

JUST DO YOUR bit!

The notion of patriotism is seeing a transformation that is readily being accepted by all

Neha Bhatia

While the feeling of patriotism amongst Indians remains constant, the way this feeling is expressed has undergone a great deal of transformation with time. The stereotypical notion of being patriotic by adorning the uniform of a soldier is no longer accepted by today's youth. Patriotism is less about glorifying the nation, and more about understanding various strands of a nation and strengthening it through our efforts.

Hitherto a lot of emotionalism used to be attached with the idea of patriotism, it is not so today. From being an idealistic notion, patriotism has acquired a more practical and action oriented approach. There are different ways to be patriotic in our daily lives. "Do small things and they can have big results. Switching off your car at red lights to prevent fuel wastage, conserving energy at home, discourage people from loitering, use more of public transport, planting saplings, the list of doable things is quite long. Showing respect to different religious communities, exposing corruption, keeping the city clean, having better civic sense all are part of being a good citizen and that's what patriotism means to youngsters today," says Rekha Singh, teacher of social science.

Exercising the right to vote is the single most powerful way to show your patriotism. There can be nothing more respectful for a democratic nation if its citizens participate in large numbers in the democratic process of elections. "For teenagers it's quite exciting to get the right to vote at the age of 18. But after getting the voting card most of us forget about voting during elections. Even in college and university elections more and more youngsters should come forward to exercise their democratic right," says Shivani Narang, who turned 18 recently and is awaiting her chance to vote.

What has really altered and broadened the way meaning of being patriotic is the new age cinema. While earlier films used to focus on just glorifying the nation, with 'Mera Bharat Mahan' epitomizing patriotism, now they emphasize more on solving the existing problems in the country and inspiring the youngsters to be in the forefront. The trend was set in motion by films like Swadesh and Rang De Basanti, etc., and has been readily accepted by the youngsters of the country.

Even the cyber world has opened several new avenues to express one's feelings towards our country. Be it the success of Indian cricket team in a nail biting finish or raising their voice against injustice, online world has emerged as a popular platform for youngsters to showcase diverse shades of Indian democracy and become a part of the events occurring in different parts of the country, something that was unimaginable in the previous decade. In the form of blogs, videos, online communities, polls and surveys on websites, and twitter messages one remains connected with the happenings in the country. "No problem has remained regional or state specific today what is happening in Kashmir or in Andhra Pradesh at once gets attention of the people through out the country. They not only become more aware but also express their thoughts on various issues related to internal security and functioning of the country and thus facilitate public debate on issues of national importance," shares Smita Bhatnagar, a blogger.

As patriotism becomes a way of life, people are ready to come forward and voice their opinions on issues of national importance be it through the online medium or through mass movements.

