



## **ROLE OF YOUTH IN SHAPING MODERN POLITICS: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA**

**Dr. Mamini Pradhan**

*Asst. Professor in Political Science, Angul Autonomous College Angul, Odisha, India*

**Paper Received On:** 20 MAR 2026

**Peer Reviewed On:** 24 APRIL 2026

**Published On:** 01 MAY 2026

### **Abstract**

*In the twenty-first century, youths have emerged not merely as participants in politics, but as architects of democratic transformation and agents of socio-political change. Representing nearly 1.8 billion people globally, the youth population today constitutes one of the most powerful demographic forces influencing governance, public discourse, electoral behavior, and policy innovation. In India, where the population structure is largely youth-driven, the political consciousness and civic engagement of young citizens have become central to the future of democracy and nation-building. This article explores the transformative role of youth in shaping modern politics through electoral participation, digital activism, grassroots mobilization, social movements, and policy advocacy. It critically examines how technological advancement and social media have redefined political engagement, enabling young people to challenge traditional power structures, amplify marginalized voices, and influence national and global political narratives. The study also highlights the persistent structural barriers confronting youth, including political exclusion, unemployment, misinformation, and limited representation within institutional frameworks. By emphasizing the intellectual energy, innovative capacity, and democratic potential of young citizens, the article argues that meaningful youth empowerment is indispensable for building accountable governance, strengthening democratic institutions, and creating an inclusive, progressive, and future-oriented political order. Ultimately, the study positions youth not only as the leaders of tomorrow, but as the decisive change makers of today.*

**Keywords:** *Youth, Indian Politics, Democracy, Social Media, Political Participation, Governance*

### **1. Introduction**

India continues to be one of the youngest nations globally, with a significant proportion of its population belonging to the youth category. In the electoral context, India has over 96.8 crore registered voters, making it the largest democratic electorate in the world, with a substantial share comprising young voters (Election Commission of India, 2024).

Furthermore, recent data indicate that over 2 crore new voters aged 18–29 were added to electoral rolls, highlighting the expanding influence of youth in democratic processes (Election Commission of India, 2024)

Youth constitute one of the most dynamic and influential sections of society, and their role in shaping modern politics is both significant and transformative. In every era, young people have acted as catalysts of change, challenging outdated systems, promoting progressive ideas, and contributing to the development of democratic values. Their energy, creativity, and willingness to question authority make them uniquely positioned to influence political thought and action. In the contemporary world, where societies are rapidly evolving, the participation of youth in politics has become more important than ever before.

History offers numerous examples of young leaders who made remarkable contributions to political and social change. Mahatma Gandhi, though later known as a global icon of peace, began shaping his political ideas in his youth, guided by truth and non-violence. Swami Vivekananda awakened the spirit of nationalism and responsibility among young people through his inspiring words and vision. Bhagat Singh stands as a powerful example of youthful courage and dedication, sacrificing his life at a very young age for the nation. Subhas Chandra Bose demonstrated extraordinary leadership and determination in his early years, mobilizing youth for a strong political cause. Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar used their intellectual strength and youthful commitment to shape India's democratic and constitutional framework.

In modern times, the role of youth in politics has expanded significantly due to the growth of education, communication, and technology. Young people are now more aware of their rights and responsibilities and actively participate in political discussions and decision-making processes. Social media platforms have provided them with a powerful voice to express opinions, mobilize support, and raise awareness about important issues such as climate change, equality, human rights, and good governance. Their ability to connect globally and share ideas has transformed politics into a more inclusive and participatory process.

At different stages of youth, their political involvement takes different forms. In early youth, individuals begin to develop awareness about society and politics through education and observation. During adolescence, they become more expressive, questioning existing systems and advocating for change. In later youth, with greater maturity and understanding, they often take active roles in leadership, policymaking, and governance. Many young leaders today are

entering politics, contesting elections, and influencing policy decisions, thereby bringing fresh perspectives to governance.

Moreover, youth play a crucial role in strengthening democracy. Their participation in voting, public debates, and social movements ensures accountability and transparency in governance. They act as watchdogs of society, questioning corruption, injustice, and inequality. Youth-led movements across the world have brought significant political reforms, proving that young voices can influence national and global agendas. Their enthusiasm and commitment help in building a more just, inclusive, and progressive society.

However, the effective participation of youth in politics also requires proper guidance, education, and opportunities. Without awareness and critical thinking, their energy may be misdirected. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions, governments, and society to encourage political awareness, civic responsibility, and leadership skills among young people. Providing platforms for constructive engagement will ensure that their contributions lead to positive and meaningful change.

Youth are not merely the future of politics but active participants in shaping modern political systems. Their ideas, actions, and leadership play a vital role in transforming societies and strengthening democratic values. As seen in the lives of great leaders and in contemporary political movements, the power of youth lies in their ability to dream, question, and act. By harnessing this potential, nations can move towards a more equitable, dynamic, and progressive political future.

## **2. Demographic profile**

The role of youth in shaping modern politics is closely linked to the unique demographic profile of India. India is widely recognized as a “young nation” due to its large youthful population. A significant share of its citizens falls within the working-age group, which gives young people a strong presence in the political sphere. This favorable age composition provides India with an advantage, as the ideas, energy, and participation of youth increasingly influence political developments.

In modern times, this population structure has made youth a decisive force in politics. The growing number of young voters plays a crucial role in determining electoral outcomes. Political parties are now more focused on youth-oriented issues such as education, employment, digital growth, and social justice. This shift reflects how the expectations of a young population are shaping political priorities and governance.

Moreover, the demographic diversity of India further strengthens youth participation. Young individuals from different regions, cultures, and social backgrounds bring a wide range of perspectives into political discussions. With the help of technology and social media, this generation is more aware, connected, and expressive. They actively engage in debates, raise their voices against injustice, and mobilize support for important causes, thereby influencing public opinion and policy-making.

At the same time, this demographic advantage comes with certain responsibilities. The potential of a large youth population can only be realized if they are provided with quality education, employment opportunities, and political awareness. Without proper guidance and opportunities, this strength may not translate into meaningful political participation.

In conclusion, India's demographic strength, reflected through its youthful population and dynamic age structure, plays a vital role in shaping modern politics. The active involvement of youth is transforming the political landscape, making it more inclusive, responsive, and forward-looking. By effectively utilizing this potential, India can ensure stronger democratic values and a more progressive future.

### **3. Role of Youth in Modern Politics**

#### **3.1 Political Awareness and Education**

Political awareness and education serve as the cornerstone of meaningful youth participation in modern politics. In an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, it is essential for young individuals to possess a clear understanding of political systems, democratic institutions, public policies, and their own rights and responsibilities as citizens. Such awareness enables them to engage with political processes not merely as passive observers, but as informed and active participants.

Education—both formal, through schools and universities, and informal, through media, public discourse, and digital platforms—plays a crucial role in shaping this awareness. It equips young minds with analytical skills, fosters critical thinking, and encourages them to evaluate political information with discernment. In an era marked by the rapid spread of misinformation and biased narratives, this ability to question, verify, and form independent opinions becomes especially significant.

Furthermore, politically educated youth are more likely to contribute constructively to democratic life. They participate in elections with a sense of responsibility, engage in debates and discussions with clarity and confidence, and advocate for issues that matter to society, such as environmental sustainability, social equality, and good governance. Many also

emerge as future leaders, reformers, and change-makers who can guide society toward progress.

Thus, political awareness and education not only empower the youth individually but also strengthen the democratic fabric of a nation by ensuring that its future leaders and citizens are informed, thoughtful, and actively involved.

### **3.2 Social Media and Digital Activism**

In the contemporary political landscape, social media and digital platforms have become indispensable instruments of youth engagement. They have redefined how political ideas are communicated, debated, and mobilized, enabling young people to participate in public discourse with unprecedented speed and reach. Platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, and YouTube are no longer mere spaces for social interaction; they function as dynamic arenas where political awareness is shaped and collective action is initiated.

Digital activism allows youth to highlight critical issues—ranging from environmental sustainability and social justice to governance and policy accountability—by amplifying voices that might otherwise remain unheard. Through campaigns, hash tags, online petitions, and digital storytelling, young individuals can influence public opinion and, at times, even policy decisions. This form of engagement fosters a more participatory and inclusive model of democracy, where dialogue is not confined to traditional institutions.

At the same time, the transformative potential of social media must be approached with caution and responsibility. The rapid dissemination of information also increases the risk of misinformation, polarization, and reactionary discourse. Therefore, it is imperative for young users to practice digital literacy, verify sources, and engage in constructive and respectful discussions. Responsible digital behavior not only enhances the credibility of youth voices but also strengthens democratic values.

When used thoughtfully, social media and digital activism empower the youth to become informed advocates and catalysts of change. Their ability to connect, organize, and respond in real time positions them as a significant force in shaping modern political narratives while upholding the principles of accountability, inclusivity, and informed citizenship.

### **3.3 Participation in Elections**

Youth participation in elections continues to rise in recent years. In the 2025 Bihar Legislative Assembly elections, voter turnout reached approximately 67.25%, reflecting strong democratic engagement (Election Data, 2025).

Additionally, India now has an estimated 21.7 crore young voters, demonstrating the growing electoral significance of youth in shaping political outcomes (Election Commission data, 2025).

Participation in elections constitutes one of the most direct and influential avenues through which youth shape modern politics. As a substantial segment of the electorate, young voters hold significant potential to determine electoral outcomes and influence the trajectory of governance and public policy. Their active involvement ensures that the perspectives and priorities of the younger generation are adequately represented within democratic frameworks.

Voting extends beyond a routine civic duty; it is a powerful expression of political agency and democratic responsibility. When youth engage meaningfully in electoral processes, they enhance the legitimacy, inclusiveness, and responsiveness of democratic institutions. Their participation is not limited to casting ballots but often encompasses involvement in campaigns, awareness initiatives, and grassroots mobilization, thereby contributing to a more dynamic political environment.

Furthermore, the growing political consciousness among youth has compelled political actors to address pressing concerns such as employment opportunities, quality education, environmental sustainability, and social equity. This shift underscores the increasing relevance of youth voices in shaping policy agendas and political discourse.

However, challenges such as voter apathy, disillusionment with political systems, and inadequate civic awareness continue to pose obstacles. Addressing these issues through effective civic education, transparent governance, and inclusive engagement strategies is essential to fully realize the democratic potential of youth participation.

In conclusion, active youth participation in elections not only strengthens democratic values but also ensures that governance remains accountable, forward-looking, and reflective of the aspirations of an evolving society.

### **3.4 Youth-Led Movements**

Youth-led movements have emerged as a powerful force in shaping modern political landscapes across the world. Unlike traditional, top-down forms of political engagement, these movements are often driven by grassroots energy, collective identity, and a strong sense of purpose among young individuals. They reflect the ability of youth not only to participate in politics but to actively initiate change and challenge existing structures.

Such movements typically arise in response to pressing social, economic, and environmental concerns. Issues like climate change, human rights, gender equality, corruption, and educational reforms have increasingly become the focal points of youth-led initiatives. What distinguishes these movements is their emphasis on inclusivity, innovation, and moral urgency. Young leaders often employ creative methods—ranging from peaceful protests and community campaigns to digital mobilization—to amplify their demands and influence public discourse.

Moreover, youth-led movements contribute to revitalizing democratic systems by holding authorities accountable and demanding transparency. They bring fresh perspectives and challenge complacency within political institutions, encouraging more responsive and people-centric governance. In many instances, these movements have succeeded in drawing national and international attention, thereby pressuring policymakers to act.

However, sustaining such movements requires resilience, strategic organization, and responsible leadership. While passion and idealism drive these initiatives, long-term impact depends on constructive dialogue, clear objectives, and institutional engagement.

In essence, youth-led movements exemplify the transformative potential of young people in politics. They demonstrate that youth are not merely future leaders but active agents of change in the present, capable of shaping a more just, equitable, and progressive society.

### **3. 5. Innovation and New Ideas**

Innovation and the generation of new ideas represent one of the most significant contributions of youth to modern politics. Unencumbered by rigid traditions and long-standing institutional habits, young individuals often approach political challenges with creativity, openness, and a willingness to question established norms. This fresh perspective enables them to propose alternative solutions to complex issues that conventional approaches may fail to address effectively.

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and global interconnectedness, youth are uniquely positioned to integrate innovation into political processes. They advocate for the use of digital tools, data-driven policymaking, and transparent governance mechanisms, thereby modernizing political systems. Concepts such as e-governance, digital participation, and online public consultations have gained momentum largely due to the influence and adaptability of younger generations.

Furthermore, youth bring forward progressive ideas that reflect evolving societal values. Their emphasis on inclusivity, sustainability, social justice, and equal opportunities often

reshapes political discourse and compels institutions to adapt. By challenging outdated ideologies and promoting forward-looking policies, they contribute to making governance more responsive to contemporary realities.

However, innovation in politics must be accompanied by practical implementation and institutional support. While new ideas are essential for progress, their success depends on feasibility, inclusiveness, and alignment with broader societal needs.

In conclusion, the innovative spirit of youth injects dynamism into modern politics. Their ability to think beyond conventional boundaries not only enriches political dialogue but also drives meaningful reforms, ensuring that governance evolves in step with the changing aspirations of society.

### **3.6. Advocacy and Social Change**

Advocacy and the pursuit of social change constitute a defining dimension of youth engagement in modern politics. Young people increasingly position themselves as vocal advocates for justice, equality, and human dignity, using both institutional and non-institutional avenues to influence public policy and societal attitudes. Their involvement reflects not only political awareness but also a deep sense of ethical responsibility toward shaping a more equitable society.

Youth advocacy often centers on critical issues such as social inequality, environmental protection, gender justice, human rights, and access to education and employment. Through campaigns, public dialogue, community engagement, and policy-oriented initiatives, young individuals seek to bring these concerns to the forefront of political agendas. Their efforts contribute to widening the scope of political discourse, ensuring that marginalized voices and overlooked issues receive due attention.

Moreover, youth play a crucial role in driving social change by challenging entrenched norms and advocating for progressive reforms. Their willingness to question injustice and demand accountability encourages institutions to become more transparent, inclusive, and responsive. In many cases, sustained youth advocacy has led to tangible outcomes, including policy reforms, increased public awareness, and shifts in societal attitudes.

At the same time, effective advocacy requires a balance between passion and pragmatism. Constructive engagement, evidence-based arguments, and respectful dialogue are essential to achieving lasting impact. Responsible advocacy not only strengthens the credibility of youth movements but also fosters a culture of democratic participation and mutual understanding.

In essence, youth advocacy serves as a catalyst for social transformation. By articulating collective aspirations and pressing for meaningful reforms, young people contribute significantly to building a just, inclusive, and progressive political order.

#### **4. Challenges Faced by Youth**

##### **4.1 Limited Representation in Decision-Making:**

Youth continue to encounter significant structural barriers in accessing positions of political authority and influence. Political institutions, party structures, and leadership hierarchies are often dominated by senior and well-established actors, resulting in the underrepresentation of younger voices. This imbalance not only restricts opportunities for youth leadership but also limits the incorporation of fresh perspectives and innovative approaches within governance and policy formulation.

##### **4.2 Inadequate Institutional Support and Mentorship:**

The absence of well-defined mentorship mechanisms and institutional support systems poses a considerable challenge for aspiring young political participants. Without adequate guidance, training, and exposure to political processes, many youths find it difficult to navigate the complexities of governance, policymaking, and public administration. This gap often hinders their ability to translate enthusiasm and ideas into effective political engagement.

**4.3. Economic and Resource Constraints:** Economic challenges remain a significant barrier to youth political participation. In 2025, India's youth unemployment rate stood at approximately 13.8%, indicating that financial instability continues to limit active political engagement (Government Labour Data, 2025).

Financial limitations represent a critical obstacle to active political involvement. Engagement in political activities—such as campaigning, organizing movements, or contesting elections—frequently requires substantial economic resources. For many young individuals, particularly those from marginalized or economically weaker backgrounds, these constraints can significantly restrict their ability to participate meaningfully in the political arena.

##### **4.4. Electoral Apathy and Civic Disengagement:**

A notable segment of the youth population exhibits a degree of apathy toward electoral and civic processes. This disengagement is often rooted in a perceived lack of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within political systems. Feelings of alienation and skepticism can diminish motivation to vote, participate in public discourse, or engage in civic responsibilities, thereby weakening democratic participation.

#### **4.5.Exposure to Misinformation and Digital Vulnerabilities:**

While digital platforms have expanded opportunities for political engagement, they have simultaneously introduced new challenges. The rapid spread of misinformation, disinformation, and polarized narratives can distort political understanding and influence public opinion. Young individuals, as active consumers of digital content, may find it difficult to distinguish credible information from misleading or biased sources, thereby affecting the quality of their political participation.

#### **4.6. Socio-Cultural Constraints:**

Societal expectations, cultural norms, and traditional value systems can act as barriers to youth involvement in politics. In many contexts, young individuals may face discouragement from family or community when expressing political opinions or pursuing public roles. Such constraints can limit their confidence, restrict freedom of expression, and reduce their overall engagement in political activities.

#### **4.7.Political Disillusionment and Trust Deficit:**

Persistent issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, ineffective governance, and unfulfilled electoral promises contribute to a growing sense of disillusionment among youth. This erosion of trust in political institutions and leadership can lead to frustration and withdrawal from active participation. Over time, such a trust deficit poses a serious challenge to the sustainability and vitality of democratic systems.

### **5. Recommendation**

#### **5.1.Strengthening Civic Education:**

Civic education should be systematically strengthened across educational institutions to ensure that young individuals develop a clear understanding of democratic values, constitutional rights, and civic responsibilities, thereby fostering informed and responsible citizenship (Almond & Verba, 1963).

#### **5.2.Enhancing Youth Representation in Politics:**

Meaningful inclusion of youth in political parties, governance structures, and decision-making bodies is essential to ensure that policies reflect contemporary aspirations and intergenerational equity. Greater youth participation strengthens democratic legitimacy and responsiveness (Pateman, 1970).

#### **5.3.Promoting Digital Literacy:**

In the digital age, youth must be equipped with strong digital literacy skills to critically evaluate information, identify misinformation, and engage constructively in online political

discourse. This is increasingly important due to the rapid spread of digital content and its influence on public opinion (United Nations, 2020).

#### **5.4.Reducing Unemployment Barriers:**

Addressing youth unemployment through skill development initiatives, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support is crucial, as economic empowerment significantly enhances political participation and civic engagement (World Bank, 2022).

#### **5.5.Encouraging Voter Participation:**

Targeted awareness campaigns, voter education programs, and simplified electoral processes should be implemented to increase active and informed participation of youth in elections, which strengthens democratic systems (Election Commission of India, 2024).

#### **5.6.Ensuring Transparent Governance:**

Strengthening transparency, accountability, and openness in governance is vital for building public trust and encouraging sustained youth engagement in political processes (World Bank, 2022).

#### **5.7.Providing Leadership Training Programs:**

Structured leadership development programs should be introduced to equip young individuals with essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and decision-making, preparing them for active roles in politics and governance (Putnam, 2000)

### **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the role of youth in shaping modern politics stands as one of the most powerful forces driving contemporary democratic transformation. Far from being passive participants, young individuals have emerged as active architects of political change—infusing public life with fresh ideas, moral clarity, and an unwavering commitment to progress. Their engagement across diverse spheres—ranging from political awareness and electoral participation to digital activism and social advocacy—reflects a generation that is not only conscious of its rights but also deeply committed to its responsibilities.

What makes youth participation particularly compelling is its ability to challenge inertia and reimagining governance in more inclusive, transparent, and forward-looking ways. In an era marked by rapid social and technological change, the voices of young people serve as both a mirror to present realities and a vision for a more equitable future. Their aspirations compel political systems to evolve, adapt, and remain responsive to the needs of a changing society.

Yet, the true potential of youth can only be realized when systemic barriers are addressed and meaningful opportunities are created. Empowering young individuals through education, *Copyright © 2026, Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*

representation, and institutional support is not merely an option—it is a democratic imperative.

Ultimately, the strength and sustainability of modern politics depend on the extent to which youth are recognized, included, and encouraged to lead. They are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the decisive force of today. If guided and supported effectively, their energy and vision have the capacity to transform political landscapes and build a future that is more just, dynamic, and resilient.

## References

- United Nations. (2020). Youth and Political Participation.*
- Pew Research Center. (2021). The Role of Social Media in Political Engagement.*
- World Bank. (2019). Youth Engagement in Governance.*
- OECD. (2022). Youth and Democracy: Participation and Inclusion.*
- Norris, P. (2011). Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited. Cambridge University Press.*
- Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties. CQ Press.*
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. Information, Communication & Society.*
- Election Commission of India. (2023). Voter awareness initiatives.*
- Government of India. (2022). Youth in India Report.*
- United Nations. (2020). Youth political participation report.*
- UNDP. (2024). Youth and governance report.*
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. (1995). Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics. Harvard University Press.*
- United Nations. (2020). Youth and Political Participation.*
- Pew Research Center. (2021). The Role of Social Media in Political Engagement.*
- World Bank. (2019). Youth Engagement in Governance.*
- OECD. (2022). Youth and Democracy: Participation and Inclusion.*
- Norris, P. (2011). Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited. Cambridge University Press.*
- Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties. CQ Press.*
- Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). The civic culture. Princeton University Press.*
- Census of India. (2011). Population statistics.*
- Election Commission of India. (2023). Voter participation data.*
- Pateman, C. (1970). Participation and democratic theory. Cambridge University Press.*
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). Bowling alone. Simon & Schuster.*
- United Nations. (2020). Youth and political participation report.*
- World Bank. (2022). Governance and youth engagement.*

### Cite Your Article as

Dr. Mamini Pradhan. (2026). ROLE OF YOUTH IN SHAPING MODERN POLITICS: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 14(94), 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20179164>