

patriotism among them. Youth symbolizes energy, freshness, vigor and exemplar. This move would breathe new life into the youngsters. In words of Meenakshi Nataranjan (the first time MP from Madhya Pradesh) “the youth should come forward to take part in politics as this is vital for the reformation of the society. Their participation is important for increasing efficiency of the work for underprivileged and needy. The inequality and discrimination is still so deep-rooted that lots of work needs to be done and done only through youth who, unlike their predecessors, are breaking the caste cauldrons and traditional evils can do the needful. We need to expand the word ‘self’ to society if we really intend to go ahead with a mission to contribute selflessly to the society and the country instead of being too self-indulged in our day-to-day problems.”<sup>9</sup> “If you can get married at the age of 21, if Bhagat Singh had a vision at age 23, surely the age limit to contest elections must be brought down,” Kejriwal said while releasing his party’s (AAP) election manifesto wherein it was pitched to reduce the minimum age of MPs and MLAs, to 21 years from the current 25.<sup>10</sup>

On one hand, we have “the Man of Ideas, Mohammad-bin-Tughluq who was well known for his wisdom and character. People had a lot of expectations from him and he on the other side, had the desire for more valuable contribution for his countrymen than his predecessors. He was highly educated and was well versed in Arabic and Persian language. He was also well read in subjects of religion, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicines and logic. In spite of such high qualification and knowledge, Sultan Mohammad-bin-Tughluq suffered from certain qualities of hastiness and impatience. That is why many of his experiments failed and he has been called an ill starred idealist. His transfer of capital from Delhi to Devagiri and experiment with copper were his greatest blunders. The former brought loss of life while

there was financial loss because from the latter. That is why he has been unkindly called by the historians ‘The Wisest Fool’”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand Akbar, the third generation Mughal emperor had ascended the throne at a minor age of 13 and went on to become Shahanshah (“King of Kings”). He is praised to be the only and truly secular Emperor of the times, very caring and protective of his subjects, righteous in deed and noble in character. Perhaps most of all, Akbar the Great showed the rulers of all nations everywhere that tolerance is not weakness, and open-mindedness is not the same thing as indecisiveness.<sup>12</sup> As a result, he is honoured more than four centuries after his death as one of the greatest rulers in human history.<sup>13</sup> Akbar comparatively took over the throne at a much younger age than Mohammad-bin-Tughluq with no such education qualification but we Indians feel blessed to have him on our land. So, don’t you think that these young minds should be boon for the country by winning laurels? When the age of voting has been reduced from 21 years to 18 years so why not change the age limit for contesting the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections? In UK, anyone over the age of 18 years can stand for election to Parliament. The age was reduced from 21 years by the Electoral Administration Act of 2006. The position is identical in Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark and Germany. One can even become a President at the age of 21 in France and Iran respectively.

An analysis by Association for Democratic Reforms show that 133 (41%) out of 327 candidates fielded by Congress in the last 10 years had criminal cases against them. Similarly, for the BJP seats; 54% of all the candidates had criminal records in the past 10 years. Our Indian law prohibits those from contesting elections who have been convicted of criminal charges. As per Section 8 (3) of Representation of People Act, 1951, if a person is convicted of any offence and sentenced to an imprisonment of 2 years or

more, this will be the ground for disqualification to contest elections.<sup>14</sup> Even if a person is on bail, after the conviction and his appeal is pending for disposal, he is disqualified from contesting an election as per the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India.<sup>15</sup> However, this provision can be easily circumvented meaning thereby that a large number of people committing serious crimes such as murder and rape are able to contest elections and surprisingly their names get printed on the front page of the newspapers as winners of the elections. But the questions that definitely a common man will have in his mind are that are these tainted ministers the perfect leaders of our country? Their sitting on the chair will be a boon or bane? How much light a person with dark past can throw on the future of the country? “Criminalization of politics” has now become a peculiar phenomenon of Indian politics with serious consequences for the police. Rather it would be more appropriate to say that criminalization has become part and parcel of our political lives. “By one estimate in 1997, 700 of 4,120 elected members of 25 State-level assemblies had criminal records. Of these, some 1,555 were accused of heinous crimes such as murder, armed robbery, rape and the like. The 2004 national elections further presented several disturbing examples of this feature. In the district of Shiwan, Bihar, the Rastriya Janata Party (RJD) candidate was one of the most dreaded offenders, Mohammad Shahabuddin. Criminal cases pending against him ranged from murder to extortion, kidnapping, violation of prohibitory orders, and theft.”<sup>16</sup>

The only way out suggested is to ban the entry of convicted politicians into politics and open the gates for young leaders. Lack of faith is the strongest reason for it. After all these elected members will be forming the government; a government for five years, a government for the people. Is it so easy to trust them? A ordinary man convicted of an offence and then returning back

home after spending years behind bars will not surely have a life like bed of roses. Instead these roses will be replaced by thorns. Can he ever find a job for himself again? No definitely not. His past records will not permit any of the employers to provide him daily means. Moreover the graph of his societal status will decline. Why the group of political elite be awarded with bouquet of flowers? Think upon our international relations. Companies and countries investing in India will no longer be interested to come to terms with the same. Danger is also imposed on the status and dignity of the country. The world sees the convicts as black sheep. If John Keats, who died at the age of 26, could produce immortal odes, Mark Zuckerberg launch Facebook at the age of 20 and Malala Yousafzai, while still in her teens, be a Nobel peace prize winner, why can't young India have elected representatives under 25?<sup>17</sup>

#### (Endnotes)

1. Student
2. The Great Indian Election Slogan Warfare, GuruPrasad's Portal, available at <http://guruprasad.net/posts/the-great-indian-election-slogan-warfare/>, last seen 21/06/2018.
3. Article 173(b) reads “is, in the case of a seat in the Legislative Assembly, not less than twenty five years of age and in the case of a seat in the Legislative Council, not less than thirty years of age;”, Article 173 in The Constitution Of India 1950, available at <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/614870/>, last seen 23/06/2018.
4. It reads “The returning officer shall then examine the nomination papers and shall decide all objections which may be made to any nomination and may, either on such objection or on his own motion, after such summary inquiry, if any, as he thinks necessary, 2[reject] any nomination on any of the following grounds:— 3[(a) 4[that on the date fixed for the scrutiny of nominations the candidate] either is not qualified or is disqualified for being chosen to fill the seat under any of the following provisions that may be applicable, namely:— Articles 84, 102, 173 and 191, 5[\*\*\*]. 6[Part II of this Act, and sections 4 and 14 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (20 of 1963)] 7[\*\*\*]; or (b) that there has been a failure to comply with any of

- the provisions of section 33 or section 34; or  
(c) that the signature of the candidate or the proposer on the nomination paper is not genuine”, Section 36 in The Representation of the People Act, 1950, available at <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/168639435/>, last seen 23/06/2018.
5. FAQs-Contesting For Elections, Election Commission Of India, available at [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/Contesting.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/Contesting.aspx), last seen 21/06/2018.
  6. Youth in India, 2017, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India, available at [http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Youth\\_in\\_India-2017.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Youth_in_India-2017.pdf) , last seen 23/06/2018, at pg-8.
  7. Id at pg-43.
  8. Id at pg-37.
  9. Participation of Youth in Politics Essential: Cong MP, Indian Express, (27/04/2013), available at <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/participation-of-youth-in-politics-essential-says-meenakshinatarajan/1108483/>, last seen 21/06/2018.
  10. AAP Manifesto 2014, Aam Aadmi Party, available at <http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/aap-manifesto-2014>, last seen 22/06/2018.
  11. Anand, Biography of Muhammad-Bin-Tughluq, available at <http://www.historydiscussion.net/biography/biography-of-muhammad-bin-tughluq-1325-1351/3044>, last seen 21/06/2018.
  12. Kallie Szczepanski, Akbar the Great, Emperor of Mughal India, Thought Co, available at <https://www.thoughtco.com/akbar-the-great-of-mughal-india-195495>, last seen 23/06/2018.
  13. Id.
  14. Supra note 4.
  15. Id.
  16. Arvind Verma, Policing Elections in India, *India Review* 4(3-4): 354-376, 2005, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14736480500302217?journalCode=find20>, last seen 22/06/2018.
  17. Soroor Ahmed, Why India Should Reduce the Minimum Age for Entering Parliament, The Wire, available at <https://thewire.in/government/india-reduce-minimum-age-entering-assembly-parliament>, last seen 24/06/2018.