



**Research Foundation for Governance: in India**

## **"Indian politics: scent of a new time"**

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**- Srijan Pal Singh<sup>1</sup>**

It is a moment of eminent change that today we witness the coming of an age where the aware and educated youth of the nation comes forth to take their role of leading the nation and share the responsibility of shaping the future of India. Gone are the days when the most fruitful dream of a middle class Indian youth was leaving the homeland behind in a jet trail leading into an American dream of dollar salaries and matching splurge. Today, the youth of the nation is craving to take the bull by the horns in true sense and be an ingredient of the change he or she wants to happen. I am happily looking forward to a time, when I will find myself with other like and even unlike minded people, who take up politics as a career – with sound understanding of policy from both theoretical and practical angle than a mere talent for mutual mudslinging gameplay, with development not division as their main tool to garner votes, with a vision and not mere skewed views to shape the nation.

But before we get acquainted with a time where the best talent finds its apt place at making the policy we need to formulate a cohesive and talent driven mechanism for promoting this new cadre of nation builders. I see three key initiatives which are needed in facilitating such an infusion.

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First, our current political process is not geared for talent and qualification governed system which provides an opportunity for rapid growth for the best. Politics is still considered to be only second to gambling in the role of chance in one's success. The remedy is a systemic change in the way political parties recruit their cadre. Why cannot our prominent political parties and leaders run campus recruitment at IIMs, IITs and other academic institutions of repute? In corporate, they say "catch the talent fresh!" In the times to come politics needs to borrow a feather from the hat of the industry.

Second, we have a gaping shortage in the availability of political mentors who are willing to hand hold the course of a prospective young politician and give him or her edge of experience. Not that we have a lack of such experts, it is just not a part of our political DNA. Politicians, both retired and incumbent, social champions and academicians should come forth and accept apprentices under them, purely based on talent and merit. In a land of Gurukul culture, where the "Rajas" (kings) used to be mentored by the "Sanyasis" (saints) finding such a system from our heritage is quite possible.

The third key challenge is that of financials. While I completely support the cause of frugality and funding of political processes from voluntary and small donations from its ultimate stakeholder – the common man, we all must accept that in any case the process of creation of a politician leader is not dirt cheap. I recently came across a Ministry of Rural Development sponsored scheme where it runs a three year stipend based scheme of breeding of social worker for NGOs. This is an excellent model for emulating in the process of breeding politicians. Once the basic living expenses are taken care of in this way, they can focus on their core objective of understanding and solving the problems of nation and people. Similarly,



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institutions of excellence who support infusing talented in youth in politics should consider setting up incubation funds which can help the best and honest youth politicians through their campaigns.

My argument should not be mistaken as handing political positions at the altar of talent and making the process of politics driven by decorative resumes. Politics does require a fair share of getting the “feet wet”. The talented and interested youth should be put through a rigorous process of exploring and growing organically, starting from contesting positions at Panchayat level and state legislatures and then promoted their way up in the national arena.

Recently, I was attending a meeting of young CAT aspirants organized by a prominent coaching institute in Indore – talking about the career options as an MBA. I was amazed to see at least a dozen young passionate souls, who openly exhibited the desire to be a part of the serving and taking the reins of next generation of India, even better was the departure from the regular urban concerns and a deeper understanding of the common man in the last village of the nation. Before this fire is put off by desperation and frustration due to lack of opportunity, isn't it time we act?