

Youth Politics in Post Left Bengal: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

"Youth" is defined as post-adolescent and pre-adult groups, or by the United Nations those who are between 15-24 years old, they are young. As youth transit into adult statuses, they become 'new' citizens with great potential to redemocratise the political space. Youths play very important role in contemporary socio-politics of West Bengal. We have witnessed that the historic thirty-four years of CPI(M) party has come to an end in 2011. The TMC slogan of 'poriborton' (change) had caught the imagination of people. The weight of the anti-incumbency factor was making itself felt. The young people played an important role in this political change. After 2011, when the TMC government formed, several things have been changed. In 2016, this government reelected and formed the government again. But youths are not very much pleased with this government. Unemployment is the most important criticism of this government. several protests are formed against this government. And youths play a crucial role of these protests. This article looks into the matter of contemporary socio-politics of West Bengal and the roles of youths in contemporary post left politics also.

Keywords: Youths, Participations of Politics, Role of Social Media, Youth Protests.

Introduction

"Youth" is defined as post-adolescent and pre-adult groups, or by the United Nations those who are between 15-24 years old, they are young. Youth is a transition phase between the more established social categories of childhood and adulthood to a large extent (Nair.S.P, 1989). There is considerable cross-cultural variation as to when an individual becomes an adult. "As youth transit into adult statuses, they become 'new' citizens with great potential to redemocratise the political space. Democracy is at its most successful when floating subjects, which are deemed invisible by the sensible, empower themselves to disrupt and deregulate the social truth. As new citizens (e.g., youth) acquire legitimate political positions, they pressure the democratic system to reconsider existing policies and ideologies in light of new ideas and values" (Suchowerska R, 2013, p-104). The contemporary sociopolitical history of West Bengal is very much changed. We have witnessed that the historic thirty-four years of CPI(M) party has come to an end in 2011. "The TMC slogan of 'poriborton' (change) had caught the imagination of people. The weight of the anti-incumbency factor was making itself felt. In fact, people wanted the Left to go without caring for who would take its place. With her cry of Ma, Mati, Manush (Mother, Earth, and People) the fifty-six-year-old firebrand leader, Mamata Banerjee, had stolen the thunder from the Left and the result was there for all to see" (Sharma Sitaram, 2014, p- 126). The young people played an important role in this political change.

Review of Literature

"Throughout contemporary history, young people have become a force for social and political change. Part of the reason young people push for social and political reform is rooted in the developmental characteristics of youth as a stage in life-their high energy, idealism, hubris, social awareness, need for independence, self-determination, and a place ("autonomous space") in the social order. ...From a structural-functional perspective, it has been argued that most young people are simply attempting to find a way to become fully integrated into their society, while from a conflict perspective (Freudian or Marxian), the argument is that youth must challenge their elders in order to come into their own and create a better society and world" (Braungart G R and Braungart M M, 1990, p- 305).



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Participation of Youths

In Lok Sabha election, every political party is looking for youth voters. The Election Commission also wants the maximum number of youths to come and cast their votes. Every political party had a strategy to attract youths so that cast their votes in their favor. Election Commission and political leaders also think that youths are the most valuable voters. As per a reliable source, there are 3880901 voters in East Barddhaman Lok Sabha and out of them, 112193 are new voters. The total youth voters who are between 20 to 29 are 907746. So, in this particular Loksabha, more than 50% of voters are youths. And the total percentage of youth voters in North Barddhaman and South Barddhaman are 46% and 42%. As per administrative source, the Election Commission made a number of 'Electoral Literacy Club' in various colleges to spread political consciousness among youths (Barddhaman-Katawa-Kalna, Ananda Bazar Patrick's, Thursday, 28th March 2019, p- k-3). Various interviews have been taken from new voters. The researcher wants to know what the expectations of youths from their political leaders are. Shreyasha Sengupta (Heritage Institute of Technology, fourth year, Computer Science and Engineering), an interviewee said "My leader should be able to look at the needs of the country objectively. His/her vision should go beyond vote-bank politics, especially beyond the disgraceful prejudices like caste, gender, religion, and historical privilege". Another interviewee, Prithwi Bank from Heramba Chandra College (South City College), Second year, Economics, said that the biggest issue that concerns the first-time voters like us is employment. We have seen how unemployment has been a major cause for concern over the years. Besides the impact of communal polarization has affected human relations, which in turn has influenced our views on society. Thus, a new voter I look forward to a secular democratic government at the center that will ensure that the end of communal violence and corruption. We need a pro-people government that will ensure earnings for farmers and poor workers, along with the security and education for all"(Calcutta Times, The Times of India, Monday, 22nd April 2019, p-4). In youth politics, college and university students play a crucial role.

We all know about the fact that India has the largest youth population. So, almost every election, there are respective numbers of youths, who will cast their votes for the first time. Each and every political party try to mobilize their votes towards them. After 2011 how does the new ruling party influenced the fresh voters as well as youth voters? And what is the role of opposition parties towards youth? No, research has been done in this area. This research tries to explore this unexplored area.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of the study are given below

1. To find out the contemporary socio-politics of West Bengal.
2. The role of youths in politics
3. Post left youth movements.
4. The role of social media on youth politics.

5. Critically evaluation of various government schemes

Methodology

The philosophy of research would be interpretivism. Through interpretivism the research would seek youths' subjective motives about politics and interpretatively understand the meaning also. This research would be use mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative. It is basically exploratory research. The main interest of this research is found out the post left trends of youth politics. So, this research would apply interviews, questionnaire, and also case study.

Youth Politics in College and Universities

"Disentangling the impact of college on youth's political and social orientations is no easy task. To conclude that college has an impact because college youth differ in their political and social orientations from noncollege youth is a specious deduction. Studies show that college-bound students differ significantly from those who do not intend to enter a college or university...The differences in political orientations presented by Langton and Jennings are considerable and appear to conform to our earlier statements in regard to the differences between college-educated adults and noncollege educated adults. College-bound students are more likely than students not planning to go to college to be knowledgeable about politics, to read about politics in newspapers and magazines, and to discuss politics with their peers, to express greater political interest and efficacy, to support religious dissenters' right of free speech, and to support an elected communist's rights to take public office" (German B D, 1974, p-36).

College and university students play an important role in politics. Generally, a student becomes an adult who may cast his/her vote in the age of college life. A youth probably cast his/her vote for the first time in his/her college life. In this phase, he/she has introduced various political orientations. Before 2011 most of the college unions are led by SFI. But after 2011, the scenario gets changed. In 2017 all the college and university student's union of West Bengal under TMCP except Jadavpur University and Presidency University. In this field, there is no such sufficient work. Why did SFI lose almost all unions? why does SFI sustain its students' union on Jadavpur and Presidency University? This research wants to explore this unexplored area.

Social Media

Nowadays social media is a very popular platform for communication among the youth. They post, follow and appreciate various news and political thoughts also. Social media play a crucial role in politics. "While our 'social fingertips' are new, less than a decade old, 'being social' of course, is an age-old idea. The social networks which people were familiar with before the wired networks arrived were aggregating in a town squares, going door to door to spread a message in a neighborhood, blowing a trumpet to gather a group, public meeting for fixing a problem or a town hall to discuss leadership. Today the approach to campaigning in any election, championing any social cause, or seeking opinion has

similarly moved to new platforms. Digital strategies are central to planning political rallies and elections. Party manifestos are no longer conspiracies of a coterie but laid bare in public eye. Canvassing demands a party's interactive presence on social platforms like Tweeter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Google Plus and others. The public, once the outsiders are now privy to a party's thought process. There is very little room to bungle up as very enunciation is analyzed and commented upon. Politics today isn't just about getting elected. It's also about getting socially elected. ...Social media connects people, gets them talking and sharing; allows campaigners to know the voters, target specific audience, splice demographics, mobilize support, and urge them to participate. When some of these people, otherwise part of the audience, get actively engaged in political debates, they become a great tool to spread the word and influence opinion"(Chopra S, 2014, p-2).

Nowadays youths are so much connected to social media. Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Tweeter are very popular among the youths. Social media put an impact on various aspects of our lives. Social media are a strong medium in our political field. Various political parties used social media for campaigning of their political activities and election purposes also. Their target audience is most probably youths. Youths do post and share their political views and ideology and also raised their voice against various problems. So, in contemporary youth politics, social media plays an important role which is an unexplored area. The research tries to explore this area.

Government schemes for Youths

"During the last five years it did not achieve much that is big. Yet it did have some achievements. Public programmed such as 'Shiksha Shri', 'Kanya Shri', 'Yuba Shri', 'Sabuj Shri', have benefited large sections of youths, male and female, belonging to economically disadvantaged families...The Jungal Mahal' region has received special attention and provided with improved infrastructure, rice at two rupees a kilogram, employment opportunities in the state police force. These, with central assistance, have contributed considerably in pacification and development of the area known as Maoist belt. Once restive north Bengal marked by Gorkha separatism has also under control as smaller tribal groups like Lepchas, Bhutias, Tamangs and others have been brought under separate development boards. Whether it will have long term positive impact is to be seen. The TMC government is to be seen. The TMC government also opened many colleges and universities, medical colleges and hospitals, polytechniques throughout the state, sometimes in close proximity to similar existing institutions. More than providing better education they serve as opportunities for providing jobs"(Basu.P and Chatterji.R. 2018. p-308). All these opportunities are not implemented. Youths especially the educated youths are struggling for unemployment. All recruitment process has been almost stopped.

We have witnessed so many schemes for the welfare of the society such as 'Kanyashri', 'Yubashri', 'ShikshaShri' etc. These schemes are very beneficial to youths. Young girls are very much benefited by 'Kanyashri'. This scheme helps lower the rate of child marriage. 'Yubashri' also beneficial for unemployed youths. But the proper evaluation of these schemes is uplifting youths has not been done yet. Is there any group of youths who doesn't appreciate these schemes? If yes, then what are the reasons? This research tries to critically evaluate these schemes which are unexplored.

Youth Protests

Aspiring Teachers

In the Left era, School Service Commission (SSC) had conducted an examination for a high school teacher at regular intervals. It was the most reliable job for small towns and villages' middle-class youths. The last ten years of Left government, every year more than a thousand youths were recruit as a teacher through SSC. But after 2011, the scenario got changed. After 2011, the first advertisement of SSC published on March 2013 and the commission declared the tentative date of the examination on 31st March 2013. But because of some legal dispute, the examination was postponed. Two years later, on August 2015, SSC conducted the written examination, which is TET, through this examination qualified candidates are appointed to upper primary school as a teacher. Another examination for class nine-ten was held on 26th November 2016 and for class 11-12, the examination held on 4th December 2016. The results were published in 2017. But the School Service Commission didn't publish any general merit list. The eligible candidates are informed via SMS. So, it brought a huge allegation about lack of transparency. With this issue more than 400 successful candidates, who are in the waiting list, they go for the hunger strike. The hunger strike started from 28th February 2019 at Mayo Road, Kolkata. Some youths are infected by dengue, and a pregnant woman had a miscarriage. But none of the television media covered this news (Business Times, 27th March, 2019). This is a huge example of state-sponsored media. Nowadays social media is very strong. Lots of share and reactions are made on this issue. And it put pressure on the government. After 28 days of hunger strike, the honorable CM, Mamata Banerjee came to the spot and met with candidates and promised that she will take steps to give them justice and then the hunger strike was withdrawn. "Wednesday was the 28th day of the hunger strike by SSC candidates. She also urged them to end the hunger strike. Over 400 successful SSC candidates in Bengal are on the hunger strike at Mayo Road, here, since February 28, accusing the state government of irregularities in appointing assistant teachers at state-run schools. They are demanding that recruitments be made immediately against the numerous vacancies in across the state. Banerjee also asked State Education Minister, Partha Chatterjee, to include five of the agitating candidates in the expert committee, headed by Education Department Secretary Manish Jain, to make a comprehensive report. "Please include five

members from among the candidates in the expert committee. It would be easier to understand each other's issues. I have no problem if a one-time solution could be found. I would request you to discuss it among yourselves and withdraw the hunger strike," she said. Stating that nothing can be done immediately as that would violate the model code of conduct, Banerjee said, "We cannot do something arbitrarily as that would be challenged in court. Something has to be done within the policy. My sympathy is with you. Give us a chance to work out a solution. Give me some time. "I am instructing Partha da (Chatterjee) to do something by the first week of June. You can keep faith in me," she said. The agitating candidates, all of whom have successfully cleared both SSC written test and interview more than a year ago, urged the state government to publish the list of qualified candidates along with marks obtained by them. Also, notify the exact number of vacancies for teachers in state-run schools, they said. Nearly 80 agitators, many of them women, have fallen ill and two would-be mothers suffered miscarriage. Two others got infected by dengue during the hunger strike."

Young Doctors

On Monday, 10th June 2019, a 75 years old patient died of heart attack at NRS hospital. After his death the relatives and neighbours of this patient blamed doctor for his death. Sometime later, two loaded trucks came to the hospital and beat more than twenty doctors. Two of them Paribaha Mukhopadhaya and Yash Tekwani got grievously injured. Paribaha suffered a depressed fracture in the skull and Yash suffered fractures in ribs and spine. The very next day all junior doctors next to an indefinite call off strike. The agitations spread all over the West Bengal. Senior doctors also joined with them. They wanted justice demanding the arrest of 'all the culprits'. On Tuesday health minister Chandrima Bhattacharaya came to NRS, and tried to handle the situation. But she was unable to do that. Outdoor services were closed. The health services are completely broken. Only emergency is open, but there are few doctors available. Forty doctors did resign from NRS (Times of India, 24th June, 2019). On the other side, CM, Mamata Banerjee tried to pressurize the doctors and demean the resistance. But her threat was not working anymore. Number of resignations were growing. All over the state more than two hundred doctors resigned. In this situation opposition political parties tried to put more pressure on government. They supported the doctors. But the doctors refused to give the strike any political color.

These are some of that movements that happened in the last ten years. Government failed to fulfilled youths' requirements. Sometimes government take very unethical, violent steps towards youths' movements. There is no holistic work on these movements. How are the movements organized? What are the issues? What are the initiatives taken by governments to control the unrest? These are the unexplored area, which the research want to explore.

Conclusion & Scope for further Research

This research has focused on the contemporary youth politics in post Lest era. The new government of West Bengal in 2011 had come with huge aspirants. Youths were looking for employment opportunities. But somehow this government has failed to fulfill youths' wishes. Therefore, several protests are formed. This article also shows that social media plays an influential role to mobilized youths in politics. There is lots of scope for further studies, such as, i) Religion as an instrument in youth politics. ii) Youth unrest among the unemployed youth. iii) Political socialization of new voters.

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