERS OR ANY INFORMATION INTENTIONALLY HIDDEN BY ME OR OTHERWISE, I SHALL BE LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE. (COMPLETE DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR AT THE LAST PAGE OF THIS PAPER/ARTICLE

ABSTRACT

This study is able to take a look at the critical analysis of a changing role of youth in Indian politics based on its historical background and current styles of participations and the structural problems with which they are facing. Having played a central role in the freedom struggle, Indian youth have remained active in their abilities to catalyze political change through events such as most recent digital and issue-based mobilizations. Nevertheless, their representation in the conventional political bodies has been minimal, and the reason is attributed to obstacles like dynastic politics, civic education shortcoming, financial constraints, and non-representation. Although the digital platforms have brought possible mass activism by the youth, lack of a matching offline representation threatens to make them mere symbolic actions. Integration of youngsters has been tried to be undertaken by the government schemes and the structure of political parties in the country yet they are not usually profound and implemented. The researchers advocate system upgrading to change youth into powerful democratic leaders by means of political education, leadership development courses and opening up policy-making to the youth.

Keywords: Youth Participation, Political Empowerment, Digital Activism, Civic Education, Indian Politics.

INTRODUCTION

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF YOUTH POLITICS IN INDIA

In India the youth have always been the driving force of socio-political change. The young revolutionists like Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and Subhash Chandra Bose made their role in influencing the nationalist movements of that era (colonial era). Their bolded activist work, in the name of justice and freedom, motivated the Indian youth generations to break the system of oppression and struggle. These were critical points in the freedom struggle that involved students and young leaders in the Non-Cooperation movement (1920s) and Quit India Movement (1942).



The protest and intellectual resistance became centered on colleges and universities and occasioned a politically awakened or politically aware youth culture.

When the nation became independent, though the elders took the leadership in building a new democratic nation, the youth were raising their voices against any act of injustice. First, a wave of youthful protest was provoked by the Nav Nirman Movement (1974) in Gujarat where the students started a mass action against corruption and inflation. This helped shape the Total Revolution movement by Jayaprakash Narayan that rallied students and other youth activists nationwide. These demonstration was vital towards countering the Emergency of 1975 and reclaiming the role of the youth as the guardians of democracy.

Nevertheless, even with these contributions of the past, young people in modern context continue to remain under-represented within the political institution of India. Young people are being regarded increasingly as campaigners or voters but not active decision-makers, despite the growing feelings of political awareness. Their access to mainstream politics is blocked by institutional obstacles, social stereotype, and weak opportunities to obtain positions of power.

1.1. Youth Movements in Recent Times

In modern-day India, the younger people have remained central to the civic and political participation of society in dynamic acts of activism and outreach. Be it the anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2011 when students and youths took to the streets as well as the online activism over the issue or the mass spontaneous participation of the youth in the Delhi gang-rape protests demanding justice and change in system in 2012, young Indians have been seen showing their ability to shape national discourse. Most recently, they have turned out in movements such as those against citizenship (Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests), global climate changes, and protest against changes to education and jobless status, which correlate an increased political awareness depending on real-time communication and ignited by issues. The ascendance of digital platforms and social media played its role in helping young people bypass the old ways of organization management, gather and mobilize faster and influence the opinion of the masses with greater speed and impact than ever before. Nevertheless, although the power and prominence of this digital activism is so much visible and widespread, its sustainability is usually limited by non-integration of the youth to formal political systems and decision making structures. The historical and current records of successful youth-inspired political transformation in India is a testament of the fact that the current system is in dire need of fundamental reforms that should not only be able to give a voice to the youth, but also give them the empowerment to lead and govern.

2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

The role of young people in politics is complicated nowadays that could be expressed in a way of voting, activism, institutional activities, and internet space. It may be divided into the conventional forms like voting, contesting elections, membership of political parties and the unofficial means like protesting or engaging in community work and activism on the internet. Within a decade or so, India has experienced an increase in voter turnout among the young population, and in most



instances, this happens to be the first time they are turning up at the polls to vote in general elections and state elections alike. This shows increasing civic consciousness and political responsibilities among the young generation.

Nevertheless, these higher levels of participation do not always equate to last long term political leadership -or representation. Youths are still not actively involved in making of decisions in instances such as legislative assemblies and circles of party leaders. The views concerning corruption in politics with its prize of nepotism, money and mysterious machineries as perceived by the majority of the young people discourage them to uphold long-term political career trends.

Moreover political parties also tend to harness youth energies during electioneering time using them as volunteers, campaigners, and even social media experts without involving them into any serious policies or even leadership. Even junior wings of large national parties, including the NSUI or the BJYM, will replicate the structures of its parent organization and end up being echo chambers rather than venues to foster ideological argumentation or to groom leaders. Lack of internal democracy of parties is demoralizing to discovery of views and innovations by young members.

The teaching of civics is poor in schools and colleges and many youths are incompetent to participate in policy debates. Political arguments only become confined to social media activities but not being part of the governance system itself. Furthermore, younger people of marginal groups (those living in rural communities, low-income families, and representatives of minorities) are disproportionately penalized because of not having an equal opportunity of gaining access to political space because of structural discrimination and absence of representation..

2.1. Forms of Youth Participation

The young people are finding their way in the political arena via various means:

1. **Voting in Elections:** Voting is said to be the closest form of participation that will give the youth ability of influencing government creation. Yet, regardless of voter education voter turnout is yet to be even among youths in proportion because of dispassion or problems with logistics.
2. **Student Unions and Campus Elections:** Student Councils and University elections are a platform that offer the first political experience, training on leadership, and the feeling of a civic duty. However, this avenue has come under threat as several learning institutions have watered down or prohibited such unions.
3. **Protests and Social Movements:** Social unrests in the form of protesting is also common among youths to speak against any injustice related to gender justice, climate change, education reforms and joblessness. The youth movement is evident in such causes as the CAA protests, climate strikes, and farmers solidarity movements.



4. **Digital Activism:** Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are the platforms that allow young people to meet and pepper their authority with opinions and gather voices. Videos aimed at creating awareness, online petitions, and live discussions are becoming some of the ways of influencing discourse.
5. **Community Volunteering:** Participation in politics: Some of the youth participate indirectly in politics by working on NGOs, social movements and communities development programs where they get hands-on experience in the field of public service.

Although there exist these avenues, genuine political empowerment of the youth is still limited by all the structural, cultural, and institutional restrictions. The second thing India needs to do to break the vicious cycle of tokenism is to create the culture in which it will no longer be accorded that much post-colonial privilege of being seen and heard, but rather understood and represented by its youth.

3. CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIAN YOUTH IN POLITICS

There are still some key barriers that remain ahead of development of effective political involvement of youth in India. Although youth has a lot of potential in strengthening democracies because of its demographic dividend, their political interests are usually silenced by structural, economic, and socio-cultural barriers.

1. **Not Enough Political Education:** India does not provide formal political and civic education, neither in school or higher education syllabus, thereby creating a custom of ignorance among the masses regarding democratic procedure, constitutional rights and significance of political participation. A lot of youths go into adult lives with no idea on the dynamics of governance or the capabilities upon which they can affect it.
2. **Economic Insecurity:** Unemployment, underemployment, and inflation tend to put a lot of pressure on the youngsters to become secure economic beings. This economic pressure deters political participation especially where political actions are viewed as costly in both terms of time and money.
3. **Nepotism and Dynastic politics:** The Indian politics are ingrained in nepotism and patronage politics. The ascendancy of political dynasties denies potential beginners, meritocratic based leadership. Those youngsters that lack vital political connections or funding are usually not considered to have access to any actual political opportunities.
4. **Marginalization Of Student Politics:** More and more universities and educational institutions are dissuading political activity by means of prohibition or limitations in student union elections. This impedes democratic action at the grass root level and robs the young people one of their early organized avenues of participation and leadership.
5. **Loss of Confidence in the Political Institutions:** Increasing levels of distrust amongst the young generation about political organizations and authorities are manifested on reasons



of rampant corruption and impunity as well as mockery of political governance in making the basic promises. Consequently, large numbers of youthful citizens turn into apathetic to politics or engage in informal and short-lap activism.

6. **Representation Gaps:** Youth are also undeveloped in the legislation chambers and at the top of elected parties. The majority of elected politicians are considerably mature, and issues that affect the youth, like educational standards, climate change, internet rights, and employment opportunities are considered to be set aside during policy formulation.
7. **Gender-based problems:** The young women experience yet another level of discrimination alongside curbing their movement, offering no security in their outing as well as the patriarchal approach of delineating politics as a male enclave. Online, young women tend to be bullied and threatened, particularly when they express dissent.
8. **Digital Divide:** Although most urban youths have become politically empowered through social media, millions of rural and economically marginalized youths do not have access to digital tools, and hence cannot be part of contemporary form of political expression and mobilization.

3.1. Societal and Economic Pressures

There are institutional and structural factors undermining the active participation of the Indian youth in politics but even more important are the societal expectations that do not support an active engagement of youth in politics. Politics is seen as a context with instabilities, risks and stress as generally most families and communities perceive it to be an insecure environment and more so that they encourage young people especially girls in conservative or rural societies to remain within the realms of traditional roles and avoid interaction with the society. This cultural condemnation together with economic norms is a major set back towards political roles among the youth. Even politically aware young people are scared by the issue of financial security which is worsened by educational loans, responsibilities of the family, fears of loss of future job and fail to embrace the field of leadership. Other barriers include the steep expenses incurred in campaigning, holding speeches, or simply traveling to advocate political agenda with the most vulnerable and marginalized parties facing the biggest constraints. All these intercultural and economic stresses further reinforce the idea that politics is a place of the elite and thereby, shuts out youth whose individual day-to-day issues and desires have no relation to the current state of politics. The youth readiness to participate in politics will simply be a mere token, which cannot lead to systemic change unless these cultural norms and financial aspects are discussed and dealt with relevantly.

4.ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Several attempts to encourage young people to participate in politics have been taken on behalf of the Indian government and political bodies, but the results of the inclusion of young people in politics are rather low, compared to other aspects of life. In the appreciation that youth plays one of the most important roles in national development, it has gone further to initiate a number of frameworks and programs over the years.



The National Youth Policy (2014) provides the vision of the government on empowering everybody with inclusive youth policies to improve access levels of youth to education, employment opportunities, skills advancement, and participation in the country. The policy highlights the value added by having youth as a stakeholder in nation-building and governance, and also suggests formulated interventions to aid capacity building of the youth.

Such organizations are the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and the National Service Scheme (NSS) who at the local level would mobilize the youth in towns and countryside towards community work, volunteering and public service. These websites are meant to instil leadership qualities and civic responsibility. Nevertheless, they cannot be utilized to the end as far as conflict-prone, economically backward, or politically sensitive areas are concerned.

Although both the youth wings exist in almost all the large political parties, they play very little role in generation of independent youth leadership. Such wings are usually not cerebral and centers of critical thinking, policy discussions, or leadership stand independences. Indian youth not having ties or ancestry find it hard to climb up the ladders at the Indian political parties.

The symbolic integration of the youth into the fray of the electioneering process, whether as campaigners, handlers of the digital media or the mere foot soldiers, does not empower them politically much. It is critical to institutionalize them by training them on formal leadership skills, mentorship, and democratization in parties internally.

4.1. How Political Parties Can Promote Youth Participation

The political parties would be efficient instruments of youth empowerment when they would embrace well-organized policies like:

1. **formation of active youth wings:** There are great numbers of parties that have their youth fronts but they are not equal in the sense of their freedom of action and control. Such wings ought to have operational roles, funds and entry into high echelons of decision making to enable them to exercise useable power over party positions.
2. **Conducting Political Education and Training:** Parties can conduct a series of workshops, debates, policy boot camps and mentorship programs to young cadres to make them aware of the issues of governance, public policy and constitutional rights.
3. **Youth Leadership:** Recognizing and giving opportunities to young capable people to move up the ladder into the leadership positions increases within the organization, and introduces relatable leaders to the young crowd. Young people should be given roles of leadership in parties and the functions of different parties should be changed so that there is no stagnation.
4. **Engaging of Youth in Decision-Making Bodies:** Youth perspective is encouraged in all political manifestos, party strategy setting, and policy planning by inviting youth



representation in the form of representatives of student bodies, other youth organizations, the civil society.

5. **Advocacy of Youth Friendly Policies:** Youth issues like affordable education, access to employment, access to digital services, mental health and environmental issues are a few initiatives to be promoted that cater to the interests of the younger generation and is also a stress reliever.
6. **Utilization of Technology and Social Networking:** Parties need to do better than send out communication through the campaign mode and resort to utilization of digital platforms that enable two-way communication with youth. Online surveys, virtual town halls, and youth-related platforms may act as a feedback channel and an engine of mobilization.

Notwithstanding these opportunities, youth marginalization persists to be a problem in the present political setting of India. Unless the internal party democracy is corrected, patronage politics is done away with and socio-economic obstacles removed, operational youth inclusion will be a dream but it will not become a reality. To utilize its demographic dividend, political parties and all levels of government should address youth as strategical ally, beyond being used to support political parties in getting votes in an upcoming election in India.

5. TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND DIGITAL POLITICS

A notable shift in the mode of political participation by the Indian young generation was brought about by the high rate of growth of the digital infrastructure and saturation of smartphones among them. Political action is now no longer a physical type of rallying or old-style campaigning but it is now taking place on-line where local opinions, grass-roots movements and discussion are being carried out at a rate and speed never before seen. The use of social media Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube has become an essential part of drawing attention, gathering forces, and questioning mainstream storytelling.

Using hashtags such as #StudentsProtest, #FarmersProtest, #MeTooIndia, and #AntiCAA, young people have held decentralized campaigns and online movements and captured the attention of the nation and the world at large to address their concerns related to the health of democracy, human rights, and the responsibility of the government towards people. These platforms provide equal opportunity of having the youth voices heard and evade the mainstream media gatekeepers and hierarchies. An example of a new-age political tool is live videos, viral images, digital petitions, and even memes, which affect the government in how the people look at them and makes authorities more responsive.

Further, online forums give young people the power to competently participate in policy discussion, fact checking and crowdsource knowledge. Online based movement is usually transferred to street protests, sit-in or civic action so digital activism has become an important part of youth politics in the contemporary world.



Nevertheless, its digital empowerment does not lack boundaries:

- The digital divide is still the means of marginalizing a large group of young people, especially those living in the countryside and in economically disadvantaged populations. High Speed internet, digital tools and media literacy remain highly urbanized.
- The environment of political expression has been hostile led by the use of online harassment and trolling, particularly, against female, minority groups and dissolved youth voices. The risks of cyberbullying and doxing quench the voices of more people who might otherwise have something to say in digital communication.
- Misinformation and echo-chambers deteriorate the level of political participation. Feed based on algorithms tends to support biases and polarize young people on the ideological front, where there is little chance of having a constructive discussion.
- The issue of surveillance is also a factor which prevents free political debate. Growing pressure and prosecution on online criticisms have rendered digital spheres more dangerous to the politically engaged young population.

Towards averting these issues, the digital literacy programs need to be enhanced in educational institutions with great urgency. It is important to provide young people with the knowledge of how to recognize fake news, guard their personal information, and be able to conduct a civilized discussion. At the same time, the laws of cyber safety should be applied to make the youth safe against abuse and guarantee them their right to free expression.

It has been mentioned in the dissertation that certain online forums may become the great enablers of youth involvement but not a substitute to institutionalized forms of socio-political activism. Other offline systems that accompany the digital activism, like the involvement in policy groups, the election in schools or politics in the region may need to illuminate the digital activism that otherwise would become a short-term phenomenon or the empty performance.

Therefore, technology should be regarded as a supplement and not a proxy to more profound democracy involvement. The closing of the digital divide, equal access, and security in online areas will play significant roles in creating an informed and strong youth voting population.

CONCLUSION

The young people of India have always been on the forefront of change in the socio-political scene of the country by being on the frontline in anti-colonial movements to modern social movements of justice, equality, and reform. Today they are involved more multidimensionally than ever before, not only in electoral politics, but also on their campus, in their protest actions, online activism, and in their communities. Nevertheless, the Indian young people are highly marginalized within the formal political systems despite the existence of the energy level and awareness due to



the pre-existing challenges including nepotism, dynasty politics, lack of civic education, unemployment, and gender and social cultural limitations. Such initiatives of government such as National Youth Policy, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), and National Service Scheme (NSS) are ineffective because some of them have minimal reach and do not have a place in the system. On the same note, it is also the typical scenario that political parties use the youth during the elections to campaign, which provides less chances with long time leadership envelope. Digital spaces have clearly equipped the youth with effective mobilizing and speech-making tools, however, the lack of simultaneous offline institutional representation means that the movement initiated online can be meaningless symbolic, or short-lived. India needs to use a holistic and strategic vision that would promote political education, access to leadership potential, enhance internal democracy of parties, and reduce the digital gap to exploit the full potential of this demographic dividend. Youth will only transform into being active creators of the democratic future of the country by being allowed to have a voice.

Reference

1. Bansal, N., & Shreelakshmi, P. (2024). Democratizing India: The Role of Media in Political Activism and Youth Empowerment. *Public Administration and Law Review*, (2 (18)), 42-50.
2. Das, D. (2020). In pursuit of being smart? A critical analysis of India's smart cities endeavor. *Urban Geography*, 41(1), 55-78.
3. Kumar, S., & Choudhury, S. (2021). Migrant workers and human rights: A critical study on India's COVID-19 lockdown policy. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 3(1), 100130.
4. Lamichhane, Y. R., & Dhakal, B. R. (2024). Why and how South Asian youth are involved in politics: a systematic review of literature. *Handbook on Youth Activism*, 75-90.
5. Lukose, R. A. (2020). *Liberalization's children: Gender, youth, and consumer citizenship in globalizing India*. Duke University Press.
6. Singh, P. A. (2018). An Analytical Study of Youth Politics in India. *Research Review International Journals of Multidisciplinary*, 3(8).
7. Singh, S. (2022). Youth participation in Indian democracy: An overview. *Academic Discourse*, 11(1), 13-21.
8. Verma, V., & Srivastava, A. (2024). Role of youth in Indian politics: A catalyst for change. *International Research Journal of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies*, 5(4), 209-215.



Author's Declaration

I as an author of the above research paper/article, here by, declare that the content of this paper is prepared by me and if any person having copyright issue or patent or anything otherwise related to the content, I shall always be legally responsible for any issue. For the reason of invisibility of my research paper on the website /amendments /updates, I have resubmitted my paper for publication on the same date. If any data or information given by me is not correct, I shall always be legally responsible. With my whole responsibility legally and formally have intimated the publisher (Publisher) that my paper has been checked by my guide (if any) or expert to make it sure that paper is technically right and there is no unaccepted plagiarism and hentriacontane is genuinely mine. If any issue arises related to Plagiarism/ Guide Name/ Educational Qualification /Designation /Address of my university/ college/institution/ Structure or Formatting/ Resubmission /Submission /Copyright /Patent /Submission for any higher degree or Job/Primary Data/Secondary Data Issues. I will be solely/entirely responsible for any legal issues. I have been informed that the most of the data from the website is invisible or shuffled or vanished from the database due to some technical fault or hacking and therefore the process of resubmission is there for the scholars/students who finds trouble in getting their paper on the website. At the time of resubmission of my paper I take all the legal and formal responsibilities, If I hide or do not submit the copy of my original documents (Andhra/Driving License/Any Identity Proof and Photo) in spite of demand from the publisher then my paper maybe rejected or removed from the website anytime and may not be consider for verification. I accept the fact that as the content of this paper and the resubmission legal responsibilities and reasons are only mine then the Publisher (Airo International Journal/Airo National Research Journal) is never responsible. I also declare that if publisher finds Any complication or error or anything hidden or implemented otherwise, my paper maybe removed from the website or the watermark of remark/actuality maybe mentioned on my paper. Even if anything is found illegal publisher may also take legal action against me

Ricky Singh Yadav
Dr. Subal Kumar Bagh
