CHAPTER - I

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The literature on the role of political elites in education is a curious blend of the descriptive and the theoretical. There was a massive appearing of publications on the aspect of student activism during the 1960s when western nations were disrupted by the students' activist movements. Much of the literature reflects the concerns of western social scientists and university officials—impelled in considerable part by a desire to understand and to "deal with" activist movements, which arose suddenly. The paradigms used were largely western in orientation. The political models reflected the realities of North American and Western European situations. While academic institutions stem from similar roots, Third World realities differ significantly from those in the western democracies. However, in many respects, the western bias of the literature has distorted analyses of politics in campus in the third world. While it is possible to utilise conceptual frameworks from the western literature and even some of the general research trends, it is necessary to look at third world campus politics as a relatively independent phenomenon.
National variations, historical differences, changing political environments, academic organisational variations and many other factors, relate to an understanding of politics in higher general education in any one nation. It is too much to expect that a readily applicable general formulation will be able to completely explain this complex phenomenon.

In this context it would be proper to mention that third world political systems are typically less "dense" than those in the industrialized nations. There are fewer competing political forces and this permits people in campus to play a more direct and powerful role. The mass media are weaker, parliamentary systems are often less effective, trade unions, consumer says and the myriad of interest groups typically found in the western industrial nations are missing, and the educated middle class is small. Hence, students in campus tend to play a crucial role in politics.

When we talk of politicization of educational system it implies the process by which the educational structure is influenced and coloured by politics. Rudolph and Rudolf make a distinction between politicization and political influence: "Politicization refers, generally, to the appropriation of educational structures and resources and the displacement of educational goals by organised
political and community interests. The effect of politicization is to subsume the educational goals and processes of particular educational institution to those of organized extra educational interests. Political influence in the context of the relationship between the educational and political systems refers, in the sense, to the reverse of the process of politicization, it is the use of political skills, influences and strategies to insure public decisions and allocations which are favorable to education generally and to the needs and interests of particular institutions." (Rudolph, L.I. & Rudolph, S.H.: 1972:8).

Politicization needs to be differentiated from public interest in education (Mohanty, B.: 5) Higher Educational Institutions cannot carry on all their activities with the help of the income from fees or from endowments, they have, therefore, to depend increasingly on the support from public funds. Moreover, the expenditure of public money becomes increasingly subject to public opinion and must be justified against the claims of competing expenditure. Under these circumstances, the legitimate assertion of the public interest in higher education by union Government and state governments is not always easy to distinguish from politicization.
In developing countries like India, the national emphasis on economic development and modernization overrides the idea of the completely autonomous University. Various sections of the governing elite, as well as many faculty members and students, believe that university should serve the national interest of fostering development. They do not think the nation can afford the “Luxury” of supporting pure scholarship, which is not related to development objectives, nor can students or faculty isolate themselves from active involvement in politics, (Lipset, S.M. 1970: 4).

Philip G. Altbach opines that the place of politics in the University is inherently related to feelings about the larger society. Those, whether of the extreme left or right, who believe that drastic changes are necessary, that major evils exist, or that the basic varieties are under attack will feel that students and faculty ought to be deeply involved in politics. Conversely, moderate conservatives and liberals are more likely to accept the formula that a University is a “House of Study” rather than a “House of Politics”. (Altbach, Philip G: P170: 9)

In the pre-independence period of India, the congress leaders argued that political education was an important aspect of education. As such they refused to accept the official view that
education and politics should not be mixed with one another. The period prior to 1920 was a time of establishing higher education in India and a slow development of political consciousness among students. While the militant activism of later decades was missing, students were exposed to ideological currents from Europe, and the growing political tensions within India added to this ferment. Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement of 1920 was the first major mass agitation initiated by the congress. It was also the first political struggle that involved large number of students. Youth leagues were formed in major educational centers to coordinate student efforts, and the discussion and debating societies of earlier periods became the nuclei of political organization (Chandra, Prabodh: 1938).

Thus, one of the most edifying legacies of Independence is the interest of the students in politics. They are repeatedly told to keep away from political activities of all sorts. In a way this seems an anomaly. Many students, particularly of college-going age, acquire the right to vote, stand for elections and yet are told to withhold themselves from indulging in political activities (Kapadia, Aban: 1963:10).

Many scholars have tended to neglect student movements. But the concern with the factors that affect the development
processes—political, economic, and social, has resulted in a major focus on students as emerging elites. Knowledge of the values and activities of students is basic to any effort to evaluate prospects for development. So the active role of student organizations and movements in stimulating educational reforms and increasing modernizing forces within their society must be given careful consideration (Lipset: 1967:viii).

In this context Max Weber says that students are also more available for new political movements than adults because of the lesser commitments they have to their “occupational” role as compared to adults. Political activity is, to a considerable extent, a function of the extent to which job requirements are dispensable. In his terms, those who could take time off from work without suffering economic consequences are much more likely to be active than those who have to punch a time clock. Students and professors, as he says, perhaps the most dispensable job requirements of all. (Weber, Max: 1946:84-85).

However, student political activity has no single cause and no single predictable effect. It occurs most often on the margins of the polity; only occasionally dramatically touching the center of national concerns. For many of the peripherally participant, their experience
in students politics will be remembered as a mere passing excitement at childhood's end. For some among the most actively involved, it will have been a rehearsal for adult political role (Emmerson, Donald : 1968: 412).

A distinction is made between Student Activism and Student Actor. One study makes it clear that students can be political activists but not political actors. To be political actors students should be capable of both opposing and assuming political power. They can do the first, but not the second. They can criticize a political regime, but can offer no viable substitute for it. They can bring down a regime, but cannot in practice, replace it with something of their own making (Yang, Sung Chul: 1973:47-60).

A study of student activism in the post-1965 period is marked with three general trends: - student involvement in broader political movements which have a firm ideological base, as is most graphically reflected in West Bengal and in groups like All-India Students Federation; student involvement in political campaigns based on outside demands and issues, such as the language agitation in Tamilnadu; and finally student involvement in sporadic demonstrations, unrest, and in-discipline related to local collegiate
and academic matters (Altback 1974:158). However, the latter aspect is the most important aspect of student activism in India.

In India, it was a series of students' demonstration in 1964 that forced the chief minister of Orissa out of Office. In Gujrat state students played a key role in dethroning a congress government in March 1974. However, it is also clear that after the change of government, the students could do precious little either to bring about a 'new social order' or economic betterment of the masses which was the main objective of their struggle (Mansukhani : 1975:15)

In this context, it is pointed out by Lewis S. Feuer that India is notable among Asian countries in having no massive student movement. What has inhibited the rise of a massive student movement, as he says, is that a political de-authorization has not taken place, which means there is no feeling that older generation has failed (Feuer, Lewis.S: 1969:44-45).

In student movements in India much of the leadership has been taken over by students from the lower middle classes. One of the main causes for the sudden withdrawal of upper class students from political involvement is the contamination of polity by widespread corruption (Altback, P.G. 1966) In general terms; the
basis of politics in India has changed. The idealistic struggle of the nationalist movement has been replaced by the day-to-day compromises. Modern Indian politics is, from this point of view, not worthy of much effort and these upper class politically aware students have withdrawn into cynicism or apathy rather than participate in a political system that they find repugnant.

A majority of students in India come from villages to cities for higher education. For these migrants, the culture shocks from the more modern urban Institutions, educational and political exposures are co-extensive (Nandy, Ashis: 1977:28). The significance of this for the political system is enormous. If the frustrations and anger of the younger generation so exposed are brought into the educational system through spatial migration in this fashion, the political system must learn to cope with it as a part of its concern with management of demands and cleavages.

Expansion of higher education has resulted in the growth of student population and with this a change in the nature of Indian student has been marked. The student community is no longer homogeneous but rather comes from diverse social strata. The uncertainties of unemployment after graduation have caused a change in the attitudes of the students (Single, Amrik & Altbach,
Philip G: (ed) 1974:viii). These students fall a prey to politicians' gimmicks. Social life of contemporary India bears ample testimony to this.

Student political patterns are also determined, in past, by variations in political institutions. As Robert Scott points out, the lack of political stability in much of the Latin America has stimulated student activism, since the possibility of successful agitation has been substantial and students have occasionally been able to exert political leverage on weak governments. In Scandinavia, on the other hand, the stability and legitimacy of the established political structures have discouraged student activism, and national politics is not generally seen as a legitimate domain of student concern. However, in other nations- notably, the Philippines, Korea, India and Japan- rapid educational expansion has caused substantial strains on the educational system and may be a factor in student unrest (Lipset, S.M. 1970:44).

In every discipline those who think of themselves as intellectuals rather than professionals are more politically active. It also works out objectively, in terms of the type of disciplines. The disciplines that are thought of as 'intellectual', the humanities and most of the social sciences, are more activist and leftist than those
that are oriented towards the professional and scientific world. Most of the activists in the Indian and Indonesian students movements, particularly during the nationalist periods, came from the liberal arts (Lipset, S.M.: 1970:47).

Metta Spencer, from a study of Allahabad, finds that men students are ordinarily more politicized than are women, and students living independently to be more politicizing than students who were integrated into a household or an organized hostel (Spencer, Metta: 1970:124-130).

It is generally recognized that university autonomy is to be preserved in three important areas, namely, (I) selection of students (ii) selection and promotion of teachers, and (iii) the determination of courses. Strictly speaking, the Indian universities do not seem to enjoy freedom in respect of any of these matters.

The University does not enjoy exclusive right of laying down the policy and standards of admission. Governments, as representative of the community, claim a say in the matter. In extending the opportunity for education to the back ward sections of the society, seats are being reserved for them. The teachers are not being involved because of the fact that the teaching profession is ranked very low as compared to the civil, legal, banking and other
services. Many studies have shown that the teachers' status is not very high. In fact, it occupies a middle position in the scale of ranking of different occupations. The marginal status of the teachers is further reflected in their not being involved in the development of the country at the policy making level. Thus, the major issues such as the nature of admission, examination system as well as resource allocations are broadly decided by groups other than the teachers themselves.

Indian college and university teachers do feel themselves to be at the unpredictable and inclement mercy of their private management and state governments. The most important controlling element in the college is the body that legally owns the institution. In private colleges, this body is usually referred to as management or the managing committee. The management of the college has the ultimate goal of control over the institution and is responsible for its expenditures and debts as well as the appointment, retention and remuneration of the staff. The principal is the key person in the academic hierarchy of the college and creates much of the atmosphere of the institution. It is often seen that a principal gets an appointment with the approval of the politicians who take a keen interest in college matters. In order to
maintain stability in the college as well as his own job, the principal must balance the various pressure groups operating amongst the college-students, the academic staff and the management. The college principals are mediators and managers than educational leaders (Altbach, P.G. 1972:51).

The historic pattern of the 'Part time' professor in Latin America is a crucial factor in the lack of commitment to scholarly endeavors and values of many students. The very bad faculty – student ratio of French universities and low salaries of Japanese professors, which require them to find other sources of remuneration, have been cited as factors lowering the level of the institutions of higher education (Lipset, S.M: 1970:43).

In India the growing numbers of non-government colleges are always afflicted with poverty. Lower scales of pay, with the rising costs of living, often tempt the teacher to resort to rather undesirable means for supplementing his income. He produces examination guides or accepts private tuition. He also undertakes heavy examination work for his own and other universities, sacrificing his leisure in the vacations that should be used for study and research.
Moreover, in several cases teacher-politicians have succeeded better in their careers than teachers who have devoted themselves to teaching and scholarship. The success of teacher-politicians who manipulate elections & get for themselves and their friends influential and lucrative positions in their own or sister universities is largely responsible for the deterioration of the morals of teachers and the academic standards of the universities (Radhakrishnan committee report 1948-49:70).

Pointing out disharmony among teachers, D.D. Karve writes; teachers in colleges and universities in India do not as yet feel themselves to be members of a single intellectual community and have yet to absorb the traditions of modern science scholarship and higher learning. Their loyalties are still anchored in the social group to which they belong by birth the academic community itself has been prevented from coming into being by the divided nature of Indian society. "(Karve, D.D. 1963:284).

Thus in general, the pauperization of the colleges in India has also meant a decline in the social standing of the academic profession (Singh, Amrik & Altbach, P.G. 1974:VIII).

Trade unionism among non-teaching staff and their negative attitude towards work has become a concern in India. They are
often organized on political party basis and their organizations embrace statewide and nationwide membership in India (Pylee, M.V. 1995:2)

Attempts have been made in India to cater to the needs of the specific, local and regional requirements in the sector of higher education, with a view to maintaining distinction, providing separate identity and providing opportunity for innovative experiments. Establishment of autonomous colleges has been the outcome. These new type colleges enjoy autonomy in the following fields

(a) Freedom to select students.
(b) Freedom to lay down its own standards;
(c) Freedom to design curricula
(d) Given the necessary income, freedom to decide the various allocations of expenditures.
(e) Examination reforms.

Though the scheme was initiated in late 1970’s it did not receive wide recognition. Above all the government’s imposition of controls as well as the government’s omnibus treatment of good and bad institution alike have fore closed the benefits of autonomy. On the whole this autonomy will not be realized unless the academic community duly recognizes the importance and sanctity of academic values and makes sincere and sustained efforts to realize this.
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