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## STUDENT POLITICS IN INDIA: A STUDY OF ROLE OF YOUTH IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Youth, one of the great sources a nation have, are not only considered as the future leaders by law, but are potentially and in actual the greatest savings for a country's development. Student Politics is an important area of enquiry in social sciences. Students constitute one of the most knowledgeable, dynamic and progressive components of the society. In India the study of student politics and leadership assumes special significance in as much as it enables us to visualize the quality and trend of political leadership in the country. Most of the present day political leaders in India were recruited from youth and student leadership. In a rapidly changing society they have come to forefront to make the changes that must be made to meet new challenges and conditions. The Possible change that can be made in the Indian democracy by the youth is when they will realize the power that they have in their hands. Students should be given proper training related to politics in educational institutions especially in Colleges and universities through participation in Unions. Students should be taught how to take part in politics and must be given training how to vote properly.*



**KEY WORDS :** Political Leadership; Unions; Student Politics.

### INTRODUCTION

Youth, one of the great sources a nation have, are not only considered as the future leaders by law, but are potentially and in actual the greatest savings for a country's development. Youth is a valuable property of a nation that can do extraordinary things if used in a right manner. Student unions are the source of power and accumulate house of unlimited energy which brings reputation to the country.

Indian Youth as a category is extremely difficult to find out at a time when there is no general agreement yet amongst scholars on its least definition. The category or the social group referred to as 'Indian youth' many look simple as most of us identify this category by a certain age group, but it is not as simple as one can think. The importance of youth as a demographic category due to its absolute size in the subcontinent is undeniable. The government of India had its own age bracket of 13-35 years as a definition of youth in different national youth policies. However, in the most recent National youth Policy (2014), the age bracket was shrunk to 15- 29 years; it was 16 to 30 years according to National youth Policy (2012). Researchers who conducted studies on Indian youth have looked at a different age bracket- up to around 25 years. The difference of opinion about youth is not only limited to different age groups, but also other demographic factors, such as location, gender, level of educational attainment, caste, region, religion, and

economic class of the family to which the youth belong; all these throw up challenges in defining the category referred to as Indian youth.

If we look at Indian national movement, the youth constituted its major plank. Several national leaders, such as Gandhi, felt that the participation of youth is crucial to achieve significant advancement in the nationalist struggle. It was therefore both the agencies and the target of appeal. Political forces were often constrained to throw off symbols appealing to youth.

Independent India was to witness mighty outpourings of youth power a number of times. It is a different matter whether such expressions were welcomed or reviled. As is well known the J.P. Movement of the 1970s was thrust to the centre stage by youth. The Naxalite Movement which rocked many parts and regions of India, particularly in the 60s and 70s drew its sustenance primarily from the youth. They were in the front position of the struggle for and against the policy of affirmative action.

### OBJECTIVES

This Paper Focuses on;

1. Student politics in India and the role of Students in College and University Unions.
2. Suggestions to Strengthen the Students to Participate in Student Unions.

### Sources of Data

This Paper is based on the Secondary sources of Data from, books, Newspapers, Government reports etc.

### Student Politics in India

Student Politics is an important area of enquiry especially in social sciences. Students form one of the most educated, self-motivated and progressive components of the society. The study of student politics and leadership assumes special significance in as much as it facilitates us to imagine the quality and trend of political leadership in the country. The majority of the present day political leaders in India were employed from youth and student leadership. In a rapidly changing society they have come to spearhead the changes that must be made to meet new challenges and conditions.

The youth is not merely an age group. It has also definable, social, psychological, and ideological dimensions. Its strength varies from society to society. Its demographic strength and its psychological orientation had often led the youth to participate and even directed towards movements to achieve a set of demands.

According to the latest United Nations (UN) report, India is having the world's largest youth population in spite of having a smaller population than China. Countries with large youth population could see development if the young people are provided proper education and training. The table below shows that India is having highest Youth population as compared to other countries:

**Table 1.1: Youth Population- (Highest in India as compared to other Countries)**

Country	Population (in millions)	Youth (15-24 yrs) Population (in millions)	Proportion of Youths (%)
China	1358.8	242.2	17.8
India	1205.6	229.0	19.0
USA	312.2	43.9	14.1
Indonesia	240.6	40.5	16.8

Brazil	195.2	33.6	17.2
Pakistan	173.1	37.2	21.5

Source: World Population Prospects – The 2012 Revision, UN 2013

There are so many struggles that were led by the youth. They have constituted the most important second step leadership of the peasant, the working class and other social movements in India. Youth have been in the forefront of the struggles against dowry, rape and gender discrimination and for maintenance of rights and equality. Some of the most unforgettable experiments in the fields of culture, media administration, science, technology and entrepreneurship have been suggested or determinately pursued by youth. This is true of India as well as other societies.

Indian National Students Organization, Students Federation of India, Dr. Ambedkar Student Front of India, National Students Union of India, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, Students Federation of India, Sunni Students' Federation, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, All India Students Association, All India Students Federation, Muslim Students Federation, All India Democratic Students' Organisation are the major Student's Organisations in India.

### STUDENT UNIONS IN INDIA

The youth is the future of every nation. They with their capacity need to learn to work towards the progress of the nation. Since the period of the Congress Party supremacy, the students unions in India has developed a composite institution of student politics. Most of these unions are allied to political parties and actively participate in any existing crisis, especially those related to students. Some of the important students' unions in India include:

#### Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) is an All India student Union which was founded in 1948 and today is the largest student Union in India. With the slogan of "Knowledge, Character & Unity", ABVP draws its motivation from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the leading Hindu nationalist organization of the country.

#### All India Students Federation (AISF)

With the slogan of "Study and Struggle", AISF was founded on 12 August 1936 under the guidance of Nehru. It has the honor of being the first student body to be directly involved in helping India attain independence.

#### All India Democratic Students' Organization (AIDSO)

Founded on 28 December 1954, AIDSO is associated with the Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist). The slogan of AIDSO is to fight against injustice, oppression and exploitation and promote social transformation.

#### Students' Federation of India (SFI)

SFI is an independent students' union which was formed in 1970. A Socialist Organization, SFI's slogan is "Independence, Democracy, and Socialism!" SFI believes that education is the only means to free India of the restraints of regressive ideas.

### **Delhi University Student Union (DUSU)**

The Delhi University Students Union is the representative body of the students from most colleges and faculties. Apart from this, each college has its own students union to which elections are held every year. The student elections are fought keenly and with great enthusiasm. In the past, several of the office bearers of Delhi University Students Union have gone on to hold public offices in State and central governments. The elections to Delhi University Students Union are by direct voting by the students of the University and member Colleges. The elections are usually held in August -September of each year.

### **Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU)**

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union or JNUSU is Students' union primarily responsible for building and preserving a healthy political culture and an atmosphere of open debates on the campus. Students are kept informed about the public meetings, discussions and other issues through pamphlets and notices. Public Action, an objective forum, invited a variety of journalists, politicians, and academics, to debate and discusses various topics.

### **Youth Wings of Political Parties in India: -**

Some prominent Youth Wings of Political Parties in India are –

1. Indian Youth Congress
2. Bhartiya Janta Yuva Morcha
3. Asom Yuva Parishad
4. All India Trinamool Youth Congress
5. Jharkhand Yuva Morcha
6. National Youth league (Indian National League)
7. All India Youth League
8. All India Democratic Youth organization
9. All Indian Federation Youth Organization
10. Yuva Janta Dal
11. Revolutionary Youth Association
12. Democratic Youth Federation of India

The student involvement in Political pattern in every society is vital. Political Unions mostly do important tasks in a political system like mobilizing and organizing protest, petition, or lobby for political change. There was a time when politics was associated with only the middle-aged and senior citizens but with youth playing dynamic role in nation building especially in the developed societies of the world. It was the youth of France who led the freedom campaign of Algeria in the streets of Paris.

The student union politics that happened at Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University in September 2015 in Delhi saw the student wings of major Political parties who contested an intense electoral battle at the college campuses with the Aam Admi party making a entrance in student politics by beginning its student wing known by the name of Chhatra Yuva Sanghrsh Samiti. This struggle for power in the campuses is measured as a reflection of the political inclination of younger generation.

The policies expressed in the Constitution and the rights guaranteed by law take a actual shape in the form of special programs for youth. Youth is understood as power, force, and the wealth of the Country. Therefore the schemes are visualized with the idea of serving the youth as well as utilizing the services of youth in a number of situations with a view to uphold general awareness and education, employment, health, sports, recreation etc.

The Possible change that can be made in the Indian democracy by the youth is when they will realize the power that they have in their hands. In every general election a large number of youth vote and some of them are those who vote for the first time. In 2014, a total of 150 million new youth were added in the list of

voters. The power of this number and along with the decision making ability of the youth combined is capable to show a new age of Indian democracy.

But if we see, only 40 percent of the newly eligible voters in the age group of 18-19 years are currently enrolled in India. In large states like Uttar Pradesh, 75 lakh and in Bihar 46 lakh young have turned 18 but have not been yet enrolled in the list of voters. There is a large difference in the newly eligible young voters and actual voters who are registered. The focus of Election commission of India is on the young voters as it has been noticed that young voters are enrolled much less in number.

**A Dialogue on Student Politics in India: Issues and Challenges** was mutually organized by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) with student leaders from some of the most well-known universities in India on 28th November 2017, held at the CSDS Seminar Hall, Delhi. It was an extraordinary occasion to have had all newly elected Student leaders from some of the most well-known Universities of India belonging to different student party lines and ideologies at the same platform to discuss and deliberate on issues of concern that matters most to student politics today in Indian Universities.

It was a day long deliberation between the student leaders and the faculty and researchers from CSDS as well as other students and audience present for the dialogue. The programme begun with an introduction of the Dialogue by Prof. Sanjay Kumar, Director of CSDS and an opening remark by Mr. Peter Rimmele, Resident Representative to KAS Office India.

#### **The broader objectives of the dialogue were:**

1. To observe the impact of national or state politics on the student union elections.
2. To identify the issues rose during the election campaign by the student parties
3. To understand the role of gender in student politics
4. To examine the role of caste in student union elections
5. To discuss the challenges faced by elected student bodies while running the union
6. To overview the recommendation laid by Lyngdoh committee

Politics as an aspect plays an important role in our lives and we all need to take an active interest in it without any discrimination on the bases of age, gender, status, etc. But there is a difference between interest and staying side by side with politics and political issues as compared to allowing politics to dominate and consume us in the process. This is where most people, believe that student politics should ideally be banned from college and University campuses. Of course, it is one thing to indulge in the rhetoric, quite another to talk logic and sense. Hence, here goes: College: Academic Institution or Political Institution? The reasons Educational institutions exist in society, is for the sake of imparting education. When politics comes to rule over academics on college campus, education takes a back seat and students become involved in issues that truly have no place on campus. But when we start contribution in petty politics, we defeat its very purpose, which is academic not political.

Banning student politics by no means is an answer in a democratic society. The unions have many advantages and play a crucial role in forming policies of government in different countries. In modern democracies the participation of masses in general and youth in particular is very important so it is necessary that every citizen should be on a proper representation in democracy, which vitalizes the role of student unions.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. Some of us imagine that Politics spoils the career of the youth and thus the students should be kept away from politics which is not correct. Students should be given proper training related to politics in educational institutions especially in Colleges and universities through participation in Unions. Academic education and Student politics should go side by side.

2. Most of the do not want the students to participate in political activities due to its connection with violence and muscle power. But educational institutions need to make students politically aware and teach them how to raise questions. The aim of an educational institution should not be only to instruct the curriculum but also make students equally responsible and aware citizens. The student Union also acts as a major connection between the students and the campus administration that makes it accountable and helps the administration to organize events and address those grievances faced by the students.
3. Youth politicians, young journalists, young students and leaders of the national polity should work through Student Unions for general public and reform the whole system.
4. The role and relation of politics with youth is to be taken in constructive perspective, they are hope of corruption free society who will uphold morals, effectively and honestly.
5. Only positive approach will make sure that Indian youth will improve the country which is under the dark clouds of corruption.
6. Student Unions are the best medicines to cure the disease of future, but also the key factor in the present situation is to give a systematic and full solution of the problems faced.
7. The role of youth is of most importance in today's time. It has underplayed itself in field of politics. Youth should become hopeful entrepreneurs rather than simple workers.
8. Youth participation is important because youth are the country's power. Youth recognize problems and can solve them too. Youth are strong force in social movements.
9. We should not consider only youth as future of our country but we should give them a chance to be an active participant in the system or to be a key of democratic operation. This simply needs a change from traditional approach to modern approach.
10. Discrimination is made on the basis of gender, caste etc. in unions and the girl students are not provided with equal opportunity to participate as there is continuous unequal position of women in society. There should be no discrimination in Student Unions on the basis of Gender, caste etc.

## CONCLUSION

Some of us imagine that Politics spoils the career of the youth and thus the students should be kept away from politics which is not correct. Students should be given proper training related to politics in educational institutions especially in Colleges and universities through participation in Unions. Students should be taught how to take part in politics and must be given training how to vote properly. Students should be right to participate in politics with proper guidance which is better than to keep them aloof from politics. They may be made able to face the problems related to politics in the country they reside. The Possible change that can be made in the Indian democracy by the youth is when they will realize the power that they have in their hands. The lack of politics in college campuses tends to make them authoritarian and undemocratic, which is not healthy. Educational institutions need to make students politically aware and teach them how to raise questions. The aim of an educational institution should not be only to instruct the curriculum but also make students equally responsible and aware citizens. The student Unions acts as a major connection between the students and the campus administration that makes it accountable and helps the administration to organize events and address those grievances faced by the students.

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