

# A new india

Religion



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It is an undeniable fact that the youth constitute a vast reservoir of energy, especially in a country like India with a population of more than 100 crore. Out of this total, those falling in the 15-30 age group constitute 40 percent. This means that nearly 40 crore young men and women stupendous man power by all counts indeed, are available for handling various tasks of national reconstruction. History bears out the undesirable fact that all great movements of nationwide importance have succeeded on the strength of massive youth power.

In India, the epoch-making Indian National Movement could gain momentum and shake the very roots of the British Raj only when the youth were harnessed in it. Over a decade ago, Mao Tse Tung, the famous Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, relied upon youth power to usher in a great Cultural Revolution. The Chinese youth enacted a memorable drama of national reconstruction. The same is the story of the French Revolution. Large parts of West Europe and North America were swept across by massive waves of youth and student power.

In India several top-ranking leaders have paid homage to youth power and have regarded it as an inexhaustible reservoir of human resources. 'Catch their young ' has been the motto. Mahatma Gandhi once said, " Young men, claiming to be the fathers of tomorrow, should be the salt of the nation. If the salt loses its flavor, wherewith shall it be salted? " The elders, including statesmen, expect India 's youth to devote their energies to the task of reconstructing India in accordance with the long accepted ideals.

There is little doubt that given the right lead and guidance, India 's youth can create a new society by eliminating the evils, making good the flaws and  
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deficiencies and facilitating the reinstatement of the highly cherished moral values of the East. In addition to this they can lay the basis for reconstruction in all spheres-social, economic and political. This begins with uplifting the rural masses in particular from the state, of stagnation as a result of the shackles of decayed traditions and superstitions senseless customs, ruthless exploitation by the greedy landlords and ineffective and retrograde official programmes.

In the social arena, the youth can help the rural masses who are gripped by the wily village leaders, crafty priests and other religious men who revel in supper situations. They can do something to broaden the 'horizon ', of the village-folk. Social emancipation and reconstruction involves tackling the dowry menace, illiteracy rumoring of caste and clan prejudices, checking corruption, elimination of untouchability and other discriminatory practices, besides child marriage and ill-treatment of widows.

These tasks seem formidable and are bound to meet with rebuffs. But a little patience and perseverance on the part of the youth to make headway. The task of economic reconstruction of the country is admittedly complex and the enlightened youth can make a significant contribution in it. It includes expediting development by facilitating implementation of the various programmes drawn by the Central and the State Governments.

They can introduce the modern outlook to agriculture and industry and bring about the 'Green ' and the 'White ' revolutions, India 's youth policy aims at promoting governmental and non-governmental effort in implementing various programmes. During the last forty years of India 's independence, various youth programmes have been started in the country with a view to

involving the youth in national reconstruction. In 1948, the National Cadet Corps was launched to create awareness of the youth in national defence and to ensure their active participation.

In 1969, the National Service Scheme was started to promote social consciousness, a sense of responsibility as well as a sense of discipline and dignity of labour among youth. With this view special camps were organized; 'Youth against Famine', 'Youth against Dirt and Disease', 'Youth for Afforestation and Tree Plantation' and 'Youth for Rural Reconstruction' etc. Since 1981-82 economic development programmes have been taken by NSS volunteers. During 82-83 about 5.5 lacs students participated in various commendable programmes.

Parallel to the NSS are the Nehru Yuvak Kendras which are innovative multi purpose institutions. The basic purpose of this scheme is to enable such youth to help the process of rural development and popularize national objectives. At these centres, vocational training is imparted for self-employment and social service. Then, there is the National Service Volunteer Scheme, launched in 1977-78, which provides opportunities to graduate students to involve themselves on a voluntary basis in nation-building activities for a specific period on a whole time basis.

These volunteers are generally engaged in promoting adult educational programmes. In this connection, exchanges of visits by youth of different regions of the country have been helpful. In the political sphere too, the youth can help in cleansing the Augean stables. The entire political system is infested with opportunism, nepotism, corruption, deception, fraud,

intrigues and shrewd tactics. Most of the political parties have no clear far-sighted goal and no well-thought-out programmes of national reconstruction.

The leadership is in the hands of senile octogenarians, power-hungry and unwilling to make way for the younger generation. Fortunately, India now has a young Prime Minister in Shri Rajiv Gandhi. He is anxious to clear up the mess that has accumulated over the years and to ensure an honest, credible regime. The youth can play a significant role by strengthening his hands. Admittedly, the young men and women of today are disgruntled and frustrated on many counts.

The internal strife, graft all round, double talk, frauds, chicanery, political opportunism, deception, deep-rooted corruption and an air of distrust among the young and the old are among the causes of unrest among India's youth. Several institutions, like joint-family system, are disintegrating before their eyes. To make matters worse, there are social injustices and the unwillingness of the old fossils to step down and make way for the young people. However, there is no room for frustration and giving up; they should be brought round by patient endeavour.

The role of the youth for national reconstruction became even more relevant in 1985 which was celebrated as the 'International Year of the Youth' with the basic themes of 'Participation, Development and Peace'. In the years to come, the role of the youth in India and other developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, in the task of national reconstruction is going to become increasingly more significant. The challenges are immense, and the youth, as a well-regulated wave of power can sweep through the country

and meet these challenges competently, and life the country to heights of progress.