quintessentially

Young and Political India

A magazine for, of, and by **YOUNG INDIANS**

QUINTESSENTIALLY:

YOUNG AND POLITICAL IN INDIA

A MAGAZINE FOR, OF AND BY YOUNG INDIANS

CONTENT

India is many things - among others it is often critical to remind oneself that we speak about a subcontinent with heterogeneous and distinct identities, cultures, languages and priorities. Even as we come together as one people, we remain in many ways subject to far too many interpretations, hence often easily misunderstood. Unlike multiple other monoliths by way of context, these nuances are significant as one starts to navigate the complexity of India's policy landscape as well.

Our starting point at the Social Policy Research Foundation was to find a way to bridge the gap between academic research on public policy themes and the public. Cultures and histories are complex, and raw data remains always at the surface of things. AT SPRF, our work aims to draw out India's subtleties with sensitivity, because the most important stories demand nuance and context. We curate, incubate and aggregate ideas from young people, building partnerships and content that aim to provide solutions and a forward thinking approach to policy problems. Non-partisan and intersectional, our evidence based work uses technology and big data analytics to inform and influence India's ever-evolving policy landscape. Our intent is to offer solutions while engaging with India's youth to invigorate and address policy challenges.

We create innovatively designed, inclusive and easy-to-comprehend content and resources that remain cause-, agenda-, and party-neutral. SPRF functions and progresses with the understanding that the key voting constituency in India remains under the age of 25. We seek to engage and encourage the youth to ask relevant questions backed by facts.

SPRF is an intersectional think tank bridging public policy and academic research. Based in Delhi, steered by a Board of eminent trustees and seasoned advisors and spearheaded by a young, dynamic, and digital-first team, SPRF seeks to make public policy research holistic and accessible.

The launch of this joint publication between SPRF and Young India Foundation is a creative venture platforming youth voices in the Indian polity and research realm. This first issue is pivoted on being young and political in India, opening up multi-media submissions to young people about their experiences, aspirations, and hopes for the country and its political future.

Neha Simlai,
founder and CEO, SPRF India

Neha currently leads SPRF India. SPRF is a think tank based in Delhi working on a range of critical themes to bridge academic research and public policy. Neha has been a sustainability and public policy professional with 16 years of public and private sector experience. Neha works with global teams and intersectional engagements across five countries and specialises in natural capital management, regenerative agriculture and environmental sustainability.

REDEFINING THE
POWER OF
YOUTH
IN INDIAN POLITICS:

The emerging 'Kursi' of Petitions, Hashtags and Digital Advocacy

By: Akriti Maurya and Devanshi Agarwal

(3rd year students pursuing B.A. (hons.)
Psychology from Lady Shri Ram College for Women)

Young adults have been kept at a distance from the reality of what plays a significant role in both their personal and political life - the realms of policies, the laws and the governing institutions. Similar to other explorations, politics is one arena that young adults seek for a peep at, only in an attempt to better understand what they hear all day round on prime times, or read at the hoardings with symbols that are beyond their comprehension. Throughout history, politics has earned a reputation as a 'dirty affair', perpetuating the notion that exposure to its realities would corrupt the minds of the youth.

However, their lack of presence has been compensated in recent times with the advent of technology and other socio-po-litical reasons, the direct mode of activism has been redefined and remodified to a more indirect form of digital or armchair activism where people, especially the young population, need not step out of their houses to express their dissent. Rather, they just sit back on their 'kursi' and use the internet technology to engage in the political processes. In other words, the powerful 'kursi' has become more decentralised. This is the phenomenon that is popularly termed as 'armchair activism'.

The present article aims to analyse the involvement of youth, through tracing back the history of youth participation in India and introducing the changed nature of 'kursi' with the rise in online petitions, hashtags and digital advocacy. It further provides a future direction for upcoming researchers, educationists and students interested in the field to draw upon this phenomenon and the lessons it holds.

With a population of more than 1.4 billion people and a 73 year old constitution that binds together the sentiments of democracy in the country, India is one of the most politically active countries in the world. Ranging from high voter turnouts to robust civil society organisations and frequent protests and marches, the country possesses a vibrant and dynamic political landscape. What makes it even more interesting to study is the fact that the country has, for long, been a breeding ground for a host of aspiring young politicians, all determined to ascend the ladder of power or in other words, the powerful 'kursi'.

The proactive involvement of youth is undoubtedly a notable aspect of the political system of a country whose median age is around 28 years. History is evident that the younger population of India has always strived hard to make its presence felt in the broader political context. For instance, JP Narayan's call for total revolution was majorly championed by the youth. The movement, which called for an end to corruption and mismanagement, witnessed widespread participation from students and young activists that in turn highlighted their determination to get their voices heard. As a matter of fact, there exists a long list of such incidents where the youth

actively reached out on the streets and became vocal about their issues. The 1990 protests against the Mandal Commission report about reservation of OBCs, the anti corruption demonstrations in Delhi in 2014, the nationwide student protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 and the farmers' protests of 2020-21 are all significant instances of the Indian youth's commitment in political movements. These incidents clearly highlight the passion, energy and determination of the young generation to address societal concerns and demand accountability from the government. Researchers have also found that the post pandemic world has seen a shift towards more specific issue-based and identity-driven activism surrounding gender equality, LGBTQ rights and mental health issues. Some of the major ways of expression that people nowadays rely upon include online petitions, hashtag movements and digital advocacy programs spread across social media platforms.

Social media has acted as a platform for both social and political issues. The presence of politicians on social media in itself has risen in its capacity in order to cengage the rising number of young people interacting on social media. Social media campaigns, websites, podcasts on leading platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have all shaped an image about contesting leaders and those already in power. A survey conducted by ADG Online- a digital marketing company has claimed that nearly one-third of first-time voters were influenced by political messages on social media platforms in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. Extensive rallies still remain important as one of the campaigning methods, however an alternative social media presence has certainly increased.

As far as the barriers on the way of youth participation are concerned then an important phenomenon that has prevented the youth from rising to a political power and entering politics has been the lack of opportunities provided to them. It is due to the innate preference towards a presumed rightful heir in the family itself. This decision

is accepted and rather welcomed by other senior political party members without any doubt, as they know who holds the reins in their hands. It is rather analogous to other fields where we find the impact of nepotism as a severe discouraging factor for the youth. With platforms emerging outside the political parties wherein young leaders have the chance to present their ideas and more importantly themselves, ultimately leading to better opportunities for them to present their overall image. These opportunities have arisen over the digital platform over time as will be discussed further, as a medium of 'winning over'.

Further, a careful look at the youth wings will reveal that these designated wings of popular political parties have existed for a very long time. However, in reality, their comparison to the actual number of parties at the state and national level is insignificant.

These wings surely hold great promise for the country as they provide a direct platform for young people to have an initial entry into the world of politics and participate actively in a dedicated wing which welcomes their ideas. But their mere presence does not ensure progression of individuals in the field of politics.
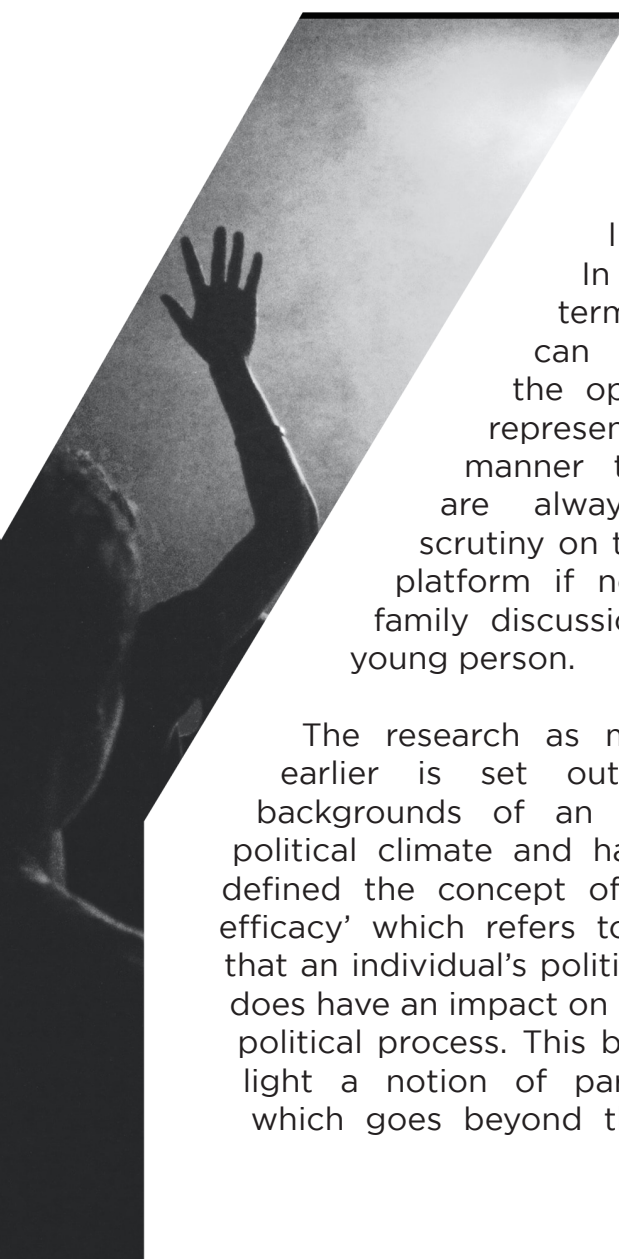
As Psychology students ourselves, research done on the crossroads of a psychological viewpoint and political efficacy has deeply interested our present analysis of what drives the youth, and what prevents them. A

research published by Easton and Dennis titled 'The Child's Acquisition of Regime Norms: Political Efficacy' (2014) revealed that children from an early age acquire an attitude to perceive politics. The evidence to this lies in the quickness and familiarity later on to adapt a political identity when they reach maturity. The term introduced is known as 'political socialisation' which as a process shapes the political attitude and preferences of young people. These preferences are shaped in a manner that they are sustained till maturity.

The forces of socialisation from friends and family have now certainly changed to social media. Thus the socialisation catalyst in the present age is social media. Interestingly, due to its vast reach it has provided a view different from the usual norms shared by elders of the family or acquaintances related to the common waves of political parties and

of a single vote to a potential of forming policies and having a say in the discussions that impact the youth.

At this point, it is interesting to note and connect from the research above that political scientists across the country have clearly revealed the powerful influence of youth involvement in 'participatory democracy' (Wagner, 2015) and a related gradual shift from the conventional, active form of youth activism to a more digitally driven, passive activism where young activists are increasingly mobilising like minded people independently with the help of social media platforms and other online channels. This kind of activism has been referred to by some scholars as armchair activism or slacktivism, a relatively new phenomenon that has been found to reinforce the political efficacy of the younger population.

favoured leaders. In simple terms one can say that the options are represented in a manner that they are always under scrutiny on the virtual platform if not in the family discussions for a young person.

The research as mentioned earlier is set out in the backgrounds of an American political climate and has further defined the concept of 'political efficacy' which refers to a belief that an individual's political action does have an impact on the actual political process. This brings into light a notion of participation which goes beyond the power

Apart from the inevitable push provided by the pandemic and the subsequent technological tide, a significant factor contributing to this shift is the current government's emphasis on the dream of a 'Digital India' which has simplified information sharing through digital channels and empowered. For instance, with the emergence of the farmers' protests in 2020-21, young adults have received recent updates via social media on the current situation, and have widely contributed their opinion. Moreover, the #metoo movement was yet political act that gained momentum through social media, allowing survivors of sexual harassment to share their stories. A number of times these discussions and sharing of opinions sometimes have also led to ugly fights, but the informed youth has largely absorbed the information only to make better decisions. In this sense social media has also acted as a platform for sharing political knowledge through mediums like networking sites which is impacted by young traffic.While newspapers and authentic news channels are no substitute to sharing of current affairs, social media has acted as a more accessible option or in simpler terms a 'go to option'.

This also raises the question on the credibility of news shared online, which involves doing a thorough background check on the person posting the content and to clearly identify their intentions to draw support. While most of the young individuals are involved in online activism to act as responsible stakeholders and present their viewpoint, some can even take undue benefit to propagate an agenda of a particular political nature regardless of the credibility of the information.

Diverse individuals from different professions and walks of life have utilised social media for different political concerns. A recent example has been the role of animal activists working towards the right cause to prevent a proposed bill (The Livestock and Livestock Products (Importation and Exportation) Bill, 2023) from being passed due to its severe consequences. The online campaign had a positive impact like many others. Posts related to concerns like these not just ask for support, but rather inform us of many decisions that otherwise we are unknown of.

This increased awareness aided by more power in hand from the single 'kursi' marks the change in the scenario of an equally important set of stakehold-ers-higher education students, working professionals and educationists. The mention of education makes us consider whether the youth for so long really have been politically disinterested or have just been lacking the knowledge that equips them to be more active as citizens. It raises the question on whether 'politics' is just a theoretical subject matter of concern to the students who hail from the field of Humanities or social sciences and whether it should be completely abandoned by students from other streams. Ironically, 'political science' regardless of what the name suggests has not been considered scientific enough to draw the attention of the majority of the youth who are absorbed in the technicalities and finances of their academic life. Regardless of the basic subject matter of Civics taught at an early age, the question lies in the application of the subject. It is a question on going beyond the text prescribed to understand real world political phenomena.

A direction that these developments and questions pave for the future are to prepare a significant chunk of young people to be involved in politics, to have an opinion as framed by their own knowledge, to be precisely immune from one-sided elements. Organisations like Youth India Foundation are the need of the hour to come up front to provide a platform for not just representation of emerging young leaders, but rather to create more young leaders with the right political knowledge.

It is now time for this political knowledge to widen its scope and include digital advocacy, an inevitable platform that defines new age activism. While the young move towards this digital medium, it would be inappropriate to neglect the impact of physical campaigning, protests and real time advocacy. In other words, digital and physical methods of political involvement play complementary roles in shaping the socio-political sphere of a nation like India and it is undoubtedly the youth which can effectively bridge the gap between the two.

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT UNIONS

BY ARSHIYA KHANNA

The very notion of being political is tainted by its instances of corrupt power play and petty party politics. for ease of reference, a simple textbook definition spells out "political" to be concerned with activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government. Yet, a widely held bias is that- to be political is to be an obnoxious and superfluous engagement that fuels inconclusive spats and disrupts 'otherwise peaceful' day to day routines. To be political is (believed) to be uncivil.

While this widespread notion is grounded in a fear of falling prey to corrupt tomfoolery, it simultaneously operates under the larger impression of being unnecessarily exaggerated. Unnecessary because politics seems to worm its way through 'peaceful' day to day instances- on questions of the domestic help's livelihood, the roads we use, a ninth grader's school curriculum, the parks we litter. If one looks hard enough, this is where the necessity question answers itself. The necessity of being a political individual lies in the political nature of mundane articles of use. Simply put,

the very act of the government providing public goods and services to ensure welfare entails political consequences. The scale of accessibility and distribution combined with social cleavages of caste, religion, gender, and age may result in several varied experiences amongst citizens on the receiving end, resulting in content/discontent respectively. Needless to say, government involvement calls for consistent mechanisms of accountability and redressal. Take for example, the institution of marriage ie a union of betrothed individuals ideally bound by love but pragmatically bound by socio-cultural identities. Marriage additionally entails property relations, citizenship eligibility, and patriarchal hierarchies to uphold. Such sub-aspects are firmly mandated by the state's legal framework and public policies. Hence the act of entering, exiting or reforming the institution of marriage falls within the state's responsibility or as they say, is political in nature.

The point that we arrive at is simple: to receive and engage with state institutions and their output commonly equips a citizen with the autonomy to voice their grievances on the same. It takes only a concerned citizen in a noble pursuit of welfare to venture into political waters. The waters may be murky, with alarming upheavels now and then which is at best, a genuine concern to take into account. This prerequisite does not seem much as opposed to otherwise notorious perceptions of political individuals being uncouth and needlessly argumentative.

This is where the notion of being objectively apolitical falls. It is more often than not, used merely as a garb to remain lackadaisical and passive on issues of national importance.

Carrying the spirit of politicisation in daily life forward, there is a steadily rising involvement of the youth in the political playing field. In india, there are approximately 40 odd political organisations run by students all over the country. Such organisations are born with the intention of creating an inclusive platform for students to voice their opinions on socio-political issues of national prominence as well as college-spe-

cific administrative issues. Prominent organisations include RSS(Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), AISA(All India Students' Association), NSUI(National Students' Union of India), SFI(Students' Federation of India), ABVP(Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), etc. In a country like India, where begone as well as current governments constitute ministers within the age group of 40 and above, it is all the more important for student run organisations to act as new- generation pressure groups on the acting government. They have a higher likelihood of presenting progressive and sustainable solutions that complement the needs of the current, as well as future generations. Here, the phenomenon of generational gaps have a higher propensity of getting bridged by way of suitable policy reforms. despite student activism being in the limelight since the Independence Movement as well as the 1970s , there has begun a higher frequency of crackdowns on youth led movements since mid-2010s. Several draconian laws by the ruling government such as the UAPA, CAA-NRC, Sedition Law have been subjects of criticism but more importantly, have been used as tools to suppress protests marches and speeches. Several youth activists such as Umer Khalid, Asif Iqbal Tanha, Safoora Zargar, Kanhaiya Kumar have been jailed arbitrarily on counts of "hate-speech" and instigating "anti-national" sentiments. It is at this juncture, that the significance of student activism and unions be reiterated clearly. The autocratic undertones that taint this country's legislation, have in the past been brought to the surface through emphatic rallies led by students, amongst other stakeholders.

In addition to this, student unions help breed an environment of adequate political awareness, disseminate information on issues of local as well as national importance, and acting as a reliable medium between the students and college authorities. Frequent problems pertaining hike in fees, inadequate infrastructure, entrance examinations, etc gain enough traction due to the evergreen spirit of dissent and dialogue upheld by the youth.

Alternatively, there exists a vacuum in institutions such as IITs, IIMs, AIIMs, etc in terms of redressal mechanisms as well as a public forum for discussions and debate. Recently, authorities in OP Jindal Global University suspended a group of students selling a political magazine "Nazariya" on campus. The students were reportedly manhandled and magazines were forcefully seized. It was through discontent and a need for negotiations expressed by the student government, that the magazines' sale was allowed once again.

student unions have been characterised by strong influence from political parties, including bulky financial assistance. Given their strong affiliation to national level political parties, most fear that student organisations are reduced to a mere reflection of dirty politics and propaganda showpieces that are marched around college campuses. The propensity of violent clashes and rioting is relatively higher in this context. That being said, state mechanisms that are firm yet democratically justified are the go-to tool for keeping political clashes in check. a critical analysis of the nature of student unions necessitates the act of weighing its benefits against its drawbacks, considering both to be fairly genuine in their respective contexts. The outcome eventually stands to be net positive due to the over-arching feature of freedom of speech and dissent as well as the consequent maintenance of checks and balances crucial to keep a potentially-auto-cratic government accountable.

To reiterate, it simply takes a concerned citizen in a noble pursuit of welfare to venture into political waters. It is a chaste yet courageous choice driven on burning questions waiting to be satiated through political reform.

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SOURIK PHOTOGRAPHY

Sourik Photography

Sourik Photography

Sourik Photography

SOURIK PHOTOGRAPHY

BY SOURIK GHOSH
Sourik Ghosh is a Zoology student from Howrah, West Bengal who is passionate about photography.

BEING YOUNG AND POLITICAL IN INDIA

BY DEVANGANA ANIL KUMAR

Devangana Anil Kumar is a class 11th student studying at the Mahindra United World College, Pune

India has more than 50% of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below the age of 35. By 2030, India's dependency ratio will be just over 0.4. These statistics are undeniable proof that India's youth are a diverse and dynamic population, with growing importance and presence in the political arena. With the emergence and popularity of social media and public platforms, young people have tightened their powers and raised their voices against the issues that concern them and others. Youth political bodies of various national and state parties are often visible displaying their protest and concern in mainstream media and on the roads.

Despite the arguments and concerns over youth and student participation in politics, it goes without saying that not engaging in politics is like being drowned but insisting you don't need to be saved. politics has existed ever since human beings decided to be in organised groups. and it will continue to exist until the end.

In history, every time the youth of India came together to fight for a cause, it led to revolutions and significant historical changes, From the 1920 protests over academic discrimination between English and Indian students to The JP movement in Bihar and the protest against the imposition of emergency and the recent CAA protests, the youth contributed to many such turnovers in our history.

Despite playing a crucial role in the political landscape, the youth of India find it difficult to emerge into the main scene with many political parties being playgrounds of dynastic succession. They are often challenged with the obstacles of power and wealth that reside within many senior members. Moreover, ageism and stereotypes might question the competence of young leaders, undermining their credibility.

But in recent days a strange structure of politics in India emerged to be that the educated class of our country does not have a significant vote ratio nor participate in active politics. The reason many questionable leaders come to power is not because people voted for them but because the educated urban class did not exercise their vote for them. The Greek philosopher Plato quoted that "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics, is that you end up being governed by your inferiors." The urban youth, who currently resides on the throne of privilege, do not indulge in activities that do not affect them directly. The lacks of empathy and political aspirations drive the educated class far away from the political space, thus reducing their significance in the said field. To be apolitical is to be selfish. Or it is ignorance. In Einstien's words, " Politics is more difficult than physics". To indulge yourselves in the matters of society is not a pleasant task. One must be mentally armed to face the people, the opinions, the judgements and the arguments. India's political landscape is evolving, and the active participation of young people is vital in steering the nation toward progress, inclusivity, and prosperity. Embracing their voices and perspectives will undoubtedly lead to a stronger and more vibrant democracy in India.

EXISTING CHALLENGES BEHIND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

BY SRUTHI.S.KUMAR

When other developed nations are experiencing the declination of young population, India is blessed with 66% of its population below the age of 35, and we have the world's largest youth population. The National Youth Policy (NYP) established in 2014 is revised with the aim of youth empowerment, not only economically productive people but also to mould a socially responsible citizen. By envisioning the development of young generation in coming years and the target should be achieved in 2030 through giving priority to 5 different sectors. Incorporating the sustainable development goals (SDGs); boundless actions in employment & entrepreneurship, education, youth leadership & development, health fitness & sports and social justice are included in the new policy drafted by government under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The first NYP was introduced in 1988 and it get updated till 2014; but the five objectives as well as 11 priority areas contributed only for the growth of an educated healthy youth, nothing done with the development of our nation. The NYP 2021 line up with United nations SDGs entails the idea of better education, equality, reduction of unemployment rate, health wellness, involvement in sports & fitness activities and so on. It acclaims that a comprehensive education system able to provide awareness about mental health; in addition, importance of young community in the expansion of productive nation possibilities.

The challenges faced for the implementation of new NYP is the most considerable facts than the aims & objectives of the policy. According to the criteria intermingled, the policy can be executed in a society where equal employment rates and equal education exists. But in our country some problems intrude in between; notably gender parity, denial of women education, growth in unemployment rate, financial hierarchy, lack of opportunities, caste & racial discrimination etc. When we just flip through, the majority states encounter above mentioned problems and like to run away from a socializing environment. By creating more awareness among common people about a reality that there is a an excel face of community exists in this world who is far brighter than them in many ways and that fact would change their attitude to get more exposure in our society. The involvement of charities, non-profit organizations and social activists can create a tremendous change in the present state. Other than the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the policy execution requires the corporation of other ministries and several central government organizations. The common challenges a developing nation should face spreads the main threat in this case also. The New Youth Policy 2021 assures a hopeful chapter of our young generation, if it implemented successfully. Let's expect that it can show a new pathway for youth empowerment!

FROM VOICES TO VISION: YOUTH A[ND MEDIA] AS CATALYSTS FOR INDIA'S GROW[TH] TRAJECTORY

This research explores the transformative power of youth and media in shaping India's growth[...] role as catalysts for societal and economic development. It examines how these forces amp[...] visions, and contribute to India's upward trajectory.

INTRODUCTION

This research poster delves into the pivotal role of India's dynamic and youthful population alongside the transformative influence of media in propelling the country's remarkable growth. By synthesizing relevant studies and scholarly sources, we unravel the indispensable contributions of youth and media in India's development, shedding light on their profound impact on the nation's trajectory. "

YOUTH AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE:

65%

of the population, India's youth are instrumental in driving the nation's economic and social development. Empowered and engaged in entrepreneurship, technology, education, and social initiatives, they fuel India's path towards progress. Studies underline the positive link between youth empowerment and economic growth, highlighting their indispensable role."

MEDIA[...]

The media s[...] accessibility [...] changes in t[...] participation[...] innovation a[...] youth, contr[...] in India's dig[...]

Source: FIICCI[...]

Never give up: Code Enterprises, a Noida-based company that now works in 20 states, was founded in 2016 by friends Naman Gupta and Vishal Kanet. The company is the first of its kind in the nation to recycle used cigarette butts to produce appealing byproducts.

MEDIA AS [...] AND ACCOU[...]

- Media, both traditi[...] public opinion, rai[...]

- With the advent o[...] instantaneous, allo[...] discussions on vari[...]

CGNET Swara, a n[...] amplifies the vo[...] rural India. It [...] accountable, and [...] stories and deman[...] CGNET Swara br[...] democracy, a[...] [sho]wcasing th[...]

YOUTH-LED ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

India has witnessed a surge in youth-led entrepreneurship, with numerous start-ups emerging in sectors such as technology, e-commerce, and renewable energy.

10-12%

India's startup ecosystem has experienced a remarkable growth rate of 10-12%, as per a NASSCOM report. This growth can be attributed to the driving force of young entrepreneurs. These youth-led enterprises have not only created employment opportunities but have also been instrumental in fostering technological advancements and innovation across various sectors in the country.

CGNet Swara

Decoding the 3 Cs

COLLABORATION

By fostering partnerships and creating platforms for dialogue, youth can actively contribute their ideas, insights, and innovative solutions to address societal challenges.

COMMUNICATION

Emphasizing the development of strong communication skills among youth enables them to articulate, engage and execute ideas.
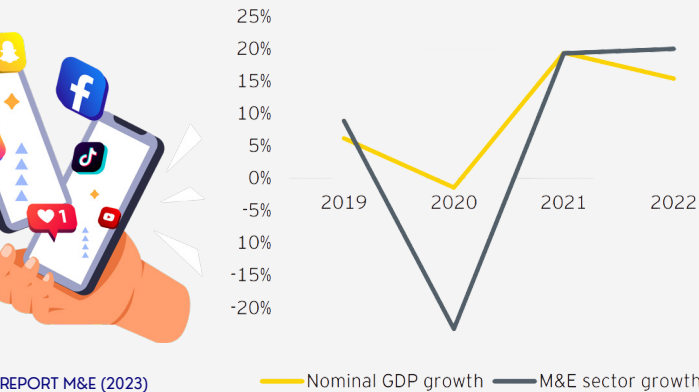
CONVERGENCE

As various forms of media converge, such as social media, online platforms, and traditional media, it is important to explore innovative ways to leverage these channels effectively.

h trajectory, highlighting their
lify voices, foster innovative

A INDUSTRY TOOK OVER INDIA'S GDP GROWTH IN 2022

sector in India has experienced significant growth, driven by digital platforms and smartphone
. Media consumption among young individuals aged 15-35 has surged, leading to positive
he country's growth. It has provided access to information, enabling informed decisions and active
n in society. Social media platforms have fueled self-expression and entrepreneurship, fostering
nd economic growth. Additionally, the media sector offers employment opportunities for the
ibuting to the economy. Harnessing this potential can further drive inclusive growth and progress
tal era.

REPORT M&E (2023)

Nominal GDP growth — M&E sector growth

A CATALYST FOR AWARENESS
UNTABILITY:

ional and digital, has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping
sing awareness, and promoting accountability in India.

f social media platforms, information dissemination has become
wing the youth to stay informed and actively participate in
ous issues.

mobile-based platform in Chhattisgarh,
ices of marginalized communities in
raises awareness, holds authorities
d empowers individuals to share their
nd change. Through citizen journalism,
ridges information gaps, strengthens
nd fosters positive social change,
he transformative power of media.

Shubhranshu Choudhary, Founder

CONCLUSION

The youth and media in India have played instrumental roles in the country's growth story. The energy, entrepreneurial spirit, and social consciousness of the youth have contributed to economic development, innovation, and social change. Simultaneously, media platforms have served as catalysts for awareness, accountability, and youth expression. As India continues to progress, nurturing and harnessing the potential of its youth while maintaining a free and responsible media landscape will be key to sustaining the nation's growth trajectory.

Research Poster by Arpita Chowdhury, PGD English Journalism,
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INDIAN YOUTH & POLITICS:
IS YOUTH OF TODAY JUST THE LEADER OF TOMORROW?

BY MANAN SINGH

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The youngest country in the world, India, is often criticized for not having enough young parliamentarians. On one end dignitaries proudly state that when the world will be turning old, India will stay young, both on the other hand only 6% of the Indian parliament comprise of people below the age of 30. Thus, though majority of Indian population is young, it has near to no influence over actual policy making. However, India does not fair very poorly in this regard as the youngest parliament in the world, of Norway, too has only 13.61% parliamentarians under 30. Yet, this is not something to be satisfied with. 13% need not be the bench mark for a country like India, we must aim higher. It is a fair argument that parliamentarians and policy makers must be mature and experienced individuals but such an argument is not completely satisfactory as well. The reason is that experience cannot be considered as an argument to negate opinions and participation of nearly two-third population of our country.

One of the primary reasons for low youth participation is that the minimum age for an individual to be part of India's highest legislative body is 25. It is true that politics does not just mean being part of the government, rather it is a small part of it, but it is the one which creates the biggest impact on the society. The experience and maturity argument is brought back here. The general notion is that the youth must be trained and taught and they must learn by observing so that they are the leaders of tomorrow. Nelson Mandela once said, "The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow." As much as I agree with this quote of his, my question is, why are they just leaders of tomorrow and considered leaders of today? Why is young age considered as a reason for presuming that the youth cannot have a large impact or is not mature enough to participate in policy-making and deci-sion-making?

The youth is just awaiting an opportunity and the world will see them embarking a journey of revolution and positive change. With every passing year, involvement of youth in change-making is drastically increasing. The interesting thing is that most of these interventions are not because a particular opportunity was provided to the youth but because they saw the need to take an action and did it successfully. Today, it is difficult to back a claim that the youth are not capable enough to be political leaders and they do not possess the skill set to let me take an active part in politics. The youth is running their own organizations, initiatives, companies, businesses and forums and is bringing about a change in the society by being leaders. In such a scenario, I fail to understand how they are pictured as not being of the right age to be leaders. This argument of incapability of the youth to participate in politics makes lesser sense to me when I begin to think about India's freedom movement. From revolutionaries like Shaheed Bhagat Singh to pioneer politicians like Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose began their active political careers in their early or mid twenties. As much as the old leaders like Mahatma Gandhi are credited for India's independence, the contribution of the youth is at par, if not more.

Another flawed argument in India to prevent youth participation in politics is that they are not interested in being part of politics. Reports tell that students studying subjects like polity, political science and international relations are at an all time high in India. This rise is not just seen among men; rather reports also state that nearly 52% of the students studying political science in colleges in India today are women. Young people are opening think tanks, forum to have discussions on pertinent issues and are even involved in policy consultation. If you wish to see how skilled an orator and how prompt with policy the youth of today is, one must go and attend a Model United Nations (MUN) Conference. Not just in UN committees like the Security Council and General Assembly, the youth has shown exemplary performance in committees like Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and All India Political Parties Meet. With their out of the box thinking, diplomacy skills and new-age though process, they have at times come

up with some out-of-the-box suggestions on topics like the New Education Policy, Uniform Civil Code, etc. The current delegates of Youth20 (Y20) India are also a perfect example to analyze the leadership capabilities of Indian youth.

As the youth asks for a chance to be part of politics, they must also realize that with position comes greater responsibility. Not just the responsibility of making the world a better place to live in by creating stringent policies and ensuring that they are implemented but also by ensuring that they extend a hand to the upcoming generations. All the youth that does get the opportunity to be part of politics, it is there duty as well to pave a path for greater youth participation and also for mentoring the interested youth. Moreover, a know-it-all attitude will not be the most beneficial. A good leader must always listen and learn, that is what the youth will have to keep in mind. Doors for opportunities are gradually opening and the youth must make the most out of the opportunities provided.

Before concluding, an important aspect of youth's involvement in Indian politics, I would like to highlight is the diversity. When we say that youth is the leader of today, which youth are we talking about? As majority of Indian populations continues to be rural or poor and largely uneducated. All the discussion we have had till now tilts towards the urban youth participating in politics and how they have been successful. The independence movement does come to our aid again, as we observe in the movement that all that participated in politics even then were not really educated but with the right guidance and training they could make the decisions required. Today, the numbers of young sarpanch in villages are also rising. Both men and women are taking active part in not only central or state politics but also rural politics. This diversity of India is not to be ignored and greater attention needs to be paid on guiding rural youth and providing them with the opportunities, so that they do not get neglected.

This article poses a simple argument, that why should youth be only taken as leaders of tomorrow, when they possess the caliber to be leaders of today. Certainly, right guidance and mentorship is required to compensate with the possible experiential lacking, is any. The world must also understand that when they call out the youth for not having the experience, it is them that have not provided the youth with the right opportunities and space to gain experience, learn and grow. Countries like Rwanda, Kenya and few others have had this realization and have provided reservations for the youth in their parliaments to ensure consistent participation. Since time immemorial, youth has shown its capability of being a leaders and embarking change. And most of these young leaders generally found senior leaders who were willing to groom them and let them be leaders of the times. These mentors never told them to wait for 30 years and be considered mature at 45, to become a political leader. To state a few examples, Gopal Krishna Gokhale mentored Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was mentored by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, and the list goes on. Thus, existing leaders must also follow decree and take up roles of mentors for young and aspiring leaders. I feel for this young India of today, for the young to be political will be a boon and it time for the country to create an environment for the same. Today's India is young and it deserves to be aptly represented and make decisions for the world they wish to live in. Youth has the potential and they must be allowed to be leaders of today, not be thought of only leaders of tomorrow.

YOUTH AND DIGITAL INDIA

BY KAMALIKA DAS

generation in the country is a significant force that has embraced technology as a way of enacting change and participating in the political environment.

Social media services such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are popular among this generation. Only if one benefit of the pandemic was the increased usage of smart phones by the general public, and this general public includes not just urban residents but also rural families. Although the number of the latter remains low, there is no denying that technology has aided an influx of formerly disadvantaged groups into the digital society. These services have provided us with substantial and easily accessible venues to express and share our thoughts with the rest of the world. This accessibility of platforms has also broadened the spectrum of knowledge relating to political events and trends. No incident or occurrence is immune to the quick transmission of information via these social media sites. These are also an important source of political education and ideas. Several experts and leaders, for example, use these services to disseminate knowledge to the public. We come across various films on a regular basis that provide insightful knowledge on our country's political status or critical news about the same.

Taking recent events into account, the volatile situation in Manipur is concrete proof of this. The war between the two tribal clans of Kuki and Meitei in this state in North-East India is one of the most violent in the country's history. The reaction to the viral video of two women displayed naked sparked uproar on social media. Many of the country's young spoke out against the occurrence, and social media was the icing on the cake since it facilitated the process of letting out the voices of millions of people. There were trending hastags, rounds of postings, and even direct involvement with the country's political authorities at the virtual level. Some used it to criticise the government's lack of knowledge about the tragedy, while others used it to promote the ideology of their own political inclinations.

As a result of its rise to prominence in the international arena, India has been known as the "New India." This "New India" that we are familiar with is mostly made up of the younger generation, which is seen as being the most affluent and aspirational. In terms of their greatest asset, technology is without a doubt. The engagement of the young people with the rapidly digitising society shapes and impacts not just their personal lives but also the nation's political structure. The rapid spread of technology has caused a huge shift in how India's youth engage with politics in recent years. With more than 65% of the population under 35, the youthful

The most essential aspect was the increased knowledge among some Indians who were previously unaware of the serious scenario brewing in their own country, and even if they were aware of it, it was restricted to a small group of people.

Technology has not only encouraged youths to speak up, but it has also aided political education. Young Indians may access government policies, monitor political developments, and learn about candidates and party ideology with information at their fingertips. Young influencers' online media platforms and audio podcasts bring new viewpoints and alternative narratives, promising a varied assortment of ideas. Furthermore, technology has accelerated youth-led policy efforts. Using information analysis, artificial intelligence, and other advanced technologies, young technocrats are suggesting novel solutions to social concerns. The power of youth-led ideas to determine India's future cannot be overstated.

However as the popular saying goes, every coin has another side, the rapid digitalization of India and the growing interaction and dependence on technology by the young individuals also indicate challenges. Although it will be absolutely immature to deny that digital media aided the holistic growth of our individuals and made them politically, socially empowered, we should not shut our eyes to the very fact that not every piece of infomation this digital world provides us if accurate and perfect. The consequences of false information is highly obnoxious. Often the iternet is used to spread false propaganda and ideologies which can be both infuriating and intimidating. For instance Misinformation and erroneous data disseminated via social media have the capacity to alter political attitudes and create reverberations, so influencing the democratic process.

Not to mention about the digital divide the country is prey of, the digital gap between the haves and have nots have not been eradicated completely. This too hinders the equal participation of all young individual in the political processes. Further online extremism still remains a rampant phenemenon among the young individuals. Digital platforms can be conviniently used to radicalize the youth and promote extremist ideologies.

Despite limitations, the convergence of youth and technology in India promises tremendous opportunities for good advancement. Youth may actively contribute to a better schooled, involved, and politically conscious society by wisely adopting technology. This proficient in technology generation is prepared to steer the country towards an increasingly dynamic and tech-driven democratic society.