

## **A Day in the Life of a Political Leader: Shadowing Raghav Chadha**

As a prospective public policy student, I was eager to learn about the challenges and intricacies of policymaking in India, as well as the role of youth in politics. To gain this firsthand perspective, I chose to shadow a political leader for a day. The choice to shadow Raghav Chadha, the youngest Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, was a deliberate one, influenced by his inspiring journey, his dedication to public service, and his commitment to encouraging youth participation in politics.

### **Why I Chose to Shadow a Political Leader:**

One of the primary motivations behind my decision to shadow a political leader was to understand the complexities and challenges that characterize the policymaking landscape in India. The intricacies of this field have always fascinated me, and I believed that firsthand exposure would provide invaluable insights into the process.

I wanted to bridge the gap between theory and practice by gaining a firsthand understanding of the daily life of a political leader. Observing the challenges and opportunities they face on a daily basis would, I believed, make me a more informed and effective policy analyst in the future.

Raghav Chadha's extensive experience and expertise in Indian politics were particularly appealing to me. I was keen to glean insights into the policymaking process, the art of building consensus among stakeholders, and the effective implementation of policies.

I was also curious about the inner workings of political offices and the teams that support political leaders. This knowledge would be crucial in comprehending the support systems behind the decision-making process.

Raghav Chadha's unique position as a Member of Parliament provided an ideal opportunity to learn about the intricacies of

managing constituency matters and raising issues of national importance in the Central government.

### **Why I Chose to Shadow Mr. Raghav Chadha:**

Raghav Chadha's journey from a high-paying corporate job to becoming a prominent political leader was profoundly inspiring. He left behind financial security to join the India Against Corruption movement, which was a testament to his commitment to public service. His experience as an MLA, Vice Chairman of the Delhi Jal Board, and his current role as the Chairman of the Advisory Panel to the Chief Minister of Punjab showcased his dynamic approach to governance.

His involvement with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its inception and his remarkable rise as the youngest spokesperson in India, followed by his role as the chief strategist for the party in multiple state elections, demonstrated his strategic acumen. His dedication to drafting a historic budget that significantly increased allocations to education and healthcare in Delhi underscored his commitment to the welfare of the people.

Raghav Chadha's unwavering belief in the importance of involving young individuals in politics and his association with the AAP, a party that recognizes merit and provides opportunities to those with non-traditional political backgrounds, aligned with my aspirations to promote youth participation in the political landscape.

### **Key Learnings from Shadowing Raghav Chadha:**

- **Rationale for Joining Politics:** Raghav Chadha's journey underscored the notion that politics should not be seen as a career but as a means of serving the nation. He emphasized the need for capable, committed individuals to lead the country for its progress.
- **Why AAP:** Chadha's perspective on the AAP as a movement rather than a conventional political party highlighted the importance of focusing on governance and public welfare. He reiterated the party's willingness to entrust young individuals from diverse backgrounds with significant roles

in policymaking. He remarked that AAP is not just a political party but the fastest growing and most successful political startup in India – highlighting the party’s focus on innovation!

- **Youth in Politics:** Raghav Chadha highlighted that although India is a young nation, but our leaders are old. The average age of Indians is 29 but the average age of MPs in 17th Lok Sabha (17th LS) is 54. Only 1.5% of MPs under 30 in 17th LS in India, compared to 13.6% in Norway. He shed light on the challenges faced by young individuals entering politics. These challenges included limited platforms for youth to influence policy, nepotism, stereotypes about youth's capabilities, and the established hierarchies within political parties.
- **Promoting Youth:** As an MLA, Raghav Chadha instituted the Youth With Raghav Fellowship to provide a platform for youth in his constituency to support governance initiatives in their area. The program's fellows played a crucial role in addressing real-time public grievances through a dedicated helpline, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their efforts included arranging hospital beds, calling ambulances, facilitating oxygen cylinder refills, and ensuring doorstep ration deliveries. What began as a local initiative in the assembly transformed into a statewide effort, led by 40 dedicated youth volunteers who assisted over 15,000 patients with hospital admissions, oxygen cylinders, and counseling. This experience highlighted the transformative impact of involving youth in politics and the immense potential they hold in catalyzing positive change.
- **Message for Youth:** Raghav Chadha's message for the youth was clear: get involved and shape India's future. His call to action for the youth to actively participate in shaping India's future resonated with me. His vision of a progressive, inclusive, and prosperous India inspired me to consider public service as a medium for bringing about positive change.

- **Suspension from Parliament:** His suspension from Parliament for voicing his concerns against the Delhi Services Act reinforced the challenges and risks associated with standing up for principles and the rights of the citizens. His determination to approach the Supreme Court to uphold parliamentary procedures and democratic norms was a powerful testament to his commitment to upholding democracy.
- **Formation of INDIA Alliance:** Raghav Chadha's involvement in the INDIA alliance highlighted the importance of building alliances to address pressing issues facing the country. His critique of the government's focus on vendetta politics over addressing critical challenges emphasized the role of the opposition in holding the government accountable.

My day shadowing Raghav Chadha offered invaluable insights into the multifaceted role of a Member of Parliament and the dedication required to serve the nation. It offered a fresh perspective on our Parliament and instilled in me a renewed admiration for Members of Parliament. It was eye-opening to witness the multitude of responsibilities they manage, often with limited institutional support.

His team of young professionals who actively support his work showcased the importance of youthful energy in politics and the need for dedicated research, administrative, and social media teams.

In conclusion, my experience shadowing Raghav Chadha was transformative. It reaffirmed my commitment to understanding and actively participating in public policy. His journey from corporate life to public service, his emphasis on youth involvement, and his unwavering dedication to serving the nation have left an indelible mark on my aspirations and have propelled me further on my path toward public service and policymaking.