Youth, Federalism, And Democratic Deepening in The Viksit Bharat Framework

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ABSTRACT:

India's youth represent the country's greatest strength, with a vibrant and dynamic generation driving the vision of making India a developed nation by 2047. Youth have the power to change the nation. Young minds will be fresher and more innovative which helps in the progress of the country.

India's Aspiration of becoming a Vikas it Bharat (developed nation) by 2047 depends on a robust federalism system and a vibrant democracy anchored in citizen's participation with over 65% of its population below the age of 35. India's youth constitute a powerful force in shaping democratic practices and strengthening federal governance.

This Article investigates the role of youth in federalism and democratic deepening using the Vikas it Bharat frame work 2047 vision as a conceptual study it draws on the theories of participatory democracy, a cooperative federalism and youth political engagement to examine how young citizens contribute to democratic reliance and developmental aspirations. The paper concludes by offering policy directions to institutionalize youth participation in India's democratic and federal journey towards 2047.

KEYWORDS:

INTRODUCTION:

Democracy in India is unique in both scale and diversity. With over 900 million eligible voters and 1.4 billion citizens, it operates as a federal republic combining unity and pluralism (Austin, 1999). Federalism in India balances the power of the Union with states and local governments, making it a "laboratory" of participatory democracy (Arora & Verney, 1995). At the heart of India's democratic experiment are its youth, who constitute the majority of its demographic profile and are often described as its most valuable "democratic dividend." In this context, the role of youth becomes transformative, as the largest demographic group, India's young population embodies energy, innovation, and aspirations

that can shape democratic processes and federal governance. The active involvement in politics–making and civic engagement contributes to dem–ocratic deepening– a stage where democracy moves beyond elections to embrace inclusiveness, accountability and citizen driven development.

The government's vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 places youth at the center of its developmental narrative. This long–term framework seeks to position India as a developed nation, economically competitive and socially inclusive. However, realizing this vision requires not only eco–nomic progress but also a deepening of democratic practices through in–clusive federal governance. The question this paper addresses is: How can youth participation in federal structures contribute to democratic deepen–ing in the Viksit Bharat framework, and what challenges stand in the way? In the vision of Vikas it Bharat, this federal model gains renewed importance as the nation seeks to balance growth, equity, and democratic vitality.

Literature Review

Scholars of Indian democracy have long debated the nature of federalism and its implications for governance. Austin (1999) emphasizes the constitutional balance between federal flexibility and unity. Chhibber and Verma (2018) argue that India's federalism is dynamic, evolving in response to changing party systems and developmental needs.

On democratic deepening, scholars such as Jayal (2013) note that participation must extend beyond periodic elections to include delibera–tion, accountability, and civic engagement. Federal structures, by creating multiple centers of power, allow for wider citizen participation (Watts, 2008).

The literature on youth participation identifies both promise and paradox. While young populations are often celebrated as drivers of inno–vation and change (Hon Wana, 2012), they also face structural barriers to political inclusion. In India, youth activism has shaped national move–ments—ranging from the independence struggle to student–led agitations in recent decades (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Jeffrey, 2010). However, institutional mechanisms for sustained youth participation remain under–developed.

Few works explicitly connect youth, federalism, and the Viksit Bharat vision. This article fills this gap by situating youth engagement

within the broader debates on democratic deepening and developmental aspirations.

This study draws on three conceptual lenses:

1. Federalism: India's federalism is often described as quasi–federal (Granville, 1999) but has evolved toward cooperative and competitive federalism. The 73rd and 74th Amendments institutionalized local self–governance, expanding the scope for youth engagement.

2. Democratic Deepening: Following Tilly (2007) and Jayal (2013), democratic deepening refers to expanding participation, strengthening accountability, and embedding democracy in everyday governance.

3. Youth as Democratic Agents: Youth engagement is conceptualized not just as electoral participation but as civic innovation, activism, and digital governance (Hon Wana, 2012; Banaji, 2017).

These frameworks allow for analyzing how youth can influence multi–tiered governance in India's journey toward Viksit Bharat

Research Methodology and objectives

This article adopts a conceptual–analytical methodology grounded in secondary sources. Its objectives are:

To analyze the role of youth in India's federal democracy.

To explore how youth participation contributes to democratic deepening.

To situate these debates within the Viksit Bharat framework.

To identify challenges and propose policy solutions.

The study relies on scholarly works, government reports (e.g., Vision 2047), and empirical data on youth demographics and participation. While not based on primary fieldwork, it synthesizes interdisciplinary perspectives to build an integrated argument.

Youth and Federalism in India

Federalism refers to a system of government in which powers are divided between a central authority and various constituent units, such as states or provinces. In India, the constitution divides powers and respon–sibilities between the central government and state government the divi–sion of powers is further enhanced by third tier of government, and local self–governments

The current federal system in India has its roots in the Simon commission Report (1930), later it gained strength during– the first–round table Conference in 1930. Further The Government of India Act 1935 set forth the major outline of the federal system of the government, finally The Constituent Assembly which conveyed in1946, officially endorsed principle of federalism

The federal structure in post independent India was dynamic and evolved as per the changing circumstances. In the 1960's and 1970's federalism in India faced many challenges in the 1980's the decentralization of powers and the devolution of financial resources to the state became an important policy goal, and several initiatives were undertaken to strengthen federalism the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments were important step in this direction.

In a new and emerging India as the Vikas it Bharat the inclusion of youth in the formal political processes is very important. The youth of today holds power to shape a brighter future for our nation

Youth engagement in federalism is facilitated through electoral processes, local governance, by participating in campaigning, and by effective utilization of social media platforms like my Bharat NYKS etc. The 73rd and 74th Amendments reserve seats for youth and women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), creating institutional entry points. Across states, youth–led movements—such as student unions in Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi—have shaped federal politics.

Moreover, federal structures provide spaces for policy innovation. For example, Kerala's decentralized planning model has mobilized youth volunteers in local governance, while Rajasthan's Jan Sunwai (public hearings) engage young activists in social accountability. Such practices demonstrate the capacity of federalism to serve as a training ground for youth leadership.

Democratic Deepening and the Role of Youth

Democratic deepening requires going beyond electoral democracy toward participatory, deliberative, and inclusive practices (Tilly, 2007). Youth play three critical roles here:

1. Electoral Participation: India's youth voter turnout has steadily increased, in every general election a massive part of the votes come

from youth and some of them are first time voters in 2019, 45 million new voters were added to the electoral list. The power of this number and the decision–making ability of the youth combined are capable of showing a new era to Indian democracy.

2. Digital Participation: Through platforms like MyGov and social me–dia, youth contribute to policymaking and accountability. Through the social media various leaders try to put forth an image of themselves, which might help the voters in deciding if they are capable leaders are not youth by using the social media platforms, they can share their ideas opinions can run the campaigns

3. Issue–Based Mobilization: Youth–led climate activism, gender justice campaigns, and anti–corruption movements illustrate their ability to shape policy discourse.

Thus, youth act as both "watchdogs" and "innovators" in demo–cratic processes.

Vika sit Bharat Framework: Opportunities for Youth

The Viksit Bharat @2047 framework envisions inclusive growth, innovation, and sustainability. Youth engagement aligns with this vision in several ways:

Leadership in Governance: Expanding representation in PRIs, ULBs, and legislative assemblies.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Start–up India and Skill India create economic pathways linked to democratic empowerment.

Digital Democracy: E–governance initiatives empower young citi–zens to interact with federal institutions.

Cross–State Collaborations: National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) foster inter–state youth networks, strengthening cooperative federalism.

Challenges to Youth Participation

Despite opportunities, challenges persist:

1. Political Tokenism: Youth wings of parties often reinforce hierarchical politics rather than enabling genuine leadership.

2. Regional Disparities: States vary widely in educational, economic, and political opportunities for youth, undermining equity.

3. Socio–Economic Barriers: High youth unemployment (currently above 17% in some surveys) limits sustained civic participation.

4. Digital Divide: Rural youth face barriers in accessing digital gover–nance tools.

5. Polarization and Identity Politics: Communal, caste, and regional di–vides fragment youth solidarity.

6. Institutional Weaknesses: Few structured platforms exist for youth consultation at the federal level.

Suggestions:

To harness youth potential in democratic deepening, the following measures are suggested:

Institutionalize Youth Councils at local, state, and national levels with advisory powers in federal policymaking.

Enhance Civic Education in schools and colleges, focusing on constitutional literacy and democratic values.

Bridge Regional Disparities through targeted federal grants for youth skill development in lagging states.

Promote Digital Inclusivity by expanding broadband infrastructure and digital literacy in rural areas.

Encourage Cross–State Collaborations on issues like climate change, health, and innovation through federal platforms.

Strengthen Representation by introducing quotas or incentives for youth candidates in political parties and local governance.

Conclusion

The role of youth in strengthening federalism and advancing dem–ocratic deepening in India is both crucial and transformative. As the largest demographic group, young citizens not only represent the future but also actively shape the present by engaging in political, social and civic processes. Federalism provides a platform for diversity, inclusion, and decentralized and decision making.

However democratic deepening requires more than just represen–tation, in depends meaningful involvement of young people in governance at all levels– local state and national

Youth are central to India's democratic resilience and federal vital–

ity. As the country aspires to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047, embedding youth participation in federal structures is not optional but essential. By addressing structural barriers and institutional weaknesses, India can transform its demographic dividend into a democratic dividend. The deepening of democracy, driven by youth agency, will ensure that Viksit Bharat is not only economically developed but also socially inclusive and politically vibrant.

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Conflict of interest:

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.