

Essay on Students and Politics

"It is open to the educational institutions to prohibit political activities and forbid students from organizing or attending meetings other than the official ones within the college campus," the court declared. "A restriction does not violate the rights such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom to form associations or unions under the Constitution of India," the judgment said. (Kerala High Court)

During the days of India's struggle for independence, the student's participation in politics deemed synonymous with their involvement in the pious cause of attaining freedom from the British despot. Students imbued with the desire to achieve freedom, threw themselves in hundreds and thousands into the turbulence of revolutionary politics. Their active participation in the struggle for freedom was undoubtedly useful for they possess the required zeal and energy and in those peculiar circumstances, they were fully justified in sacrificing their studies at the altar of political freedom.

But as the country became independent, the situation has altogether changed. The reasonability of participation of students in politics is required a thorough review. We have to see what do we expect from the students whether we want them to become the politicians of tomorrow or we want them to become Administrators, Scientists, Judge or alike. We should also review the present state of politics in our country and its impact on students.

Politics in many of Kerala's church-run colleges is now officially being inked as a dirty word. A recent High Court order allowed college management to prohibit students from undertaking or participating in political activities within campuses. But student

unions of major political parties such as the Congress and the Communist Party of India–Marxist say they will appeal against the order in the Supreme Court as it is against the fundamental rights.

At least a dozen colleges run by the church have already enforced the May 26 order saying student politics have often disrupted studies and led to violence and killings. More colleges across the State are in the process of banning politics. The influential Inter-Church Council for Education—an apex union of various Christian educational managements in Kerala has also written to all the colleges run by it to forbid politics in colleges.

“We no longer want colleges to allow students’ unions to fight elections under political banners. We feel banning politics on campus would improve the quality of education and reduce various forms of violence perpetrated by students in colleges,” ICCE Chairperson Archbishop Joseph Powathil of Changanassery told. “Kerala has suffered a lot because of violent students’ politics,” he adds.

The unprecedented court judgment came after a student – Saj a Francis –filed a case against the church-run St. Thomas College principal Father M.M.

Mathew for preventing him from writing his second-year degree examinations in April 2002 on account of inadequate attendance. Francis claimed the principal was vindictive toward him on account of his being a Student Federation of India activist. His petition, supported by the SFI, also asked for a compensation of Rs 25,000 from the principal for the loss of one academic year.

But the court rejected Francis’ petition and ruled that St. Thomas College has the powers to enforce a ban on political activities of students. “It is open to the educational institutions to prohibit

political activities within the college campuses and forbid students from organizing or attending meetings other than the official ones within the college campus," Kerala court declared. "A restriction does not violate the rights such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom to form associations or unions under the Constitution of India," the judgment said.

Educationists say the ban was long overdue. Sabu Thomas told that since 1970 some 43 students have died due to violence instigated by campus politics. "To be precise", he adds, "SFI lost 30 activists, Kerala Students' Union lost 10 and the Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad lost three students."

"A ban on campus politics will improve the quality of education. Let colleges be places of students' intellectual growth not of political violence," he says.

But SFI Kerala unit President P.K. Biju disagrees. Termed the verdict as 'cruel and undemocratic', he says, "It is in colleges that students shape their careers, whether it is in politics or any other fields. If politics is banned in colleges where will you get competent and visionary politicians for future India?"

'Students need not have to involve themselves in politics and by doing so they are wasting their academic life', according to Kerala Assembly Speaker Vakkom Purushothaman.

"Time has come for the student community to have a rethink on whether to join politics or else the decision can even lead to spoiling their future prospects," the Speaker said, inaugurating a new block of the Mahatma Gandhi College in the kitty. School students also seem wary of politics. "Politicians are dishonest, corrupt and they never keep any promise they make. At least, if politicians can improve our

lives, it's fine. They only promise big things but deliver only long speeches," replied the students in a recent survey, when asked. What do they think about Politicians of today?

Students of today are the citizens of tomorrow. The propriety and necessity of the time require that they should be well educated and fully equipped to face the challenges of this competitive world. Active participation of students in politics may spoil their career and defeat the very purpose and aim of studentship. Therefore, first of all, the students must make themselves fit, acquire the highest possible education and knowledge before they join the battle of politics. "Politics is the game of government, is too big a game for a half-developed mind of young men and women", said an eminent thinker. Students generally proved a failure, in the political game being played by the veteran politicians, because they don't understand the Check and balance tricks of the game. In many cases, they become exasperated and lose their patience and resort to violence and other crimes to prove their mettle. Student life is an excellent period for preparing themselves fully for the responsibilities that they have to shoulder in the future.

It does not mean that students should keep themselves totally aloof from the political situation of the surrounding. They must discuss and express their views freely without involving themselves in any controversy or activity as such involvement may cost their valuable time and energy. The students must keep themselves abreast of the political problems not only of their own country but also of the world. They must apply their mind to understand the origin of such problems and the solutions thereto.

Information technology, computer science, medicine, bio-technology, research, civil services, management, and media – with these areas emerging as hot career options and the world of glamour and fast

bucks luring them, do our youth consider politics as a career option?

A big NO-NO. At least, the section of students that interacted with The Times of India survey team said that they wanted nothing to do with politics. And politics as a career option? "No way. I don't want to have anything to do with politics. The way our politicians behave and the way they encourage corruption stinks. Neither am I interested in politics nor will my family permit it," Shilpa, a B. Com. II Year student of Delhi University, says.

Nowadays the regional and national political parties are indulging more and more in college elections utilizing the student's leader for their own political goals. The criminalization of politics, nexus between politicians and the criminals, is again a very bad sign of the present-day political situation in the country. The unhealthy involvement of students with such politicians may ruin their careers and spoil their life totally. So the best course is to utilize the student life to equip themselves fully to shoulder the responsibilities of tomorrow and to achieve their true aim.