

the party continues to ignore the Muslim community now that it has found a winning formula in its new social coalition or whether it will try to reach out to the Muslims as well by controlling its fringe elements and delivering on its promise of 'sabka saath, sabka vikaas' (together with all, development for all).

Notes

Wherever necessary, figures have been weighted by actual vote share of parties in the respective states.

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The Youth Vote Made a Difference for the Victory of the BJP

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Electoral politics in India is largely discussed in context of caste cleavages of political parties, largely with reference to mobilisation of caste. The post Mandal discussion on electoral mobilisation in India centered largely around the issue of mobilisation voters belonging to the Other backward castes (OBCs) while in recent times there is also focus on mobilisation of the dalits. There is also focus on women in Indian politics and the debate revolves around if women vote different compared to men and if there is something called women vote if not nationally but at least in states where women have occupied the top position, have been the Chief Minister. Some studies have focused on women's voting pattern and their role in electoral politics.

However, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections there was immense focus on the young voters. Not only did political parties were busy making strategies how to attract the young voters, they being in sizeable numbers, even the Election Commission of India was keen on enrolment of the Young voters in as big numbers as possible. Some studies have indicated, a lower enrolment ratio amongst the young voters compared to the voters of other age group. The ECI was very aggressive in its campaign for enrolment and motivation of voters to vote on the polling day, with a special focus on the young voters who are in sizeable numbers. While there are no official estimate of what proportion of voters are in this age category nationally or in different states, but before every election the Election Commission of India releases figures for how many new voters are added to the electoral roll of a particular states. While this does not give estimate of young voters, but this certainly indicates that over the years, because of growing young population, the proportion of young voters is also increasing. There are

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different estimates of what proportion of Indian voters would belong to the category referred as young voters (18-25 years of age) but estimates from surveys conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies put the figures in the range between 22-25 percent of total voters.

In order to encourage more young voters in Indian politics the Government took an initiative and started celebrating 25th January as National Voters' Day since 2011, specifically to enroll the newly eligible youth who have just attained the age of 18 years in the electoral rolls and to motivate them to actively participate in the electoral process.

While there was enormous focus on the enrolment, motivations and electoral mobilisation of the Young voters by political parties, it may be incorrect to say that this is the first election when so much attention was paid on the young voters. It was only after the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and in various assembly elections after the Lok Sabha elections that there has been increasing interest in youth vote India. It was widely believed that large number of young members got elected to the 15th Lok Sabha in 2009 mainly because, the young voters who constitute large proportion of voters, voted for the younger candidates. While media analysis of 2009 Lok Sabha elections results was full of analysis about large number of young members getting elected to the parliament, but a careful analysis of the age of the members elected to the 15th Lok Sabha suggest, there were only 79 members (below the age of 40 years) and this number was not higher compared to previous House. This was rather simple; a manual count of members elected to the Lok Sabha looking at their age helped in answering this simple question, but the bigger questions of whether there is an young vote in India needs a careful analysis and this article makes an attempt at analysing this issue of if there is something called a youth vote in India. In 2014, this figured dropped slightly as there are only 69 elected members were below the age of 40 years.

Such an initiative by the ECI is important as there have been concerns about under enrolment of the Young voters and also their lower turnout in

elections during last few decades. There are other concerns also with regard to the young voters, the youth not only vote is lesser numbers, and only few of them get elected to state assemblies and parliament, they remain divided between various political parties when they vote. But with all the political parties trying hard to mobilise the young voters who are in sizeable numbers, we did witness higher electoral political participation of the young voters in 2014.

Almost all political parties including the newly formed Aam Adami Party made attempts to mobilise the youth realising that the young voters constitute a sizeable proportion of the total electorate. Most of the advertisement and campaign by the Congress party either in media or by way of putting up hoardings, used the faces of the young Congress worker in their effort to mobilise the young voters. The main rival of the Congress, the BJP did not leave any chances, its leader and Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi made all effort to mobilise the Youth vote considering that the youth (18-25 years) constitute large number of voters. In this race for mobilising the young, the regional parties were also not far behind, they also tried to mobilise the youth vote. The decision by the Samajwadi Party to make Akhilesh Yadav the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh could be seen as a part of this strategy. But did this strategy of the political parties resulted in any significant change in youth's participation in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections?

The analysis of figures of turnout during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections suggest, this election did witness higher electoral participation of the Indian youth. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed the highest ever turnout in history of Lok Sabha elections in India. Compared to the previous of 64 percent, the 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed a very turnout of 66 percent. It is important to note that the turnout amongst the young voters who in the past have voted in lesser numbers compared to the average turnout, voted in much bigger numbers in 2014 compared to the past. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed as high as 68 percent turnout amongst the young voters, two percent higher compared to the average, which in the past used to be nearly four percent lower compared to the national average.

Table 1

Turnout of the Young Voters: Lok Sabha Elections 1996-2014

Turnout amongst	1999	2004	2009	2014
Young Voters (18-25 years)	57	52	54	68
All India Turnout	60	58	58	66

Note: All figures are in percent. Figures for All India turnout are from the results of various Lok Sabha elections while the estimates for the turnout amongst young voters are from the post poll surveys conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

The euphoria of youth's mobilisation and their possible higher participation in election had begun soon after the Anna Hazare's anti corruption movement and more so after the formation of AAP, but analysis of the turnout figures indicate, the turnout amongst the young voters remained lower compared to the average turnout in states where assembly elections even in Delhi where the Aam Adami Party successfully contested the Assembly elections. Not only was turnout low amongst the young voters in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, even in a city like Delhi which witnessed large scale mobilisation of the young voter, thanks to the effort of the Aam Adami Party, the turnout amongst young voters was four percent lower compared to the average turnout.

The 2014 Lok Sabha election was also different with regard to how the youth voted. This is probably the only election in recent years when the young voters have voted decisively in favour of one political party, the BJP. The vote share of the BJP amongst the young voters was 34.4 percent, more than three percentage points higher than its average vote share of 31.1 percent. These figures stand alone may not seem very significant, but in comparative perspective these indicate significant numbers of young voters voting for the BJP. Since the proportion of young voters of total voter is very large, even fraction of percent shift towards any party means large number of voters in actual numbers. In the past never had the young voters shown such making such a clear political choice amongst various political choices.

If we look back and analyse the results of the 2009 Lok Sabha elections the Congress to a great extent succeeded in portraying itself as a party which represents the youth, but the youth does not seem to have reciprocated by indicating a clear preference for the Congress party over other political parties or voting for the Congress in bigger numbers now compared to the past. While it is difficult to say whether the Congress lost its vote bank among the young voters during the 1990s and in recent years compared to the past, but it is clear that the party did not receive disproportionately higher votes from the young voters compared to non-youth or other voters in Lok Sabha elections held since 1996. The vote share of the Congress among the young voters remained more or less the same as its national vote share. In some elections, the party got more votes amongst voters of the age group 34 years and above compared to the youth.

On the other hand, popularity of the BJP among the youth seems to have increased sharply as compared to 2009. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, compared to the 31 percent votes polled by the BJP amongst the Young voters the BJP got 34 percent votes, three percent higher compared to the average vote which in actual numbers are very large.

During the last few Lok Sabha elections the Congress has generally got more votes amongst voters who are above 34 years of age compared to the young voters, though the proportion of votes for the Congress amongst the young voters is only marginally higher compared to the proportion among other voters. But there is a big gender difference in the vote for the Congress amongst the young voters. Findings of the national election studies indicate that the Congress has been more popular amongst young women compared to young men. In other words young women have voted for the Congress in a slightly bigger proportion compared to young men. Even in 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the support for the Congress was 3 percentage points higher among young women as compared to young men.

The BJP has always received more votes amongst the young men compared to young women. The party continues to hold an advantage among

Table 2

BJP Was a More Oopular Choice Amongst the Young Voters in 2014

Parties	1999			2004			2009			2014		
	All Voters	Youth	Others	All Voters	Youth	Others	All Voters	Youth	Others	All Voters	Youth	Others
Congress	28.3	27	29	26.5	27	26	28.6	28	29	18.6	19	20
BJP	23.8	26	23	22.2	23	22	18.8	20	18	31.1	34	30
Left	7.6	8	8	7.9	8	8	7.5	7	8	4.8	4	5
BSP	4.2	5	4	5.3	5	6	6.2	6	6	4.1	5	4

Note: All figures are in percent

Source: NES surveys conducted by CSDS during Lok Sabha elections; Note: Vote-share weighted datasets. All figures are in percent.

Table 3

The Young Men Voted More for the BJP Compared to Young Women

	1999		2004		2009		2014	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
All Women	31	22	27	22	29	18	19	29
Young Women	30	24	28	24	29	19	20	32
All Men	28	25	26	23	28	20	19	33
Young Men	26	26	25	24	27	22	17	36

Note: All figures are in percent, figures estimates from the survey conducted by the CSDS

young men compared to the young women even in 2014. Compared to 32 percent young women voting for BJP, amongst the young men 36 percent voted for the BJP.

Locality, or the type of area where a voter is residing in, also has some influence on voting patterns of voters which is true of the young voters as well. The young living in villages vote differently compared to their counterparts living in small towns and cities. In fact the differences in voting patterns amongst rural and urban youth is much sharper compared to what we see amongst young women and young men. A study of the voting pattern of the youth since 1996 indicates that there has not been much difference in the rural-urban support for the Congress amongst the Young voters, though BJP does seem to be slightly more popular amongst the young voters living in towns and cities.

The electoral choice amongst the young voters seems to have changed to a great extent in recent years. We witness shift in youth support towards the BJP both amongst the rural youth and those living in small towns and big cities. The shift was not much till July 2013, but we witness a remarkable shift amongst the young voters towards the BJP during last six months. What is important to note is that, while we witness shift amongst both rural and urban youth towards the BJP, but the shift amongst the rural youth towards the BJP is much bigger compared to the shift amongst the urban youth. There is a clear trend of this shift amongst the young voters few months before elections. The BJP got large number of votes both amongst the rural young voters and amongst the urban young voters, though BJP remained slightly more popular amongst the urban young voters.

The level of educational attainment of the Indian youth seem to be an important factor in shaping the youth's voting patterns at least during last decade or so. Irrespective of the electoral success or setback of the Congress and BJP, Congress always had an advantage over the BJP amongst the non-literate young voters while the BJP always had an advantage over the Congress amongst the college-educated young voters. Even though the

Table 4
BJP's Slightly More Popular Amongst the Urban Young Voters

Parties	1999		2004		2009		2014	
	Rural Youth	Urban Youth	Rural Youth	Urban Youth	Rural Youth	Urban Youth	Rural Youth	Urban Youth
Congress	27	28	26	30	27	28	17	21
BJP	25	28	22	26	20	20	34	35

Note: All figures are in percent

Source: NES surveys conducted by CSDS during Lok Sabha elections Note: Vote-share weighted datasets. All figures are in percent.

Table 5

Educated Young Voters Vote More for the BJP

	1999		2004		2009		2014	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
Uneducated Youth	33	19	29	20	32	16	19	26
Primary School Pass	29	26	29	19	30	18	21	25
High School Pass	26	25	24	22	27	18	20	35
Graduates or more	23	32	24	32	26	25	17	38

Note: All figures are in percent, figures estimates from the survey conducted by the CSDS

Congress did not perform well during the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections and its overall vote share went down drastically, it still had an advantage over the BJP amongst the uneducated young voters. Similarly, even though the BJP's vote share declined drastically from 25.6 percent during the 1998 Lok Sabha elections to 22.2 percent during the 2004 Lok Sabha election, the BJP still managed to retain its advantage over the Congress amongst the college educated young voters. The party lost this advantage over the Congress in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, but only marginally.

During last few Lok Sabha elections, Congress received more votes amongst uneducated youth compared to college educated youths. This is also in conformity with the trend amongst voters above the age of 34 years who are non-literate, as they also tend to vote more in favour of the Congress compared to the BJP. Though the Congress still manages to get more votes from the uneducated youth compared to the college educated youth, the gap between votes for the Congress amongst the uneducated youth and college educated youth has narrowed down, because, there has been a slight increase in the preference for Congress among the college educated youth over the years. Barring the 1999 Lok Sabha election, there is hardly any indication of any positive shift amongst the uneducated youth in favour of the Congress between 1996 and 2009. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed almost equal support for the Congress amongst the educated as well as uneducated young voters. The BJP has been more popular amongst the educated young voters in almost all election held in the recent past in recent past. That said the party's vote share among the educated youth has declined sharply over the years, from a high of 40 percent in 1998 to a low of 25 percent in 2009. But the BJP seem to have regained its support amongst the educated young voters as amongst the young educated voters 38 percent voted for the BJP in 2014. The shift towards the BJP is much sharper towards the educated voters compared to the uneducated voters. The attraction for the BJP is much more amongst the college educated young voters, compared to the uneducated young voters. Even amongst the school educated young voters, sizeable proportion seemed to have shifted towards

the BJP. We do notice shift amongst the middle school pass young voters also towards the BJP, more due to their attraction toward Narendra Modi as a leader and less due to attraction for the party.

Conclusion

Going by the patterns of electoral participation of the Indian Youth, before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, there was hardly anything like a youth vote in India as their did not vote in big numbers and they remained as divided as voters of other age group for different parties. It is only during the 2014 Lok Sabha election that we see Youth emerging as a political category. The youth not only participated in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections much more enthusiastically, they also voted more decisively for one political party, namely the BJP. There are clear signals for youth emerging as a political category.

But the question is, why did we not see youth emerging as a political category like we see for various caste groups? There could be couple of reasons for that, first the youth are not concentrated in some constitutes, they are more or less equally divided in all the constituencies like we see in case of women voters. For a community to be seen as vote bank for a party, or for the party to make effort to mobilise that group, the number or the share of that community in total electorate is important. While it is difficult to say what the size of the community or the group should be for parties to try and mobilise them, but certainly they need not be spread in all constituencies in more or less equal numbers. There has to be unevenness about their size in different constituencies so that they should have a sense of being a minority compared to other constituencies. It is easier for the party to invoke such sense of insecurity amongst such groups in order to mobilise them in favour of a party. Since that is not the case with the youth, neither have the parties tried to mobilise them in the past nor has youth shown special interest of being associated with a party. The other factor which enable party to mobilise groups as vote bank is by way of announcements of special benefits whether social or economic for some groups. At least in the past the parties has failed in doing that in case of the

youth and that is why we do not see youth mobilisation for any particular party like we see for some castes in some states.

But now when parties have realised that the youth are in sizeable numbers, most of them made an extra effort to mobilise the youth in favour of their party if not by announcing special schemes or by extending benefits to the youth, but at least by making appeal to them for greater electoral participation and also by giving ticket to some of the young contestant for contesting elections. There is a significant shift in youth's participation in 2014 Lok Sabha elections, I only hope this is only the beginning and we might see youth more active participation in country's politics.