

Should Youth Indulge in Politics?

- V. K. Dev

Today's young generation seems to be in a state of confusion. Rapid economic growth has transformed the nation into a powerhouse but at the same time religious fundamentalism, overpopulation and poverty are eating away the fabric that binds the nation. Riots, scams and social ills have increased manifold thereby posing a threat to the very essence of democracy. Such is the state of Indian politics that even the chief election commissioner (CEC) of India J M Lyngdoh said that he would never join politics. Lyngdoh said the entry of a large number of criminal elements in the fray, growing incidents of defection in the parties and unchecked use of huge sums of money by candidates and parties to win the polls was making politics sicker every day.

What can be done to improve the political system?

One of the most important reasons for the rot is that fresh blood has not been infused into politics. Today's youth have become slaves of technological revolution, as the only thing on their mind is a lucrative career.

Their non-involvement in nation building by being politically non-active has brought in dubious and corrupt elements into the political arena. The result: rampant corruption has deprived thousands of villagers across the nation the right to be part of the economic development. Some 47 per cent of the country's 1 billion population is under the age of 20, and teenagers among them numbering 160 million. By 2015, Indians under 20 will make up 55 per cent of the population.

Rural youth, who have been deprived of the right of education, fall prey to the evil agendas of conniving politicians cashing in on their illiteracy. Hate-politics, casteism, communal undertones are the planks used to blind these uneducated and unemployed youth. But the case in the urban and semi-urban areas is very different, educated youngsters loathe the current crop of politicians and see the entire act of governance as a farce. To a certain extent, the lack of political awareness among the educated can also be taken up as academic agenda by educational institutions, which do not inculcate awareness among students

about the real significance of politics.

It has to be understood that politics is not just running the government, but also problem solving; taking charge of the issues that plague the country in general. It is the educational institutions that should be the breeding ground for politics. Apart from academic pursuits, institutions should also encourage youth to take up social development programmes.

"India still continues to live in its villages and will remain so"- this was predicted by none other than Mahatma Gandhi. A politician in its pure sense Gandhiji was a man of the masses. He said politics was religion, and religion without politics is a sham. By religious he meant to be committed to people, and to be committed to people is politics. Youth have to understand that for the benefit of all-round economic growth and to nip the problem of social inequality things have to start at the grassroots level. To be politically active means to care for the society and not become an MLA or MP. Gandhiji stressed on youth participation in bringing about social reforms such as sati, polygamy, child marriage, education of women, widow remarriage, untouchability, caste system, exploitation and religious misguidance. To a certain extent that has been achieved but only in urban and semi-urban areas. The rural areas shockingly continue to be afflicted by these ills. It is here that youth should pick up the cudgels.

Gandhiji advocated that education was the means to attain virtues. Basic education is every person's right. Children should not only learn to read and write, but also learn social skills like animal husbandry, agriculture and small-scale industries like handicrafts, which will make them independent and self-reliant. Making villages self-reliant will stop migration of villagers to the city. That is how Gandhi identified khadi as a key self-development industry.

The teachers and academia should see that the hollow ideologies preached by biased political outfits don't sway the youth. Hence classrooms should be engines of a new and vibrant India. ■

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