

Tertiary education, key to elect leaders

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The US election result indicates how lack of education can render powerless even the most powerful nation.

The tertiary education sector has been an area of both concern and focus lately in India. The implementation of the government's National Higher Education Mission and a greater awareness of our dismal performance in the university world rankings has garnered a lot of attention and resulted in a renewed focus on uplifting the quality and reshaping the higher education landscape in the country.

The role of education in shaping the lives of citizens and future of a nation is undebatable. The need to promote education at tertiary level should be the highest priority in a developing country like India.

The recent US presidential election bears testimony to this fact where a fear mongering, racist, hate spewing, misogynistic, politically ill-qualified busin-essman who has been giving ev-asive responses to questions ranging from foreign policy to tax payment got elected as the president of a first world country.

The US election is the biggest example of how economic prosperity at national level doesn't necessarily trickle down to individual citizens who are disillusioned by the lack of prospects owing to the lack of tertiary level education.

There is a direct relationship between economic condition of the individuals and their ability and motivation to pursue tertiary education. This relation also extends to individual's level of education and ability to enhance their economic prospects. If the majority of people are devoid of education beyond high schools, it is bound to skew their global outlook and instil a sense of insecurity in all span of life be it employment, education, health or a general sense of being.

Trump fuelled these insecurities by blaming the other; Mexicans, Muslims, African-Americans and educated immigrants, for all the existing and anticipated miseries of the American masses. Protest rallies erupted across US soon after the elections results were announced when he emerged to be the 45th president elect leading to many people taking to the streets of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago shouting slogans of "not my president", resulting in the arrest and even attack on many protestors.

It is interesting to note that many of these protestors were young people, pursuing tertiary education. While many reasons could be identified for the flabbergasting victory of the new president elect, an important clue lies in Trumps exclamation, "I love the poorly educated". Tru-mp received maximum backing (44%) from voters who only had a

high school degree or lacked college education while most college graduates, more than 50% supported Hillary Clinton.

A post-election analysis by Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam indicated that Trump received largest share of votes among whites without a college degree. His share was the largest among any candidate in exit polls since 1980. Some 67% of non-college whites backed Trump, compared with just 28% who supported Clinton, resulting in a 39-point advantage for Trump among this group.

The election results are a clear indicator of how education or the lack of it can render even the most powerful nation powerless in securing its political destiny. This political reality is bound to affect the individual, economic, social and cultural reality of not just the people living in the US but will also manifest itself in its international relations and foreign policies which will have an impact on the larger world community.

'Trump effect'

Glimpses of the 'Trump effect' were already visible in various media accounts, where less than a day after the election results were announced, his supporters were said to have used racial slurs and intimidation against women and people from minority community.

There were media reports where a seven-year old boy was beaten up by his classmates for being a Muslim and an Indian-American women politician being threatened and asked to "go back to India" for supporting anti-Trump agitation.

On an international scale, Trump's decision to withdraw from Trans-Pacific Partnership, his anti-immigration policy and plans of building a great wall along the Mexican border and the myopic stance on the issue of global warming and climatic change are just the beginning of what could turn into a disaster of epic proportions for not just the US but the rest of the world.

The US election offers the world a lesson and more than ever, highlights the importance of educating the vote-bearing masses. As a nation, while we strive towards economic prosperity marking a steady increase in our GDP year after year, we also have to understand the repercussion of putting tertiary education on the backburner. For a developing country like ours, tertiary education needs to be made both geographically and economically accessible.

The renewed political will towards upholding the cause of higher education reflected in the recent announcements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking the Indian universities to aspire to make it to the top 100 educational institutions globally. His offer of special economic assistance to both public and private universities in order to help

them in this goal is a positive step in this direction.

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