

*Reprinted from*  
**India since Independence—Social Report on India 1947-1972**  
*Edited by S. C. Dube*

## Youth

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**VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD**  
New Delhi Bombay Bangalore Calcutta Kanpur

## YOUTH

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The study of Indian youth involves a discussion of several dimensions. It is not difficult to make quantitative estimates of the proportion of youth in a population: generally the age-group fifteen to twenty-five is regarded as constituting youth, but in some cases, the age-group fifteen to twenty-nine has been included in this category. Youth cannot be defined, however, only in biological and demographic terms; it is also a matter of recognition by society and there are variations from one society to another in the definition of youth. The socio-cultural dimension of youth is significant for every society. Youth can be understood, thus, in terms of different groupings and criteria of stratification in a society exemplified by class and caste. Then again, the different socio-cultural variables like education, occupation, income, standard of living, and rural-urban differences have to be taken into account when one talks about youth. While youth may be a statistical category in terms of a particular age group, in reality it cannot be treated as a homogeneous group because of the interplay of the socio-cultural factors noted above. All the same, it is important to enquire into the demographic dimension of youth because the proportion which the youth bear to a given population at a given point of time has important socio-cultural and political implications, particularly when the youth have been sensitized to their rights and to the share they should have in the processes of decision-making. Authors like Moller (1958) and Apter (1965) have emphasized the increased significance of youth in terms of the higher percentage of youth in a population both in developed and in

developing societies. Moller says, "In any community, the presence of a large number of adolescents and young adults influences the temper of life; and the greater the proportion of young people, the greater the likelihood of cultural and political change" (Moller 1968:454).

To the extent that the youth are kept away from the mainstream of life, they constitute a threat to the political stability of the society concerned. Apter (1965) also observes that youth want equality as a right so that they can succeed to adulthood and enjoy positions of authority. That is why the young are willing to accept political religions.

Another aspect of youth that needs attention is the expectation the society has from it with respect to the tasks of national development and social transformation. In the Third World it is believed that the youth can bear this responsibility because of their physical energy, freshness of outlook, and the desire and capacity to innovate. To be able to undertake this role effectively, it is essential that they should have a share in authority and the decision-making processes. One has to enquire, therefore, into the nature of the society and particularly into the genesis and distribution of authority in the society before one could sit in judgement about the inculcation of responsibility or otherwise by the youth. In this context it is also necessary to understand the "youth culture" in society. There is no denying the fact that the very concept of youth culture is foreign to the Third World and particularly to India. The absence of an identifiable youth culture, when linked with certain other features of the social system, renders the problem even more difficult. In our discussion on Indian youth, we shall therefore begin with some of the special features of Indian society which have implications for the behaviour and functioning of youth.

#### FEATURES OF INDIAN SOCIETY

In the first place, one should mention the phases of life and the allocation of responsibility and authority in Indian society based on biological age and appropriate rituals demarcating divisions in terms of age. In the traditional Hindu system, life is viewed in terms of four well-marked stages with relevant responsibility and authority, or the denial of it. The youth enjoyed no authority, but

were enjoined to prepare to shoulder it in the second stage. In this system age was respected and as such young age was a matter of disadvantage. While the notion of the stages of life was confined to Hindus, respect and reverence for age and the authority enjoyed by the elders was a common characteristic of the entire Indian society.

Education was denied to youth belonging to certain strata and as such they had little opportunity for self-improvement. In consequence, socio-economic and occupational mobility was severely constricted. To the extent that education, particularly higher education, even today is a commodity which has to be bought, it is available largely to those who are able to pay for it and as such it is beyond the reach of the lower income groups (Desai). The percentage of non-student youth to student youth at all levels makes poignant reading. The prevailing system of stratification denies the possibility of education acting as a lever of mobility.

The pre-independence period, or the period of British rule to be specific, was characterized by a stagnant economy which provided very little opportunity to youth in terms of new occupations and professions. Even in the post-independence period, the slowness of economic growth has meant restricted opportunities for youth. Viewed against the revolution of rising expectations the slow growth of the economy appears even more depressing. There is a considerable demand for higher education on the part of the erstwhile deprived and disprivileged sections who have not had access to it for centuries. They look upon education as a gateway to economic well-being and social prestige. This has to be taken into account in examining the problems of Indian youth. Education is a sub-system of society. The various components of this sub-system—students, teachers, courses and syllabi, methods of teaching and examination, relationship between the teachers and the students, linkage between education and employment—have to be considered when we view education as a source of career and prospects for its recipients. To the extent that the education system falls short of what the society expects from it, it will promote frustration among youth. One of the major criticisms against the Indian educational system is its irrelevance and meaninglessness to its recipients. When education is looked upon as a channel for attaining status and white-collar jobs, it ends up by swelling the ranks of disgruntled young men and women, for the number of

such jobs is pitifully small. In the absence of proper linkage between the educational and the occupational systems a high proportion of youth does not know what it can do with its educational attainments. This disjunction is heightened by the slow growth of the economy. The discrepancy between education and employment creates unrest amongst the youth.

#### YOUTH BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

As no significant studies were done on youth in the pre-independence period, the discussion in this section will be largely in the nature of general observations.

Before independence, life expectation was estimated to be roughly thirty. This had significant consequences for the relationship between the younger and the older generations in the sense that a clear-cut demarcation between the two was not possible.

Education, especially higher education, was largely the privilege of the upper crust of society. Those from the lower strata were also drawn to it, but their numbers were not large and quality-wise the education that they received was inferior.

The 1930s were a period of acute economic depression and unemployment. This tended to increase youth's dependence either on their parents or on traditional and hereditary occupations.

During the pre-independence period, there was considerable participation by youth in the national movement. The revolutionary movements for the overthrow of British rule in India were manned by youth. Impoverishment of the people and the rising nationalist consciousness, created and reinforced by modern education, generated resentment and resistance against the British. Some of the youth were drawn to trade unionism and other radical movements. A section of them felt that apart from dislodging the British, it was also necessary to demolish the system of stratification based on property. Marxian ideology found favour with the younger intellectuals and they were very keen to lead the struggle for the abolition of the inequitable class system. Such movements met with stiff resistance on the part of the British and many young men and women languished in jails for years. There was a ferment among the youth in favour of new ideas, new institutional structures, and new patterns of thought. This is reflected in the literature produced during the 1920s, 1930s, and the early 1940s,

Besides the national and radical movements, there were few outlets for the energy and creativity of youth. A non-expanding economy and a restrictive social structure did not give freedom to the imagination, initiative, and creativity of the youth. As the nationalist movement was led by intellectuals and professionals, it attracted young men and women from the more affluent and educated sections of society. Those from the lower strata were drawn into it only when it acquired a mass character.

#### YOUTH AFTER INDEPENDENCE

At the outset the importance of the biological and socio-cultural dimensions of youth was emphasized. As a result of the increase in life expectation from thirty in the pre-independence period to fifty-five and above after 1960 and later, the youth were recognized as a force to contend with.

The distribution of youth population in rural and urban areas for 1951, 1961, and 1971 makes interesting reading. In 1951 the percentage of youth, i.e., those in the age group fifteen to twenty-four, was 16.86 (males 16.46 per cent and females 17.26 per cent) in the rural areas. For the same year, in the urban areas, the percentage of youth was 19.93 (males 20.07 per cent and females 19.76 per cent). In 1961, the percentage of youth in rural areas was 16.20 (males 15.62 per cent and females 16.81 per cent) and 18.84 (males 19.05 per cent and females 18.58 per cent) in urban areas. A decade later, in 1971, the percentage of youth in rural areas was 15.75 (males 15.57 per cent and females 15.93 per cent) and 19.61 (males 19.90 per cent and females 19.27 per cent) in urban areas. Thus, we find little evidence of change in the percentage of youth in urban and rural areas for the different census years quoted above. Of course, if we consider the age-group fifteen to twenty-nine the youth constitute a very sizeable proportion of the Indian population.

With respect to the urban areas, in 1961, 34.96 per cent of youth was uneducated, while educated youth constituted 14.14 per cent. Among these, 23.70 per cent were males and 48.62 per cent were females. Amongst the educated, males were 19.15 per cent while females were only 8.05 per cent. The term educated, in this context, includes matriculates and technical and non-technical diploma holders, as also those with higher education. In rural areas, for

the same year, 71.44 per cent were uneducated (males 56.30 per cent and females 86.05 per cent). There were only 2.09 per cent educated youth (males 3.77 per cent and females 0.48 per cent). For the year 1971, in the urban areas, uneducated youth constituted 26.43 per cent (males 18.12 per cent and females 36.38 per cent), while educated youth constituted 22.96 per cent (males 26.59 per cent and females 17.42 per cent). As for the rural areas, the uneducated were 60.62 per cent (males 45.24 per cent and females 76.38 per cent) and the educated were 5.45 per cent (males 8.8 per cent and females 2.2 per cent). Thus, we find that there has been a reduction in the percentage of the uneducated over the ten years. Naturally, all those who have received some education—matriculation and above—are bound to swell the number of persons who need employment, adding in its turn to the number of the educated unemployed in the country.

#### NON-STUDENT YOUTH

Taking into account the rural-urban dimension as well as caste and class variations and, of course, exposure to education, one understands why the youth do not really constitute a homogeneous group in India. There are significant differences in education, aspiration, styles of living, and so on that divide the youth into several segments.

In the first place, uneducated youth have to be distinguished from the educated youth whose situation and problems are in many ways different. So far, considerable attention has been given to the analysis of the problems of educated youth, but little, if any, to uneducated youth. This contemporary discussion on youth, focused only on educated youth, does not adequately represent the total reality of the situation of youth in India. It is only with respect to the demographic dimension that material is available regarding educated as well as uneducated youth of the country.

We shall first enumerate the problems of uneducated youth. Because of their special nature they deserve careful understanding.

A vast majority of youth have been denied opportunities of education at all levels. According to the Fourth Plan estimates, non-students in age group eleven to fourteen formed about 66 per cent, 80 per cent in the age group of fourteen to seventeen, and 97 per cent in the age group seventeen to twenty-three. These three age groups

represent the middle school, secondary school, and higher educational levels. It is thus obvious that very few young people are able to pursue education even if they are keen to do so. While there is a significant rise in the level of aspiration on the part of youth and their parents with respect to acquiring education, there is denial of opportunity to a large proportion of youth.

As we shall see later, there are structural constraints under which even the educated youth have to labour. One can easily imagine the handicaps which the uneducated youth have to suffer. In the case of non-student youth it is obvious that they have no relationship whatsoever with the main intellectual stream and as such are likely to be alienated from society. The conditions under which they live are characterized by economic and cultural deprivation. These factors have definite implications for dropout rates and even for the patterns of recreation and leisure time activities of youth. The kind of work which non-student youth are able to get is mostly of an unskilled nature, offering practically no avenues of promotion or mobility. There is continued dependence on kin-groups, friends, and neighbours with respect to getting employment. A sense of belonging to society is lacking among non-student youth. This youth pose a problem to society for two reasons: first, they cannot be put to any effective use, and second, as a group they constitute a threat to stability because of their discontent and dissatisfaction.

Non-student youth, who constitute an important segment of the population and who need serious attention, have been neglected. It is true that political parties and pressure groups often use student youth for various kinds of agitations and protest movements, but the uneducated youth have not been mobilized so far even towards these ends. These youth cannot visualize a wider social role for themselves. Desire for education coupled with non-availability of education and the general rise in the level of aspirations can make the situation explosive.

#### STUDENT YOUTH IN INDIA

A great deal of attention has been given to the problems of youth by social scientists, both Indian and foreign. The importance attached to the study of youth in societies having a well-developed youth culture, and in those in which it is incipient, is understand-



able. It should be noted that certain authors, like Musgrave (1964), dispute the entire formulation about a clear-cut differentiation between the youth and the old generation and assert that the youth are not a distinctive group. However, the presence of a large number of adolescents and young adults has significant implications for the general stability of the social system in societies in which the majority of the population consists of adolescents and youth and in which the capacity to generate income is limited. This appears to be true of many Asian countries. The importance of educated youth is enhanced by the fact that they have been exposed to education and sensitized to new ideas and values. This gives them new visions and utopias. But they are not given necessary opportunities for the realization of their aspirations. This fact has implications for the politicization of youth. This is why student youth are attracted to political religions. It should be emphasized that even educated youth do not constitute a homogeneous group, for among them there are differences which stem from rural and urban backgrounds, family backgrounds, caste and class backgrounds, and so on. Many students undergoing higher education today come from families which have had hardly any background of higher education. This has implications for the choice of careers and courses and also for performance in colleges and universities. Several studies have brought home the relationship between socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and the performance of the students. With respect to wastage and stagnation in education this relationship is pronounced (Kamat and Deshmukh 1963:13). In a study of students from Poona university, it was found that about forty-six per cent of arts students completed their B. A. course, but fifteen per cent left without passing the first year examination, sixteen per cent passed the first year examination but left without passing the intermediate examination, seven per cent joined the degree classes but left without passing, seven per cent passed the intermediate but left without joining the degree classes, and four per cent joined the degree classes but left without passing the final examination. Apart from the hard fact of wastage and stagnation reported above, the relationship between social stratification and wastage and stagnation is even more revealing. From the Poona study, it is clear that among advanced castes of Brahmans and Prabhus (CKP) the wastage is about forty-two per cent and for other castes and communities it is fifty-two per cent or above. Even

if we exclude the backward classes, among whom wastage is the highest, it is as high as fifty-six per cent among the Marathas. It is further noted that among the higher grades (S.S.C.), wastage among local students is lower than among non-local students. Among the Brahmans and the CKP, wastage is less than thirty-five per cent, while among all other castes and communities it is as high as fifty per cent. Wastage and stagnation in professional courses has also been reported.

#### QUEST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The considerable demand for higher education is evinced by the growth of colleges and universities in India since independence. There are today one hundred universities and university level institutions and three thousand and five hundred colleges which admit students for higher education. A large part of the benefits of the expanded educational opportunity has gone to youth from the more affluent sections of society. A study of the social and economic background of the students of the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, points out that the proportion of students from low income groups has declined over the years and that there is a concentration in it of students belonging to higher income groups (King 1970: 1463, 67). Students belonging to lower socio-economic strata have to face all kinds of difficulties in pursuing their studies successfully. Recruitment to the I.A.S. and other central services also shows that candidates belonging to the backward classes find it difficult to make the grade. On the whole, it can be said that higher education does not act as a sufficient lever of mobility, particularly for the lower socio-economic strata.

#### EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

It is indeed a matter of common knowledge and criticism that the educational system in India neither maintains high and rigorous standards nor does it impart any skills to its recipients to enable them to enter the employment market. Several committees and commissions have enquired into the malaise of higher education in India and have criticized its lack of rigour, its social irrelevance, and its inability to prepare students for careers. But the rush for admission to institutions of higher learning continues. It is well-

known that the courses, methods of teaching, the relationship between the teachers and the taught, and the examination system stand in urgent need of reform. The increase in the numbers of students in institutions of higher learning has been regarded generally as one of the major factors responsible for the decline in standards. There are other factors, however, which are equally responsible for the paralysis of the university system. The most important among them are (i) the resistance from within to update the courses, (ii) the system emphasizes rote learning, (iii) the examinations fail to judge the true worth of a student, and (iv) the apathy and lack of social commitment in the teaching community.

The rush for higher education can be explained in terms of the desire for social and occupational mobility, especially the desire for attaining higher status in society. Higher education is regarded as an instrument of social status as white-collared jobs continue to enjoy a high status. Education imparts wrong ideas regarding *status* and *dignity* and creates in the students a disdain for manual labour. On the positive side, there is no denying the fact that new ideas and values are inculcated through education; these make students receptive to and desirous of social change. Several studies (Cormack 1961) have shown that students are keen on social change in the areas of family, caste, notions of status, rationality, secularism, equality, social justice, women's position, and so on. Students favour a democratic family structure as against the prevailing authoritarian structure. They do not believe in many restrictions rooted in caste, class, and sex. Similarly, they would like the affairs of the nation to be conducted on a rational and scientific plane. But these studies also point out that the students, while they give such responses at the overt and verbal level, are also aware of the difficulties lying in the way of translating these ideas and values into actual patterns of interaction and behaviour.

Family and socio-economic background have a great deal to do with the students' choice of courses and careers, which has significance for what Erickson describes as the process of identity formation (1959). Their financial dependence on parents means that their choice of courses and occupations in most cases rests with parents and guardians. Gaudino observes "young people are manipulated into adult life by the elders with a surprising practical success and the great psychological uneasiness" (Damle 1970).

Thus, even those who receive higher education and have been exposed to new values and ideas find themselves constrained by some of the structural features like family, caste, and stratification.

#### EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Higher education in India, it is well-known, does not guarantee suitable employment. The reasons for this are many; lack of proper guidance, training, and preparation for careers and non-availability of jobs may be cited as important factors. The spectre of unemployment haunts the students in the final stages of their education and makes them restive and insecure about their future. Several estimates have been made about unemployment among the educated (Saxena 1972: 128-38). According to the most conservative of these, based on live register data, the number of educated unemployed was in the vicinity of 0.8 million in 1970 and if the part-time or unsuitably employed persons are included the number may well swell to 1.5 million. These studies point to the preponderance of unemployment among those in the age group 18-21. The highest incidence of unemployment is among the matriculates who account for about two-thirds of the total educated unemployment. The live register data reveal a steeper rise in unemployment among the graduates and postgraduates than among the matriculates in recent years. There is a higher incidence of unemployment among the freshers. The situation has been further aggravated because of the general disinclination among the educated to look for manual jobs and their preference for white-collar jobs. The incidence of unemployment is higher among the educated with arts degrees than among those who studied science or commerce. It should also be mentioned that there is substantial unemployment among engineers, particularly after 1967, because of the recession. The crisis of educated unemployment in India is deepened both by the figures of unemployment and also by the proliferation of educated young men and women every year who have not really received a proper kind of education. The increase in the number of such educated youth and the indifferent quality of education makes matters worse. This definitely has implications for student unrest and unrest in the population at large (Panthackal 1973). According to the employment register of 1 June 1971, there were 0.26 million unemployed youth in the country. "Social structure which generates poverty

generates its own shabby education system to serve it. Therefore there is a firm linkage between kind of education and social structure" (Panthackal 1973).

It is very clear from these figures that there is a disjunction between educational unemployment and preparation for an occupational career. Erickson regards an occupational career as an important requisite of identity formation (Erickson 1959). If for any structural reason, an occupational career cannot be guaranteed then the process of identity formation is not successfully completed and creates a series of problems both for the recipients of education and for society as a whole. It was also mentioned earlier that a mass of educated adolescents, without either proper education or employment prospects, provide a threat to social stability. The swelling of the educated unemployed cannot but have a disturbing impact on those who are undergoing higher education. The persistent criticism about the present education being worthless also adds to the insecurity of the recipients of education. Broadly, the inadequacies of the educational system are well-known, but when it comes to action, all sorts of financial and institutional alibis are offered as reasons for inaction.

#### RADICAL IDEOLOGIES

It was pointed out earlier that students receiving higher education acquire new ideas and values and are keen to bring about social change. A section of them is fired by radical ideologies which they inculcate as a result of their exposure to the wider world through books and periodicals. There is a regrettable tendency to dismiss student movements as being concerned only with trifling and ephemeral issues, devoid of a firm ideological basis. However, some studies of student activism in India question this assumption (Aikara 1973: 236-37). On the basis of a study of student activism in Kerala, Jacob comes to the conclusion that "students inculcate revolutionary ideology when supported by political parties. Student activism in the case of ideologies is a concerted occasion to realise ideal society as envisaged in the revolutionary ideology. Thus political parties, the leftist ones, play an important role in ideologically oriented student activism in Kerala in so far as they equip student activists with revolutionary ideology. Apart from providing leadership and organizational structure, students' unions help

political socialization of students and the making of future political leaders. Thus leftist student unions acquire both ideology and organizational techniques from the political parties." This is not to suggest that all the student activists are ideologically oriented, but it has to be borne in mind that commitment on the part of the few provides the necessary ideological and organizational base for student activism. Of course, one has also to enquire into the social base of those who have inculcated radical ideologies and particularly investigate their styles of living, for it is likely that in some cases there may be no correspondence between their formal acceptance of radical ideology and actual practice in daily life. In case there is a wide gap between the two, radical ideology loses much of its significance and becomes a mere excuse to cover the guilt complex generated by higher standards of living. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that youth exposed to radical ideologies are discontent with the social system and they spearhead movements to bring about changes in it. They contribute content, organization, and strategies to youth activism.

#### STUDENT UNREST AND VIOLENCE

An issue of the journal *Seminar* (June 1973) was devoted to a discussion on our paralyzed universities. In his article, Malcolm S. Adisesiah says, "during Christmas term in nineteen seventy-two between two to three hundred of our University Institutions representing ten per cent of our total were involved in strikes and the destruction of public property which are predominantly followed by Gheraos and killings stemming from political involvement and the desire to avoid examinations followed by academic, employment, transport and linguistic problem occasions" (Adisesiah 1963). The same article says that according to the Union government's announcement in the Lok Sabha, "between June and November nineteen seventy-two there had occurred four thousand three hundred sixteen cases of unrest in our educational institutions. This means that all our University Institutions have been disrupted during this six-month period at least once, with about a third of them suffering disruption twice or about half of our institutions have suffered unrest thrice in the six-month period." The government statement further states, "more than a third of the

disturbances were due to relation to unacademic or campus parochial factors which had no relation to academic or campus matters" (Adiseshiah 1963).

A study of student unrest, the main conclusions of which were reported in the *Sunday World*, the magazine section of the *Hindustan Times* (Vinayak 1972), lists and analyzes the issues involved in the widespread student unrest. These fit into three broad categories—academic, off campus, and others (unemployment, fees, residential and other facilities). The causes of campus disturbance, category-wise, were as follows: (i) academic-196, (ii) off campus-484, and (iii) others-84.

The reasons for student unrest in different universities and colleges are of a varied character. The study referred to above, revealed that of the total number of cases reported during 1968 to 1971, more than 65 per cent were due to off campus issues, about 24 per cent due to academic issues, and about 11 per cent due to other factors such as unemployment and fees. The off campus issues invariably relate to public transport arrangements, sympathetic strikes, and confrontation between students themselves and group clashes. The state-wise analysis showed that there were 66 agitations in Andhra Pradesh, 25 in Assam, 44 in Bihar, 128 in Delhi, 7 in Gujarat, 6 in Haryana, 7 in Himachal Pradesh, 15 in Jammu and Kashmir, 51 in Tamil Nadu, 14 in Maharashtra, 22 in Orissa, 50 in Punjab, 18 in Rajasthan, 109 in U.P., and 101 in West Bengal. It will be seen that four states, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, U.P., and West Bengal accounted for more than 57 per cent of the total number of agitations arising from off campus issues during 1968 to 1971 and the states of Bihar, Delhi, U.P., and West Bengal accounted for 58 per cent of the total number of disturbances arising from academic issues during the period under report. The study revealed that almost all the states were affected by student violence during 1968 to 1971.

The analysis of student unrest in different universities and colleges in India during the period 1968 to 1971 showed that of the total of 744 instances of student unrest, more than 380 per cent were violent and about 20 per cent were peaceful. Student agitations each year and in each state, during the period under report, were predominantly violent. The all-India average ratio of violent to peaceful agitations was 4.5 to 1.0 and it ranged between 2.3 to 1.0 in Bihar and Madras, to 31.0 to 0.0 in Madhya Pradesh. This

study dispels the general feeling that universities in the southern states are more peaceful or at least less violent. The analysis revealed that student disturbances in these states each year during 1968-1971 were predominantly violent. The maximum number of cases of student violence reported were in Delhi, followed by U.P. and West Bengal. The least disturbed states were Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan. The least number of cases were reported from Haryana. The study further revealed that the states of Delhi, U.P., Punjab, and West Bengal together accounted for 60 per cent of the total number of cases of student unrest. The maximum number of cases were reported in 1969 (288) and the minimum (105) in 1968.

What are the causes of student violence? The extent and fury of it deserve serious examination. According to one analyst, "One of the underlying causes of student discontent in India is rooted in a general feeling of unrest and frustration amongst the masses. Students are bewildered by the kaleidoscopic changes in their social, political, and intellectual environments and the incapacity of the present systems and values to respond to the new changes. The vanishing of decency from public life have enfeebled the students' faith in accepted moral and intellectual values. They have come to believe that in the present set-up the defiance of authority will yield immediate and rich dividends whereas merit and ability are at a discount" (Vinayak 1972). Further, violence seems to act as an important medium of communication while everything else appears to fail to obtain the desired result.

The outbreak of student violence generally takes place in the month of September, which can be explained partly by a feeling of home-sickness on the part of the students who are away from their homes, partly by their desire for some kind of thrill, and also partly by the fact that the elections of the student unions are generally held in August or September.

The association of various political parties through their student wings—the Youth Congress, the Students Federation of India, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and so forth—with student affairs is also in many ways responsible for the outbreak of student violence. Several studies of student unions in different parts of the country appear to support this view. Political parties tend to use student unions as sounding boards and as testing grounds for their



strength for general elections. This has been revealed time and again in studies of student unions.

Student unions are generally dominated by leaders who come from relatively well-to-do families. A majority of them wish to become political leaders and towards this end they use leadership of student unions as a training ground. Student unions are meant to promote welfare of students, but provide necessary learning opportunities for student leaders to prepare for leadership roles in adult life. Elections to students' unions involve considerable expenditure, often reducing student leadership to a monopoly of the well-to-do classes. Some of the estimates made of the expenses incurred during student union elections clearly point out that very large amounts are involved. This implies heavy spending by political parties and by the richer parents of students who aspire to be union leaders. Student unions give little attention to the welfare of students, which is ostensibly their major aim.

Association of students' unions with political parties naturally provides a semblance of power to students. Of course, the power enjoyed by the unions is only some kind of reflected glory and as such the students have to depend continuously on their links with political bosses. Much depends on the way student power is handled by educational institutions, including colleges and universities.

Our discussion of the situation and problems of youth (students as well as non-students) in the post-independence period highlights certain important points:

1. There is increasing awareness on the part of youth that it forms a distinctive group and it is conscious that it will be in its own interest to work for bringing about rapid social change and progress;
2. There is a general distrust of the prevailing institutional arrangements and a keen desire for changing the social order;
3. Non-student youth are handicapped with several difficulties such as lack of education, lack of any prospects of mobility, and dependence on kith and kin, caste and linguistic group;
4. Such youth are either not adequately exposed to new ideas and values, or in the event of their exposure to them through the mass media, it is not possible for them to act upon any of them;
5. Student youth, who have been exposed to new ideas and values, are keen to implement them although they are also beset

with certain difficulties—financial dependence on parents, nature of the educational system, and lack of opportunities for occupations and career.

6. A section of the student youth is fired by radical ideology and is keen on restructuring the social order;

7. Due to a variety of factors, there is considerable student unrest and violence, but this unrest is only an extension of their frustration and helplessness which is capitalized on by political leaders;

8. Student violence can also be understood as an important medium of communication between students and the authorities; and

9. Restlessness among the youth is an indicator of the feeling on its part that the present order and institutional arrangements have failed to keep the promise which was given on the eve of independence.

#### THE FUTURE

As a result of health measures, life expectancy has increased considerably over the last twenty-five years. It is expected to increase much more by A.D. 2000. It would be safe to assume that expectancy of life would go up to at least sixty years, if not more. This would necessitate a clear-cut division between youth and adults and would involve a definite demarcation of their roles and responsibilities. It would also involve some transfer of authority from the older generation to the younger. Demographically speaking, even if the percentage of youth in the population were to decline relative to the older generation, it would not mean relaxation of pressure on the older generation by the younger with respect to some opportunities of life such as occupying important positions in different walks of life. Thus one does not foresee any possibility of a reduction in the clash of interest between the younger and the older generation. On the other hand, such a clash is likely to be sharpened in years to come.

There are several ways of avoiding such a clash. Appropriate changes in the structure of the family appear to be necessary. The younger generation will expect a more permissive and democratic family atmosphere. Perhaps more nuclear families will emerge.

There will have to be a radical change in the husband-wife relationship, which will have to be essentially egalitarian in every respect, including the responsibility for the upbringing of children, and household chores. This would also mean availability of a large number of educated and trained women for the task of national development.

It was noted earlier that because of the financial dependence of youth, particularly for higher education, the parents can manipulate the career and life of their sons and daughters with remarkable ease. Once this responsibility is taken away from the parents the youth will have greater autonomy, and hopefully a greater sense of responsibility. The process of identity formation can be more satisfactorily completed in the absence of constraints and inhibitions stemming from the family system. Similar observations can be made with respect to kinship. Its strength would be reduced and it would remain a sentimental tie rather than an obligatory relationship involving complex responsibilities. The caste system, which defines role, responsibilities, privileges, duties, and obligations, will be neutralized or rendered innocuous. The hold which it has today on personality formation and choice of career, personal friendships, and other relationships will be considerably reduced and may remain only a matter of cultural difference which need not be a permanent obstacle in anybody's path. As a result of significant reduction in the potency of caste, the youth will be considerably emancipated from shackles and constraints and this would mean enhanced emphasis on achieved status. Along with caste, which has given rise to all kinds of discriminatory practices, other factors like linguistic, sub-regional, and regional loyalties would also cease to be effective, or at any rate they will be weakened. Once they are curbed, a really all-India pattern would emerge. The youth is even now in no mood to accept any kind of disparity but these disparities can really be done away with only when some of the structural features are rendered powerless. Freedom, which youth will attain, will have to be matched by a sense of responsibility. It is only then that a radical transformation of the old order will be possible.

In the light of the foregoing discussion certain trends emerge. In the first place, Indian society did not have and still does not have a youth culture, largely because of its social structure and the system of values. There always was emphasis on the physical valour

of youth and it was called upon to make supreme sacrifices for the national cause. The demographic situation and the life expectancy of the population did not necessitate the emergence of a youth culture. Due to traditional occupations, which did not need any formal training, youth could be absorbed into adult society without any difficulty. Marriage and the family also enable youth to fit into the adult world with ease. However, because of changes in the system of education and the occupational structure, this smooth transition from youth to adulthood has been disturbed. As mentioned earlier, the prolongation of the process of identity formation on account of higher education gives rise to certain problems. These problems have now been considerably accentuated. In the pre-independence period there were certain attenuating circumstances, for example early marriage and the joint family system with common sharing of property. The prolongation of identity formation did not then really pose much of a problem. In the post-independence period, however, with the expansion of education, urbanization, industrialization, and of course acceptance of new ideas and values, there tended to develop a hiatus between youth and the older generation. On the one hand there has been a considerable rise in the level of aspirations and expectations and on the other, due to the inadequate growth rate, the youth have been compelled to depend on traditional structures and as such tend to be dominated by the forces of tradition. At the ideational level the youth are radical and progressive, while at the behavioural level they cannot implement their views and envisioned patterns of social interactions and relationships. All the same, one has also to keep in mind that due to the entrenchment of student organizations, which were largely encouraged during the nationalist struggle, student youth have become a force to be reckoned with. In any case, students can exercise pressure by resorting to negative strategies like strikes, *gheraos*, *bandhs*, destruction of property, and so forth. There is no denying the fact that students are often exploited by interested parties. As we have seen, the percentage of educated youth is very small, particularly as far as higher education is concerned. One must note that at the same time a beginning has been made with respect to making higher education available to the erstwhile unprivileged and deprived sections of the population. We have also noted that there is a significantly large population of non-student youth who are constrained in every way

because of lack of education. Such youth are not even organized, for most of them work in domestic service and at menial jobs along with their studies. A large majority of the youth is not in the mainstream of national life and as such is denied opportunities for self-advancement and making its contribution to society. As for future trends, one envisages increasing life expectation and therefore there will be a cleavage between the young and the old. Radical transformation in certain key institutions like family, kinship, caste and regional loyalties will free youth from the constraints which have inhibited them. It is obvious that in times to come, say in the next twenty-five years, the youth will wage a continuous battle against discrimination on all counts—sex, age, caste, region, language, religion, and economic class. In fact youth will play a significant role in rooting out discrimination. Then alone can a social order based on performance, merit, and social justice, as well as the welfare of all, be established.

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