



YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT:

Today's young generation is more vigorous than the prior generation. Inconsideration with-respect-to future of the country in upcoming years it is indispensable to being an engaged citizen of modern India. Curiosity of what might happen in the future if youth enter Indian politics is very awaiting matter to Indian society as well as globally, the ability to imagine how things could be different and empathy for our future selves are all necessary if we want to create positive change in our own lives and the world around us. The youth constitute a substantial portion of India's population, presenting a dynamic force capable of influencing the nation's political landscape. This research delves into the multifaceted realm of youth engagement in Indian politics, scrutinizing the challenges impeding their active involvement and identifying opportunities for fostering a more politically vibrant younger generation. A mixed-methods approach is employed, incorporating interviews, surveys, and content analysis of social media platforms. The research sample is selected to represent the diversity of India's youth across geographical, socio-economic, and educational spectrums. The findings reveal a myriad of influences on youth participation in politics, The influence of cultural factors, familial expectations, and peer perceptions underscores the need for a holistic understanding of the youth's social milieu. Despite the potential for youth to be a transformative force, numerous challenges obstruct their seamless integration into the political sphere. A prevailing sense of political apathy is identified, fueled by disillusionment with systemic inefficiencies and perceptions of political corruption. Systemic barriers such as complex bureaucratic processes and limited representation channels also deter youth from actively participating in political processes. However, amidst these challenges lie significant opportunities for enhancing youth political engagement. Education emerges as a powerful tool for empowerment, equipping the youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective participation. Technology, particularly social media platforms, offers a transformative medium for political expression and mobilization. Harnessing the potential of these platforms can bridge gaps in information dissemination and encourage civic participation. The study incorporates case studies from diverse regions in India, illustrating successful youth engagement initiatives. These cases highlight the positive impact of education-centric programs, mentorship initiatives, and grassroots movements in nurturing politically aware and active youth communities.

In conclusion, this research underscores the critical importance of empowering the youth in Indian politics. The recommendations encompass a multi-faceted approach, advocating for reforms in educational curricula, leveraging technology for outreach, and fostering mentorship programs. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on opportunities, India can cultivate a more inclusive and representative democratic process, ensuring the active participation of its youth in shaping the nation's future. This study paves the way for future research, encouraging scholars to explore emerging trends and evolving challenges in the dynamic landscape of youth political engagement in India.

KEYWORDS:

INDIA, POLITICS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, YOUTH PARTICIPATION.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India had its first general election in 1951, which was won by the Indian National Congress, a political party that went on to dominate subsequent elections until 1977, when a non- congress government was formed for the first time in independent India. Young people want to bring modification in present politics, but they feel their voices are bound to get lost in the political oratory. The field of politics in India is habitually perceived as something that is not acceptable to the educated masses. The youth involvement has been majorly informal and even though the youth continue to participate in local elections there is a need for a more dynamic and formal participation in

politics to emerge the changes which is obligatory for the country's progress. Politics has become as a last career invoke among the youngsters, due to uncontrolled corruption, nepotism, caste politics, and lack of accountability and lack of openness. As a result, most of our potential human resources choose to go abroad for settling their permanently as soon as they complete their education. Politics need to open and should promote the younger generation into mainstream politics. Swami Vivekananda's discipline and principles are an inspiration to the young minds of the country to lead a successful life. Vivekananda believed in the strength and passion of the youth to drive society towards a developed nation. While

his view on the youth of our nation was so positive, in regards to politics he said, "No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for." Though Vivekananda did not completely believe in politics because he rather believed that Indians were enslaved, he thought that once the youth were well educated, fed, and cared for, they would always be strong pillars of our nation.

Present day India is recognized as the largest democracy in the world. After the Constitution of India was formed on 26th January 1950, India was reborn. This day is of great significance because that day shaped the progress and direction of India and made India what we know it to be today. India today is a sovereign, democratic, secular republic and the people are given many constitutional rights like freedom of speech and expression, freedom of work and practice etc. The constituent states of India share major powers among the state governments. New reforms, laws, articles have been added and implemented in the Constitution of India but the core principles of the Constitution are expected to be followed by all the governing bodies at all levels, from the block to the central government.

1.1 FEATURES OF INDIAN POLITICS:

Panchayat System- Panchayat is the lowest form of self-government in India and it looks after the rural society. The word Panchayat means a council consisting of five members who are given the responsibility of taking important decisions in Indian villages. They are elected by the people of the village as the governing council.

Federalism- Dual politics in which both the central government and the state government work together to function properly. In this way, in a way, the states are given the power to make their own decisions and a decentralized way of decision-making is encouraged. Therefore, different states can have different policies on different issues/areas depending on the activities of their respective state governments.

Election System- All the leaders and members are elected through the voting process. Every Indian is given the right to vote once he/she attains a certain age (18 years). The government and leaders of India take the responsibility of arranging the elections and then the common people can vote for the candidate of their choice.

Multi-party system- India being a democratic country, has the right to protest and form other organizations. There are multiple political parties and each of them may believe in different ideologies. They fight against each other for power.

Upholding the Constitution- Whatever the government does must follow the Constitution of India. No one has the right to do anything that can be termed as 'unconstitutional'.

Role of the Supreme Court- In a democracy, the independence of the judiciary is very important. The Supreme Court is the apex judicial institution of India

headed by judges who are responsible for taking impartial decisions to maintain a healthy democracy in India.

Relationship between the Army and the Government- There is a very good coordination between the Government of India and the Army. No action is taken or decision is taken without consultation and strategic planning between the two. Therefore, both play a vital role in maintaining peace and harmony in the country and providing protection from external forces or interference.

1.2 INDIAN POLITICS AND YOUTH:

Though India is generally condemned for its very high population, it also means that India has vast human resources available. Nearly, 49% of the Indian population are youth aged 15–40. This demographic is the foundation of a nation, integral to its economic and social growth, especially in a rapidly developing country like India. However, according to a report published by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)-Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), 46 percent of India's youth population have little to no political interest, and even those who are interested seem to have no affiliation to a single party, which is unfortunate given the country's future.

2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To study to emphasis why youth participation is significant in politics.
2. To know how young people engage in Indian politics (elections, membership of a political party).
3. Identify the Emerging trends in Indian Democracy, Opportunities & Challenges.

3. METHODOLOGY:

Methodologically, a mixed-methods approach is employed, incorporating interviews, surveys, and content analysis of social media platforms. The research sample is selected to represent the diversity of India's youth across geographical, socio-economic, and educational spectrums. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of the intricate factors influencing youth engagement.

4. DISCUSSION:

PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 1

To study to emphasis why youth participation is significant in politics:

Youth participation is seen in every aspect and profession in India, may it be engineering, medicine, legal, commerce, business, sports, social work, and various other occupations, we discover youth show their absolute interest but when it comes to politics it is very rarely seen and when one shall have an interest in the same, it is suppressed for the long run as a career. Since its independence, India has been in a vicious circle of an unchanged system and the same political parties, but more youth in the system could bring more notable and advanced changes in the country. There are many reasons for the lack of youth representation in the Indian Political

System, such as the lack of trust in the political institutions, social and political factors like family expectations, underrepresentation of youth in politics, etc. But the influence that the youth could have on our country cannot go unnoticed due to these ever-lasting factors that may always exist if no change is made. A few of such notable reasons for the youth to actively participate in the political arena are:

* **Fresh Perspectives:** The youth bring new ideas, innovative thinking, and fresh perspectives to the table. Their unique experiences and insights can lead to creative solutions for the challenges faced by our nation.

* **Representation:** The youth make up a significant portion of the population. By actively participating in politics, they can ensure that their voices, concerns, and aspirations are represented in decision-making processes.

* **Change Agents:** Young people have the energy, enthusiasm, and passion to drive meaningful change. By engaging in politics, they can advocate for issues they care about, such as education, employment, climate change, and social justice.

* **Future Leaders:** Youth involvement in politics helps groom future leaders who can shape the destiny of our nation. By gaining firsthand experience in governance and policy-making, they can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to lead effectively.

* **Empowerment:** Participating in politics empowers the youth to have a direct impact on the issues that affect their lives and the lives of others. It gives them a platform to voice their opinions, engage in debates, and contribute to the development of their communities.

* **Social Justice and Equality:** Many young individuals are passionate about social justice, equality, and human rights. By engaging in politics, they can advocate for causes they believe in and work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Initiatives Advanced to Encourage Youth Political Participation:

Schemes and policies initiated by the government offer various avenues for youth to actively participate in politics and have their voices heard. It provides valuable opportunities, platforms, and resources for young people to understand, engage, and contribute to the political landscape of India.

* **National Youth Policy (NYP):** The Government in 2022 reviewed the NYP, 2014 and prepared a new draft that envisages vision to achieve by 2030. It includes Sustainable Development Goals and serves to 'unlock the youth to advance India'. It mainly focuses on education; employment and entrepreneurship; youth leadership and development; health, fitness, sports; and social justice.

* **National Youth Parliament Scheme:** This scheme aims to engage young people in the democratic process by organizing mock parliament sessions at various levels. It is organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and provides a platform for the youth to discuss and debate

important issues, enhancing their understanding of parliamentary proceedings, governance, and policymaking.

* **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS):** NYKS is a youth-focused organization that works towards channeling the energy and talent of young people in constructive activities. It was set up as an autonomous organization by the Government of India under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. NYKS is the largest grassroots-level organisation. It channels the power of youth on the principles of voluntarism, self-help, community participation, and nation-building initiatives.

* **National Service Scheme (NSS):** NSS is a voluntary organization that encourages students to participate in various community service activities. It aims to develop their personality, leadership skills, and social responsibility, fostering a sense of active citizenship.

* **'Know Your Leader' campaign:** The campaign encourages young people to learn about their elected representatives and their work. It helps them understand the role of politicians and promotes transparency in the political system.

* **Youth for Nation Program:** It focuses on inspiring and motivating young individuals to actively participate in political activities. It organizes workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions to educate youth about the importance of their involvement in the political process.

* **National Young Leaders Programme:** This programme is a Central Sector Scheme that identifies and nurtures young individuals with leadership potential, providing them with mentorship and training opportunities. The objective of the Programme is to develop leadership qualities among the youth to enable them to realize their full potential and in the process, to contribute to the nation-building process.

PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 2

To know how Youth-led movements engage in Indian politics (elections, membership of a political party):

They not only bring remarkable changes to the welfare of the country but also influence the people, especially their youth-mates to bring and work towards betterment of the society. Such youth-led movements are an example that if a movement led by the youth can be so loud then as leaders their changes to the country can be louder. Youth-led movements in India have been instrumental in driving social change and promoting democracy. Here are some notable trends:

• Pro-Democracy Movements:

-**Anti-Emergency Movement (1975):** Student protests played a crucial role in opposing Indira Gandhi's Emergency, which led to the eventual downfall of the Congress government.

-**Anti-CAA Movement:** A widespread movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act, which was seen as discriminatory and threatened the rights of certain communities.

- **Social Justice Movements:**

-Anti-Mandal Agitation (1990): Students protested against the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report, which aimed to provide reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in public sector jobs.

-Justice for Rohith Vemula: A movement sparked after the suicide of a Dalit Ph.D. student at the University of Hyderabad, highlighting issues of caste-based discrimination and inequality.

-Pinjratod Movement: A group founded by female students in JNU to advocate for equal rights and rules for men and women in universities.

- **Other Notable Movements:**

-Nirbhaya Protests: A massive movement demanding justice for a young woman who was brutally raped in Delhi, leading to changes in laws related to sexual violence.

-Patidar Protests: A movement led by young Patidar leader Hardik Patel demanding OBC status for the Patidar community in Gujarat.

- Student movements in Northeast India: Youth-led protests and activism have been instrumental in promoting democracy and social change in the region, often focusing on issues like environmental concerns, identity consciousness, and human rights^{4 3}. A few such movements are:

- **Chipko Movement:** The Chipko Movement, which started in the 1970s, was a grassroots movement led by villagers, including many young individuals, in Uttarakhand. They protested against deforestation and the indiscriminate cutting of trees by hugging them to protect them from being felled.

- **Anti-Corruption Movement:** In 2011, social activist Anna Hazare led a movement against corruption in India. Many young people actively participated in protests and hunger strikes, demanding the passage of the Jan Lokpal Bill to establish an independent anti-corruption ombudsman.

- **Nirbhaya Movement:** Following the brutal gang rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi in 2012, there was a massive outcry across the country. Thousands of young people took to the streets, demanding justice for the victim and stricter laws against sexual assault.

- **Jallikattu Protests:** In 2017, Tamil Nadu witnessed widespread protests, mainly led by students and young people, against the ban on the traditional bull-taming sport called Jallikattu. The movement aimed to preserve cultural traditions while ensuring the safety and well-being of the animals involved.

- **Anti-CAA agitation in Assam and Delhi, 2020:** Division bells: In December 2019, the Union government passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), massive and partly violent protests erupted first in Assam, led by the All Assam Students' Union, and soon spread to other neighbouring northeastern states as they feared that providing citizenship to

illegal immigrants from Bangladesh would alter the region's demographic balance, resulting in a loss of their political rights, culture, and resources. In Assam, police firing claimed five young lives. Meanwhile, on December 15, major protests took place near the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi where mobs burnt and destroyed public property. The police forcibly entered the Jamia campus, and used batons and tear gas, injuring over 100 students. In protest the CAA and solidarity with Jamia students, civil society groups and students took to the streets in many parts of India. However, unlike the protesters in the northeast, their counterparts elsewhere believed the CAA to be discriminatory against Muslims.

PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 3

Identify the Emerging trends in Indian Democracy, Opportunities & Challenges:

Youth participation is seen in every aspect and profession in India, may it be engineering, medicine, legal, commerce, business, sports, social work, and various other occupations, we discover youth show their absolute interest but when it comes to politics it is very rarely seen and when one shall have an interest in the same, it is suppressed for the long run as a career. Since its independence, India has been in a vicious circle of an unchanged system and the same political parties, but more youth in the system could bring more notable and advanced changes in the country. There are many reasons for the lack of youth representation in the Indian Political System, such as the lack of trust in the political institutions, social and political factors like family expectations, underrepresentation of youth in politics, etc. But the influence that the youth could have on our country cannot go unnoticed due to these ever-lasting factors that may always exist if no change is made. A few of such notable reasons for the youth to actively participate in the political arena are:

TRENDS:

- Increasing Use of Technology in Governance: One of the most remarkable shifts in Indian democracy is the incorporation of technology into governance. E-governance initiatives like Aadhaar-based subsidy delivery and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system ensure targeted benefits reach the intended beneficiaries seamlessly.

- Rise of Regionalism and Coalition Politics:

Regionalism has become a dominant force in Indian politics. Citizens increasingly demand development tailored to their regions, leading to the emergence of strong regional parties. This trend has posed challenges to national parties, making it difficult for them to secure a majority. Consequently, coalition politics has become the norm, requiring political alliances to form stable governments.

- Rise of Digital Democracy and Judicial Activism:

The growing role of digital platforms in shaping public

opinion and political discourse signifies the advent of **digital democracy**. Leaders increasingly use these platforms to connect with citizens, bridging gaps between governance and the governed.

- Shift from Ideology-Based to Issue-Based Politics:

Indian politics has transitioned from being ideology-centric to issue-driven. Earlier, political parties were predominantly aligned with leftist, rightist, or centrist ideologies. Today, voters prioritize tangible outcomes like improved infrastructure, healthcare, education, and welfare programs. This pragmatic approach highlights the electorate's growing focus on performance over promises.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Fresh Perspectives:** The youth bring new ideas, innovative thinking, and fresh perspectives to the table. Their unique experiences and insights can lead to creative solutions for the challenges faced by our nation.
- **Representation:** The youth make up a significant portion of the population. By actively participating in politics, they can ensure that their voices, concerns, and aspirations are represented in decision-making processes.
- **Change Agents:** Young people have the energy, enthusiasm, and passion to drive meaningful change. By engaging in politics, they can advocate for issues they care about, such as education, employment, climate change, and social justice.
- **Future Leaders:** Youth involvement in politics helps groom future leaders who can shape the destiny of our nation. By gaining firsthand experience in governance and policy-making, they can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to lead effectively.
- **Empowerment:** Participating in politics empowers the youth to have a direct impact on the issues that affect their lives and the lives of others. It gives them a platform to voice their opinions, engage in debates, and contribute to the development of their communities.
- **Social Justice and Equality:** Many young individuals are passionate about social justice, equality, and human rights. By engaging in politics, they can advocate for causes they believe in and work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

CHALLENGES:

- **Dynastic Politics:** Indian politics is often characterized by dynastic rule, with many parties being led by family members of prominent politicians.
- **Criminalization of Politics:** There are concerns about the increasing presence of lawmakers with criminal charges, which can undermine the integrity of the political system.
- **Executive Accountability:** The concentration of power in the executive branch has raised concerns about accountability and the potential erosion of democratic institutions.

- **Un-ideological Polarization:** The absence of strong ideological frameworks often leads to fragmented political narratives.

- **Populist Rhetoric:** Politicians frequently resort to populist promises, which may not always align with long-term development goals.

- **Fake News and Misinformation:** The proliferation of fake news through digital platforms misinforms citizens, impacting their decision-making.

5. CONCLUSION:

The impact that youth have on our country, towards its progress is tremendous. They shape the future of our country and lead it to the path of remarkable accomplishments. But in doing so one of the major factors that influence the development of the country is the political system of the country which the youth must also strive to lead as they must not forget that their voice matters and their participation in Indian politics makes a concrete difference provided, they stay truthful and determined to their intention without getting deviated to any kind of influence in a negative path. It is also important to remember that even small acts of engagement, such as staying informed, voting, or joining youth-led organizations, are a way to encourage yourself as a youth to the political aspect. It is very essential to promote political education, encourage open dialogue, and create platforms for youth to voice their concerns. By fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, more young individuals are inspired to actively engage and address the existing challenges by creating a more inclusive and vibrant political landscape.

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