CHAPTER VI
AN OVERALL VIEW

This chapter presents an overall study of the work and analyses the findings in the context of the analytical framework offered in the second chapter.

An attempt has been made to bring into focus student organisations in relation to the process of political socialisation. The findings support the theory of political socialisation which says that peer groups are an important agency of political socialisation. The peer group concept is reinforced by the fact that student organisations have a peer group basis, according to the theoretical enquiries made in that direction. Students who form a social category are influenced decisively by their friends in shaping their political opinions. Political life starts at a very early age for an individual. In their childhood children become familiar with precursive forms of politics. Then they adopt their parents' opinions as their's too in political matters. But later on in their youthful days they tend to deviate from their parents' views and are likely to adopt their friends' views on political matters.
The peer group basis of student organisations enable us to fit them into the theory of political socialisation.

The process of political socialisation has significance in the modern society marked by rapid changes. These rapid changes affect the students more than any other section of the society. In this context also student organisations are highly significant as far as their activities are concerned.

In the modern social dynamics group activity is very much important. It is often talked about the group basis of politics. Here again as a group students and their organisations do count.

The modern university is performing a great task when it brings together a large number of students and prepares them for performing various roles in a modern nation. In a country like India they have to take part in a variety of activities like nation building, social reconstruction, social welfare, national integration, social reforms, etc.

There is no doubt that the concept of political socialisation has immense significance for developing societies like India. For example, if democracy is to
flourish and the new nation is to be built up people's participation is very important. The political order and the social order are very closely related. Student organisations which involve in the political process by themselves and through their parent political parties have much significance in the dissemination of political values.

The politically conscious student community naturally takes part in political activities in any society. From the theoretical studies of student political activism it becomes clear that such political activism is more prominent in developing societies than in the West. To put it in other words, student movement is coloured and even governed by social and economic compulsions in developing societies which themselves acquire political significance in due course, while in the developed countries student movement revolves around social and cultural issues more than political issues. Of course, there are reasons common to student activism in any part of the world like generational conflict, administrative inefficiency, demands for representation in university government etc.

It is the 'politics of scarcity' which in the ultimate analysis compels the students to get politicised.
The students realize that their aspirations can be materialised only through political means. The political parties knowing this fact very well make use of the students for their own selfish goals.

Nationalist Tradition

In Chapter III the combination of historical data and the attitudinal data helps to realistically analyse the course of student political activism in Kerala. The student activism is having a nationalist tradition as the students had played a memorable role in the freedom struggle. The Quit India movement marked the apex of the student movement. After independence, during the 1950's emphasis was on introducing educational reforms. Agitations were conducted to get the demands accepted or conceded by the government.

The participation of the students in the 'Vimochana Samaram' of 1959 to bring down the Communist Ministry headed by EMS Namboodiripad was highly significant as far as students' political activities were concerned. This was an open invitation for the students to participate in state politics. The Kerala Students Union was thus born in 1957, constituted mainly by the democratic minded rightist students. It acquired wide popularity after the
'Orana Samaram' of 1957. But in 1956 itself the leftist students had formed an organisation called the Kerala Students Federation. The KSU and the KSF were the two leading student organisations in the early years after the birth of a united Kerala in 1956.

The 1960's witnessed vigorous political activities among students. The KSU became very much popular. The newspapers also gave importance to the statements of student leaders. The Congress Party encouraged the KSU leaders unlike the Communists who did not give that encouragement to their student leaders. Meanwhile the Kerala Students Congress (KSC) was born in 1964 which was the result of state's uncertain politics.

The 1970's started with the birth of the Students Federation of India. The SPI succeeded in attracting a good number of students towards its fold by adopting an intellectual approach.

Meanwhile the students got representation in the Senate of the Kerala University in 1969 and the Syndicate in 1974. This was an important achievement, for now on they began to play a role in administrative matters of the University.
The Emergency Declaration dealt a blow to student activism in the state. The leftist students went behind the bars. But the Emergency adversely affected the prospects of the KSU. In the elections conducted to the College Unions and the University Unions the SFI could reap rich dividends. Another important consequence of the Emergency was the birth of new student organisations like the Vidyarthi Janatha.

The post Emergency period also witnessed the strengthening of extremism -- both left and right, marked by the intensification of the activities by the All India Democratic Students Organisations (AIDSO) and the Akhil Bharathiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), respectively.

During the 1980's the field of higher education in Kerala witnessed violent upheavals. The students again and again prevented the government from implementing educational reforms. Obviously they gave importance to the quantitative aspect -- education for more sections of the population and not to the qualitative aspect of higher education. This reaction is only natural in a society where higher education has been denied to a large section of the people. We have stated that in a society like our's education helps upward social mobility. Thus the students vehemently opposed the implementation
of the Adisheshiah Commission recommendations and the suggestions made by the National Policy on Education. The Pre-degree Board agitation of 1986 even caused dearly to the UDF in the 1987 elections losing the battle to the LDF. After the elections the Left Democratic Front came to power in the state.

Political Instability

The investigation also points toward the fact that there is close relationship between the nature of state politics and student activism. That is, Kerala's political instability has been the main reason behind the failure to develop a unified student movement. We find the birth of a new student organisation the KSC in 1964 which was an offshoot of rebel political activities in the Congress. Again, the split in the Congress Party led to the split of the KSU. Thus student movement had an inauspicious beginning as its birth and growth synchronised with the inauguration of political instability from the 1960's.

Student political activism also exhibits a definite pattern. That is, whenever one party or a coalition of parties was in power the opposition sponsored student organisations conducted agitations regularly. The Scandinavian countries' example testifies to the fact that
where society is characterised by a high degree of social and economic stability student politics tends to be peaceful and orderly.

It is also true that student politics and the attendant agitations are caused by the socio-economic changes. Students here demand more facilities and are disappointed and disgusted with the educational set up.

Features of the Student Movement

The student movement in Kerala which has attained a certain amount of respectability exhibits some definite features. The various student organisations have been carrying on socialisation activities through leaflets, press conferences, declarations, letters and demonstrations.

Student political culture in the state embraces both the left and the right. The College Unions and the University Unions have been controlled by both of them.

The student movement has undergone changes. It all started as a part of the freedom struggle, but new elements have been added to it. Arts students are more involved in political activities than Science students.
Besides socialisation function, student organisations have also concentrated on protecting student interests. Therefore even passive students give their approval of student leaders' activities.

Another important feature is that student union elections constitute a general election in microcosm in Kerala. The union election results are commented upon by the senior political leaders.

The political parties have developed an ambivalent attitude towards student activities. At times they say that students must keep off politics and at other times they prefer students taking part in political activities. They are also not that concerned about finding solutions to student problems.

Similarly, it is true that the left parties have consciously cultivated the student community. They say that students must fight social injustices along with other sections of society.

Again, student power has come into the open during crisis situations. They do not operate in a political vacuum. The best example is the Vimochana Samaram or the
Liberation Struggle of 1959. Since then student organisations have worked in close collaboration with political parties in the state.

Students have become restless and their demonstrations have become violent. An important feature of the student movement is factionalism, creating disunity in it. Kerala's educational system is such that it contributes towards student unrest.

It has been found out that there is no student subculture in Kerala because student politics is an extension of the politics of the adult world. Students cannot therefore be considered as agents of change in politics. The student organisations are even sponsored by the various political parties. Students take a political line even during school days because in schools also there are various organisations and elections to the School Parliament. The membership of student organisations enable the students to acquire political skills.

The political activities of students suffered a setback only during the Emergency. This is because during that period all sorts of political activities were banned in schools and colleges.
From the viewpoint of political socialisation it must be said that students are very much careful about the methods to be adopted during their struggles. They impart political education to the students, radicalise them, and react sharply when situation so warrants. They choose the appropriate slogans and select the right form of struggle. Study classes are also conducted at the college level, district level, and state level.

Student politics has become the most important platform in Kerala for the recruitment of future political leaders. Taking part in political activities from the school and college days is a stepping stone towards full-fledged political activities in future. Almost all the political parties give representation to their youth leaders in the elections to the legislature. But in the earlier days political leadership had evolved through trade union or farm labour welfare activities.

The student leaders have a feeling that they have wrongly copied the trade union style in their political activities. They are ready to change it. But they oppose any attempt to curtail their freedom for organisational activities. All the benefits and concessions which the student community enjoys today are the result of
organisational activities, and these organisations have dearly paid for them also, when they confronted authorities and clashed with the police.

Peer Group Basis

In order to understand the attitudes and orientations of the students towards politics a questionnaire was supplied to them and they responded well. The first three questions were asked with the purpose of understanding the basis of formulating political opinions (Table 1, Table 2 & Table 3). In the first Table 70 per cent of the students agreed that their political opinions are influenced mainly by their friends' opinions. The rest gave more importance to the opinions of the press and parents. In the second Table the question was regarding the frequency of political discussion. While 32 per cent answered that they discussed politics regularly 66 per cent said that they discussed politics only occasionally. So totally it makes 98 per cent. Only 2 per cent said 'never'. Again in Table 3 the question was with regard to the items of discussion among friends. In this 68 per cent of the students said that they discussed politics among other things. Of course, more than one choice was given. From these three answers the peer group basis of student politics is amply clear. Students share their political ideas and it is this likemindedness and unity
of ideas which lead to the birth of student organisations from a theoretical viewpoint.

When asked about students' opinion about politics 50 per cent of them said that students must play an active role in politics. But 26 per cent added that they must take part only in campus politics, not in outside politics. Anyway this total of 76 per cent do not find anything wrong in students participating in some form of politics. There is another 20 per cent which feels that students must take part in politics 'sometime in one's life'. With regard to the methods to be adopted for achieving their goals a majority of 70 per cent preferred 'negotiations'. But there are students who preferred strikes, demonstrations, gherao etc. Here it is clear that the majority of students are peaceloving. If at all they become violent there are external forces which compel them to be so.

Student Organisations Useful

Two questions (Table 6 & Table 7) were asked to understand students' opinions regarding student organisations. In the first table, they were asked whether student organisations are the leading agents of political socialisation. The answer, 76 per cent agreed,
while 24 per cent disagreed. In other words, a vast majority supported the question pointing towards the relevance of student organisations with regard to political socialisation. In the second table, they were asked to comment on the functions of student organisations. Four choices were given and while 40 per cent said that they create political awareness another 40 per cent preferred to say that they protected students interests. So together 88 per cent supported the positive functions which their organisations performed. Only 12 per cent felt that their main function is to help the administrative authorities.

Majority of Students not Politicised

It was also intended to find out the ideological commitments of the students of the Mahatma Gandhi University. For this purpose three questions were asked. In the first table (Table 8) the students were asked to mark their preference on a five point scale like Radically left, Far left, Moderate left, Moderate right and Far right. To include the radically leftist students one choice more was added for the leftist students, while only two choices were given for the rightist students (Moderate right and Far right). From the answers received it becomes clear that while leftists constitute 49 per cent (6 + 4 + 39) the rightists constitute
51 per cent (41 + 10) in this University. In other words, the rightists lead only by a margin of 2 per cent.

But in order to recheck the above finding another question (Table 9) was asked as to whether they will cross vote --voting for another panel's candidate -- if they think their own candidate is weak. The assumption here is that an ideologically committed voter will not cross vote. Here again only 44 per cent said they will not cross vote. The majority 56 per cent said they will cross vote. This is an illustration of the fact that most of the students are not ideologically committed pointing towards the fact that the students are not rigidly politicised as such.

With the same purpose in mind i.e., rechecking the above finding one more question was asked. The question was that, left parties alone can bring about social and economic changes. Here again, only 27 per cent said 'Yes'. A majority of 69 per cent did not agree with the question and so said 'No'. Only 4 per cent said 'Do not know'. Thus from the above findings it can definitely be concluded that liberal minded, non politicised rightists dominate over the ideologically committed leftist students in this University. Radical politics too is not widely supported.
In Chapter IV, what is dealt with is students and their involvement in university administration. The students' demand for representation in university bodies and participation in university administration is in tune with day-to-day realities. The impact of mass culture and mass politics has compelled authorities everywhere to practice participatory management. Kerala is the first state which granted representation for students in university bodies. They got representation in the Senate and in the Syndicate in the Universities of Kerala. The social status of the students have gone up as a result of their participation in university and college administration.

The Education Commission and the University Grants Commission favour student participation in academic management. It has been accepted by all these authorities that organisational weaknesses are likely to increase student unrest. Student political activism depends upon the level of responsiveness of the government and related institutions. Unnecessary bureaucratisation of university administration will do more harm than good. In these days of universal education it is only natural that the university administration is democratised. Similarly, academic autocracy must be replaced by academic democracy.
The politically socialised students naturally demand a share in the administration, and the College Unions and the University Unions have been constituted to give them training in administration. They shall promote cultural progress and corporate life among students. But in actual practice the student unions seldom fulfill the aims and purposes for which they have been constituted. They have grown as centres of power too.

But in spite of the inadequacies in the working of student unions and election to them result in violence and loss of lives it goes to the credit of the students that their political activities could produce certain good results. They can be summed up as follows:

Positive Aspects of Socialisation

1. The political awareness of the students has helped them to create student organisations. These organisations have been educating the students in political matters and also protecting student interests.

2. Political activism has enabled students to get a share in university administration. From 1969 onwards student representatives are there in the Senate and from 1974 in the Syndicate of the
Universities. As a result the social status of students has gone up.

3. Representation of students in the various university bodies has enabled them to be participants in policy making with regard to educational matters. The University Unions and the College Unions have also been carrying on student welfare activities.

4. The student community has come to enjoy certain rights, privileges and concessional facilities because of their organisational activities and participation in university management.

5. The students have made use of all forums to seek education for more and more sections of the society. They have thereby contributed towards the spreading of literacy in Kerala.

6. The membership of students in university bodies has enabled them to have a first hand knowledge of manipulations and corruption in university administration. They have exposed the concerned officials.

7. The representatives of students in the university have become legislators in future and their previous experience has helped them to fare well in the state legislature.
Today the students consider the University Unions and College Unions as a right of their's. They oppose any attempt to curtail their freedom to carry on organisational activities. The students' charter of demands include, in addition to the above, democratisation of university administration and withdrawal of the arbitrary powers given to the UGC.

The elections to the student unions are hotly contested. The various student organisations forge alliances to win the maximum seats. The KSU and the SFI are the two leading organisations and others usually join either of these to form alliances. Candidates spend a lot of money for publicity purpose in order to canvass votes. They make use of the microphone, pamphlets, corner meetings, personal canvassing, public speeches etc., to canvass votes. The union elections, in short, resemble Assembly elections not only in content and appearance, but also in intensity and expenditure.

There is a worrisome aspect also about student union elections, that is, they sometimes become law and order issues. Students quarrel and violence become a part of such elections, resulting in physical injuries and even loss of lives. Similarly, it has been found that the elected student unions very often work undemocratically.
Instead of improving the tenor of academic life, the student unions and their activities create confusion and chaos on the campus. The union officials violate the laws of the college and university and do not respect the authorities.

The student organisations themselves do not exhibit the democratic spirit very often because those who lost in the elections try to create disturbances in colleges and universities. The tendency now is to measure the organisational strength among the students by conducting strikes and demonstrations and this negative attitude has forced the public to raise serious objections to student politics. Their alliance with political parties which is an illustration of pragmatic politics has proved to be dangerous as far as discipline and progress in the field of higher education is concerned. Student politics assumes much significance when one takes into account the political instability prevailing in Kerala. During elections to the Assembly the experience gained by students is made use of by the major political parties.

In the next chapter, that is Chapter V, the emphasis is on the overimpact of political socialisation. The students know how to apply political pressure in order to achieve their objectives. They get into
alliances with political parties and other vested interests. They seek power and in the process they tend to overlook injustices and side with erring officials. Their heroes are adult politicians and they try to imitate them. The result of all these is that the educational process gets disrupted. The politics of the street culture occasionally makes its entry even into the field of higher education.

As a result of the political activities of students and other sections in the university which maintain vested interests the university too gets politicised. The post of the Pro-Chancellor, the Senate and the Syndicate are all the agencies of this politicisation. The politically active students come out against the injustices going on in the university. They oppose corruption in the university.

There are several other reasons also for student indiscipline which take the form of agitations and demonstrations. The lack of physical facilities in colleges, rivalries among teachers, the presence of professional student leaders, interference of political parties, etc., are some of the important reasons causing trouble in the campus.
The face of student politics gets distorted in the context of Kerala's coalition politics. Each political party tries to ensure the support of a section of the students so that it can make its presence felt and come to power during the next elections.

Depoliticisation, Not the Answer

Attempts to depoliticise the university is not the answer for student political excesses. If student organisations and their activities are banned the vacuum so created is likely to be filled in by communal organisations or other undesirable elements. This may prove more dangerous.

The enquiries conducted also reveal that political parties alone are not responsible for creating trouble in the field of higher education, but the social and economic factors present in a developing society (or social transformation) compel students to get organised and engage in political activities. For instance, the students are not that concerned about the improvement in the quality of education, but they demand education for all sections of the society. Again, unemployment is another important issue for the student youth. The bureaucratisation and adhocism in the university, outdated examinations, inadequate channels of communication, the
irrelevant content of education, the communal basis of higher education in Kerala, student alienation, and value confusion all contribute towards political activism among students. They engage in the politics of protest. But it goes to the credit of Kerala students that they have not forgotten their social commitment altogether. For example, in 1965 and also during 1966-67 the various student organisations had organised agitations for the supply of adequate food grains to Kerala by the Central Government.

So there are general causes as well as particular causes for student agitations in Kerala. The general causes are those experienced by students almost everywhere, whereas the particular causes are special to Kerala. While bureaucratisation is an example of the former, political instability is something peculiar to Kerala. A deep understanding of the social and economic conditions of Kerala is also important to meaningfully analyse 'politicisation' of the student community in the state.

Over Impact of Political Socialisation

Specifically speaking the following are the negative consequences of political socialisation or the over impact of political socialisation.
1. Student politics has led to a large number of agitations in the campus, and violence has been an inevitable feature of such agitations. They have destroyed public property also.

2. The political activities of students have encouraged criminals on the campus. Student organisations try to protect them also.

3. The educational institutions have become the recruiting centres of political parties. The student organisations indirectly serve as the recruiting agencies.

4. The overdose of campus politics has hit educational reforms. It has become now very easy to oppose any attempt to bring about reforms in the field of education by organising agitations.

5. Students have neglected their studies and they even agitate over issues which have no relevance for them at all.

6. The rivalries among the various student organisations have prevented the emergence of a total and unified student movement in Kerala.

7. Higher education in Kerala has succumbed to social demands and political pressures. The student...
community considers higher education to be a right of their's.

8. Political parties have been successfully exploiting the students in Kerala. They use them in critical situations.

Thus to conclude, the over impact of political socialisation has been felt in the educational field as well as in the larger society. This is, no doubt, a negative aspect of student political socialisation.