

Rise of the INTELLIGENT bureaucrat?

THIS YEAR, CITIES SUCH AS BANGALORE WITNESSED A NEW WAVE OF INTELLECTUALS CONTESTING THE ELECTIONS. ANKITA SHREERAM EXPLORES THIS PHENOMENON

It is not everyday that we see a man like Nandan Nilekani contest the elections. The ex-CEO of Infosys may have lost to BJP's Ananth Kumar but his candidature does raise the question - do Bangalore's educated populace consider politics as a viable career option?

Many have harboured the opinion that Bangalore needs a CEO of sorts to put it on the right path to progress. So, is Nilekani's loss a loss for the city as well? "Nandan Nilekani's loss in the election is certainly a loss for the city. A greater loss is the loss of credibility of the AAP. What might have been a flood could well be a trickle, thanks to the election results. But Nilekani, I am sure will continue to be in politics and serve Bangalore," says Ramanujam Sridhar, founder and CEO of Brand-comm. "Here was a person with proven leadership and administrative abilities and a clean image and he had a lot of potential to help Bangalore grow in ways we need," agrees Gaurav Vohra, CEO, Jigsaw Academy.

Bangalore has a wealth of capable, educated professionals and if they would consider braving the political corridors of the country, there is no limit to how far the city can go. However, the situation is not very encouraging at the moment. "Though we have a lot more educated people playing a more predominant role in politics and in the community, we need many more to come forward and lead from the front. Indian politics as practised today, does not encourage educated people to join politics. The political space for them needs to be created and encouraged," opines Vohra.

Nilekani's entry may pave the way for more industry tycoons to enter Indian politics. But will this work out well for the country? "There is no conclusive proof of good corporate citizens also being good public servants and Nilekani's only stint with the government as the head of the UIDA project cannot really be termed as successful given his own high standards of performance. While we

cannot say what Bangalore's educated population thinks in general about politics being a viable career option, we strongly believe that people from all walks of life including capable corporate leaders should join politics if they feel they have something viable to offer. Industry tycoons are known to manage the expectations of thousands of their employees and external stakeholders well; a skill which could hold them in good stead in politics," suggests Ranjan Manish, head (South India), business unit, Koenig Solutions Ltd.

Definitely, the average Bangalorean has a greater desire to make a difference today than ever before. "I think we see a lot of the educated Bangaloreans wanting to make a difference and entering politics would be one of the logical ways. Thanks to the penetration of internet and social media, the educated population is quite connected with what's happening in their constituency. I wouldn't think that there are considerable numbers wanting to enter politics, but the intent is definitely there to make a difference for the city and country as a whole, create more jobs and essentially make the city woo investors from within and outside India," says Kamal Karanth, MD, Kelly Services India.

Perhaps, we need to approach politics like any other industry and tackle the issues that confront other industries - skilling, employment gaps and training for leadership.

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