The Problems and Status of Modern Youth

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THE PROBLEMS AND STATUS OF MODERN YOUTH

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Youth is the valuable human resource of every country. The young people constitute about forty per cent of the total population of India. During the freedom struggle, the youth of our country played a significant role. There is a generation gap between the young and the old. The youth should be guided and their energies should be utilized for the progress of the nation. Today India is burdened with many social, political and economic problems. The youth can come forward and check them, and work for the betterment of the nation. The youth can also provide relief to the afflicted persons during natural calamities. By performing a constructive role, the youth can make India prosperous in every field.

Unrest among youth has been a problem since time immemorial. It was so in the past and it shall be so in future as well, howsoever glamorous and glittering the social fabric might become and however secure and stable they might feel under the new dispensation. The young have never rested on their past laurels nor have they felt contented with their present possibilities. The chords of their impulses, instincts and intuitions have been always vocal and vibrant. No doubt the problems of youth in different parts of the world under different socio-political systems differ in contours and contents. But one thing is almost certain that the modern youth is up against problems, the like of which did not exist in the past. "Youth in turmoil", "Unrest among youth", "Youth in revolt", Angry young man" – these epithets are not just literary coinage or journalistic flourishes, but a vociferous voices of protest of vast segments of populations that have seen and suffered the all-round erosion of values and the wreckage of their dreams.

Having been influenced by the philosophies of "individualism" and "existentialism", the urban youth is in a state of defiance against the old order, whether that order comes from the

"elderly generation" or the "powers that be". If they find themselves in a state of "alienation or estrangement" in the present set-up, the fault lies as much with their socio-economic milieu as with the education system. Deprived of the opportunity to develop intellectually, many suffer from the problem of subjective isolation and self-estrangement. Among red-tapism and bureaucratic control over the strings of both private and public sectors, the cream of the country finds itself uncared and un-solicited for. It is under these trying and turbulent circumstances that the best brain of the country starts draining out. This country does not seem to provide for the youth what they wish for or what they are capable for. They are seen exploited here and not given their due in spite of their putting in the best efforts. This treatment starts with the educational institutions, where the teachers and the curriculum both seem to him quite contrary to his tastes and aptitudes and his enthusiasm seems to get blunted in the start of his career and he feels alienated from the world around him. Once out of college he feels the whole world not ready to accept him and he starts to become rebellions in character. His parents start complaining about his behavior and during this crucial stage he is prone to some bad habits, like smoking, drugs etc. Many youth at this juncture seek market for their abilities and capabilities but they find, their capacities least respected in the market. Those who succeed in finding jobs or some means of subsistence in this country do not find life a sweet-song or a care-free comfort. A host of problems keep staring them in their faces – inadequate houses, transport and sewerage; poor medical and recreational facilities; neurotic noise pollution, shortages, dust and smoke; crimes and ever-expanding slums and what not. The most creative and colorful period of their lives is consumed and swallowed by activities most profane and abject in the ever exploding towns and cities. The bosses for whom they work are never co-operative and always scorn them for their inability to get their targets completed, which is always out of their reach. They want to get rid of this servitude and start something of their own to make use of their talents independently but the constraints of finances and other problems bar the way and to keep the ball rolling, and wishing for a divine opportunity to cross his way, they continue with their present unfriendly job merely to make their two ends meet.

If T. S. Eliot's Prufock measured his life by counting the sips of coffee cups, the modern youth in India measures his life by standing in queues, jostling and pushing in buses and finally by removing the grey hair from his head. His problems are social, economic and psycho-emotive but there is none around who can share his sad and solitary existence. Compounded with his

lonely state of life, the urban youth have remained immune to the profundity of spiritual heritage of the land, mysticism, the philosophy of Vedas and Upanishads and teachings from their respective religions, right from their formative years in schools, colleges and universities. Fed on scientific data and attuned to economic, political and social theories, the victim finds himself rudderless and utterly helpless when caught in the tempests of some personal crisis or jolted by some inexplicable tragedy. Even the telecast of two great epics on the television has failed to change his outlook because the symbolic and spiritual import of these epics have not penetrated through the thick layers of 'rationalism', 'materialism', 'nihilism', etc. which like crumbs, he picks up from here and there and then flourishes them as props of his pseudo-scholarship.

Differences in class and social background contribute to the disparities among youth. It leads to the accumulation of tensions, which have an explosive potential. Youths belonging to the lower class of society, after attaining good academic and technical efficiency became angrier as they join the army of job-seekers and are no more prepared to adapt the level of their aspirations to the prevailing realities. They usually get frustrated as their aspirations are not fulfilled. They want to earn the fruits of their toil they have put in to get their degrees through educational and technical institutions. They do not find people with whom they want to work, as friendly as they expect, so they turn rebellions to their society and their anger finds outlet through a behavior which turns to be anti-social, at times.

"Today's youth is concerned with the issue of corruption more than anything else and that is why most of the protestors in the recent Anna Hazare's campaign against corruption were the Indian youth. Mr Ratan Tata once said, "The youth of today will need to recognise that they shoulder a great responsibility. They will need to fight for rooting out corruption, for ensuring that no one is above the law and uniting the citizens of India as 'India first' instead of communal or geographic factions". Though fighting against corruption is the responsibility of every citizen but youth by virtue of their nature and energy participate more in this cause. Corruption should be rooted out of country. Youth in India must know what they want and how they want because good and bad co-exist in the society. Today we relate everything related to success in terms of money. But success is more than this. Youth must derive inspiration from their role model and live life with proud." (Ramadeep Kaur)

The rural youth who comes to towns and cities in large numbers to seek employment after completing their courses of study seem themselves freed from the cramping controls of traditional institutions or rural life. The freedom gained and the energy released thereby does not find satisfying outlet, in the urban areas where they have to complete with youths of urban background. They face the problems of adjustment in cities, in the case of language, manners, speech in the first instance and subsequently inadequate foods and residential arrangements. They feel suffocated in the city crowds and pollution and are unable to accommodate with the routines and life-style of the town. They cannot withstand the glamour of the urban areas and face psychological tension and insecurity generated by the more competitive, individualistic and impersonal environment coupled with the uncertainties of future employment which result in their inhibited socialization. It has a direct impact on their prospects of employment and they become a soft target for the greedy employers of the city who take an advantage of their simplicity and exploit them for their personal gains. Many of them fall into the traps of some antisocial elements, who take them very far into their network of evildoing wherefrom they do not find any route of escape and their life and career is spoiled. Despite their outnumbering the urban youth, opportunities available to the rural lot are qualitatively different. Here the inequalities that divide the educated and somewhat affluent urban and the unlettered and the underprivileged rural people, come in the way and the ruralities are denied opportunities as compared the urbanities. The condition of the rural areas has been deteriorating for lack of development there, and the development of real India which is in villages, does not seem to be on the agenda of development agencies, as such, the number of job-seekers, both educated and uneducated, goes on increasing day by day and their march towards cities and towns also increases day by day. Therefore, the deteriorating economic conditions of the villages and the more extensive development-cum-job opportunities of cities is the primary cause of youth migrating from the countryside to the slums and squalor of cities.

This influx of rural people to the urban areas signifies kind of "brain drain" towards the cities and calls for an urgent and immediate programme for rural resource development and the engagement of the rural youth in the development of these areas so that the rot is halted and the problems that follow un-planned and haphazard urbanization are put under check.

Independence was once an inspiring social ideal and the struggle for independence brought to the free ground some of the finest qualities of the Indian youth. The nationalist struggle was undoubtedly associated with a moral ferment; it did throw up a leadership which had strong bonds with the people and which rose to the great heights of moral courage and dedication. In the person of Gandhi, India did throw up a leader who became a symbol of Indian awakening. But Indian leadership in the period following independence has not been able to transform the challenge of national development into such an overpowering cause; the programme of planned development has not caught the imagination of the youth nor has it released spiritual ferment and energy to any appreciable extent. The fundamental causes of this weakness are socio-political; they lie in the ambivalent attitude of the leadership to the challenge of development and moral rejuvenation. The leadership's failure to inspire the youth with their ideal thinking and action has made the Indian youth either cynics or snobs, unable to cope with the day to day problems and predicaments.

One of the big failures of the Indian models of development and the State has been an inability to realize that we are dealing with a very different kind of society comprising many linguistic and ethnic groups craving for recognition of their rights to preserve their ethnic identity and linguistic entity. Having been exploited and neglected for long, the young blood among these groups took up the cause of their communities and thus came in direct conflict and confrontation with the state authority. In recent times, many movements led by the youth, have been going on in different parts of the country and the only problem that the youth have highlighted is their assertion and reiteration that their separate identity and cultural entity be respected and restored back to its pristine glory and grandeur. The failure in doing this, alongside the deliberate provocations coming from interested quarters has resulted in the growth of both communal conflicts and sub-national assertions and movements that are greatly straining the authority and legitimacy of the Indian State.

In the West, the dilemma of the modern youth is born out of factors that are alien to the youth in the developing countries. If poverty, ignorance and unemployment are our curses, affluence and permissiveness are the bane of their homes, most of which are shattered as well as broken. The cult of Hippism, Drug addiction, violence, aimless murders etc. proves beyond doubt that mere material prosperity is not the end of all problems. The largest number of

psychologists and psychiatrists flourishing in America point to the widespread enigma of neurosis-cum-mental sickness most prevalent among the youth there. In the countries of Eastern Europe, the problems of youth are that of transition from a "Closed Society" to the "Open One".

All said and done, modern youth, particularly Indian youth, can again contribute towards a big push to Indians growth and progress. Thinking and dynamic elements among the youth will have to organize themselves for serious self-education before they can organize the participation of the youth in this vital, national task.

The youth of every country is its valuable human resource. The young people can play an important role in various development activities going on the country. The responsibility for change, progress and innovation lies on their shoulders. Youth is the carrier of cultural identity of a country. Youth can make or mar a society. Therefore, their energies should be directed properly.

The youth of our country played a very important role during our freedom struggle. The political leaders gave a lead to the students and they joined the struggle in large numbers. However, since the attainment of Independence, the youth have remained more or less inactive. They have stayed away from contemporary national politics.

The youth constitute about forty per cent of the total population of India. The youth today have often been misunderstood by the elders. There has always been a struggle between tradition and modernity. The elders consider the youth to be immature and inexperienced. The widening generation gap has made them feel alienated. The growing population has aggravated the problem of unemployment. Reservations and nepotism have further heightened the problem. Schools and colleges do not groom them for a bright future. All these factors have made the youth a frustrated lot.

Students constitute majority of the youth. They indulge in acts of indiscipline and rowdysim in many universities, colleges and schools. Thus, their energies and zeal are being misused for destructive purposes. They hold rallies, stage demonstrations and resort to strikes, etc. They go to the extent of taking law into their own hands. They lack proper guidance and good leadership. They should be properly guided so that they use their energies for constructive purposes.

The students alone cannot be blamed for this. Political leaders exploit students' power for their own vested interests. If there is good leadership, students' power can be utilized for bringing about social, economic and political reforms in the country.

Today India is burdened with many problems in the social and economic spheres. Corruption, increasing population, high illiteracy rate, social evils like child labour, dowry, drug addition, etc. are some of the burning problems. The youth should take an active part in solving these problems, which have hampered the progress of the country. If the youth respond to their duties towards their country, they can become more responsible citizens. This in turn will help in the fast progress of the nation.

"Corruption has become rampant in the country. The common man encounters corruption everywhere starting from politics, bureaucracy to government offices. The youth should organize themselves, form anticorruption cells and expose the guilty. On a higher level, they could also expose the malpractices by both the politicians and the public servants. This would prevent the ruling class and the powerful from indulging in corrupt practices" (Ram Ahuja , 52)

The population of India has crossed the one billion mark. This has hindered the progress of the country. Family planning programmes have not been totally accepted by the people. Youth organizations should take up the responsibility of educating the poor about the benefits of family planning. It is the duty of the youth to further the government's efforts to control population.

Illiteracy is another burning problem in our country. The youth should encourage the illiterate parents to send their children to school. They should initiate steps to teach the illiterate people of their neighbourhood. They should teach them elementary reading and writing. They should also educate them about hygiene and the need for cleanliness. The youth should inform the masses about the harmful effects of drinking, smoking drug addiction and chewing tobacco.

One of the worst social problems faced by India is the evil of dowry. Hundreds of deaths, suicides and bride burnings are reported every year in our country. Many more of these cases do not come to light at all. The youth should come forward and fight against this evil practice. They should not come under the pressure of their parents to demand, give or accept dowry. The youth can also help in the removal of other social evils like child marriage, casteism, gambling etc.

The youth should work for national integration. They should fight against communalism, casteism, linguism, regionalism etc. Sometimes natural calamities like earthquake, flood, cyclone, drought, etc. afflict one part or other of our country resulting in the loss of life and property. Students can provide relief to the affected people by raising funds for them and organizing relief works.

The government has become conscious of the need to tap the youth power. With the lowering of the voting age to 18 years, the youth have become politically important. The youth should cast their vote after careful consideration of the character and policies of the politicians and respective political parties. Thus, the youth can play a decisive role in choosing their leaders.

The first National Youth Policy was formulated and laid in the Parliament in 1988. Again a new National Youth Policy was formulated in 2003 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to galvanize the youth to rise up to the new challenges. The age group of youth, as per this policy is 13 to 35. The new policy recognizes four thrust areas viz., Youth Empowerment, Gender Justice, Inter-Sectoral Approach and Information and Research Network. The policy provides implementation mechanism through which various development programmes and activities will be undertaken for the youth with active involvement of the State Governments and Union Ministries and Departments. Some of the important programmes are, National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development, National Youth Festival, National Youth Awards, National Service Scheme, Indira Gandhi NSS Awards etc.

The Department of Youth Affairs and Sports is implementing a number of schemes for youth development. Our Five Year Plans have also laid emphasis on the importance of youth in national development. The government has also introduced several schemes to improve the employment opportunities of the youth.

The youth should play a responsible role for the betterment of the country. By playing a constructive role, the youth can make India prosperous in every field.

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