CHAPTER VIII

PERCEPTION AND ORIENTATION
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The overall perception and orientation of student activists to social, cultural, economic and political problems have an important bearing on their political culture, political behaviour and overall activism. The role performance of student activists is considerably influenced by their attitudinal orientation. In order to ascertain the overall perception and orientation of student activists, five broad groups of questions were asked and answers elicited from them. The first group of questions seeks to test their attitude towards political involvement, the second group towards student unionism, the third group seeks to test their perception of the factors/causes of student unrest; the fourth group deals with the perception of local issues/problems and the last group tests their perception of national problems.

I

Active participation of students in politics remains a controversial issue. Diametrically opposite views have been held by students, authorities and the general public on this issue. Leftists and radicals hold that students and faculty should be deeply involved in politics. On the other
hand, moderate-conservatives and liberals are more likely to accept that a university is a "house of study rather than a house of politics". As Soares puts it:"conservatives argue that the political and academic roles should be compartmentalised while the leftists seek to integrate the two". Spencer writes about the Indian situation in this regard: "It would seem....that the norms concerning student political activity are rather conservative in India, in that it is not quite legitimately accepted for students or (even for faculty members for that matter) to be active in politics". While India illustrates a chequered history of student participation in political activities stretching back to the beginning of the twentieth century, student activism in the post-independence period has been looked upon with suspicion and cynicism and very little appreciation. Self-seeking politicians and power brokers use students as pawns in their game of power seeking. The general public including parents are not favourably disposed towards student participation in political activities primarily because of its possible harmful effect on academic pursuits. When controversy is generated over the crucial issue of

2. Spencer Netta,"The Partisan Student in India", in Ibid.,p.121.
political involvement and participation of students, it is pertinent to discern how student activists themselves perceive such an issue. With this objective in view seven related questions pertaining to student involvement in politics have been posited to the activists. They were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the suggested questions with possible explanations and their responses appear in Table 8.1.

**TABLE NO.8.1**

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS**  
(N=160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Should students be members of political parties and render active service to them?</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>41.25</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Should students take part in politics?</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>60.62</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Should students seek support from political parties and other sister organisations for various issues?</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41.87</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Should student political associations be affiliated to political parties?</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41.87</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should students take part in agitations and movements affecting the broader society?</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>95.62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Should students attend study circles and seminars organised by political parties?</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>96.87</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Should students follow the advice/command given by political personalities from outside the campus?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.75</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

290
The first question reads: "Should students be members of political parties and render active service to them?" It is common knowledge that political parties and personalities openly mobilise, recruit and utilise students by taking interest in their affairs and by patronising student leaders. The linkage between the campus and the political parties is an accepted fact of Indian social and political life. A minority of student activists in our survey agreed to the suggestion that students should be members of political parties and render active service to them, while a majority (58.75%) disagreed. This is consistent with the more intense forms of party involvement of student activists in our survey. A significant percentage of student activists (44.14) are active members of political parties.\(^3\)

Those who favoured membership of and an active role in political parties advance the following arguments: (1) Politics is all-embracing and students as an important segment of the population cannot keep themselves away from politics and political parties. (2) Students should interact with political parties to develop leadership traits and to get the necessary training for assuming leadership.

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3. See Table no. 7.9 in Chapter VII of this Dissertation for Comparison.
in future. (3) The support of political parties strengthens student movements and enables them to achieve their objectives. (4) A good number of college and university students are voters and have the right to form political associations like other citizens. (5) Party alignment results in commitment to definite ideologies among students.

The arguments against party alignment are: (1) Active participation in party activities will affect adversely the academic pursuits which is the primary objective of the educational institutions, (2) In the present state of politics in the country, party alignment will have a corrupting influence on student activists and debase their moral standards. (3) Political parties and personalities do not know where to stop in dealing with students; students are often used for partisan purposes. (4) The sort of training and grooming which students receive from political parties and leaders are unlikely to develop the requisite orientation and values urgently needed for nation building activities.

To ascertain the attitude of students towards the most important and controversial question regarding their political involvement, student activists were asked the second question: "Should students take part in politics"? A
majority of the student activists (60.62%) agreed to the suggestion while the rest disagreed. Some of the arguments of those who favour participation of students in politics are: (1) As a conscious, enlightened and sensitive segment of the society, students should take interest in political affairs and do something worthwhile to provide solutions to the multifarious problems of the country. (2) Participation in politics is a training in citizenship. As future citizens and prospective members of the elites, students should undergo training in public life at a formative stage. (3) In a developing country like India students are better equipped, educated and politically conscious than the average citizens. Their energy and idealism can be properly harnessed to counteract social prejudices, political corruption, administrative impropriety and economic offences. They can play a vanguard role in socio-economic transformation.

Those who disfavour student participation in politics advance the following arguments: (1) Active involvement of students in politics has converted the campuses into hotbeds of politics and affect academic pursuits adversely. (2) Studenthood should be viewed as a period of learning and a period of intense preparation for
a career. Political involvement should come at a later stage of life. (4) Political involvement dissipates the time and energy of the students for curricular and co-curricular activities and results in greater indiscipline on the campuses.

To the third question, namely, "Should students seek support from political parties and other sister organisations for various issues"?, 41.37% agreed. Thus a majority (58.12%) of the student activists deem it improper to seek support from political parties and their front organisations for public issues. In this they are apprehensive that more damage than good will come from such support from extraneous elements. They argue that seeking support from parties will result in political interference which destroys academic atmosphere on the campuses. Those who favour party support on public issues argue that political parties and their front organisations articulate and aggregate public interest on several issues and students, as part and parcel of the enlightened and vocal public, should join hands with them to promote public interest. Some respondents suggested that in seeking such support students should fight shy of nasty party politics and enlist the support and cooperation of parties and leaders who are committed to public welfare.
It has been found that most of the political parties have their student associations active on the campuses. As a dynamic force on the campus, these student organisations regulate the political behaviour of the students. The question of affiliation of student organisations to political parties has evoked some controversy. Student activists in our survey were asked to register their responses to the question: "Should student political associations be affiliated to political parties?". 41.87% agreed to such affiliation while a majority (51.25%) disagreed and 11 respondents (6.37%) were undecided. This finding is inconsistent with the membership of student political associations. While a majority (58.12%) of student activists are actually members of student organisations having linkage with political parties, a lesser number (41.87%) favoured affiliation of such organisations. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that, while for practical reasons many student activists are members of student political associations, they disfavour the affiliation of such associations to political parties on ideological or theoretical grounds.

Those who favoured affiliation advance the argument that such affiliation would result in ideological conviction.

4. See Table no.7.5, Chapter VII of this Thesis.
and commitment of their members and the grooming up of a second front of political leadership in the country. It would also result in financial support for the student organisations and enable them to participate in the decision making process of the political parties relating to youth and student affairs. Those who disfavour affiliation advance two main arguments: (1) Affiliation would compromise the independent functioning of student political associations. (2) Party affiliation would result in narrowness, rigidity in ideological postures and unhealthy competition among student groups.

The next question related to an intense form of student political participation, namely, "Should students take part in agitations and movements affecting the broader society"? An overwhelming majority of the student activists (95.62%) agreed to this suggestion. Thus most of them felt that student politics should not be confined to the campus and display an off-campus orientation. Campuses are integral parts of the society and their inmates, namely, the students, can not afford to remain blind to the issues and problems in the larger society. Participation in societal movements will remove sectarian outlook from the student community and make them agents of social change. Some of the respondents
justify such participation by judging the gravity and genuineness of the issues focussed by off-campus movements.

Student activists were asked about their attitude towards a soft form of political participation, namely, "Should students attend study circles/seminars organised by political parties"? An overwhelming majority of the respondents (96.87%) favours such attendance and participation. The main argument in support was that such political participation would result in political education and training for the interested students and make them aware of the political and ideological trends. A small minority which disfavoured, argued that such participation would make students politically oriented and introduce partisan politics into the campus.

The last question in this group was: "Should students follow the advice/command given by political personalities from outside the campus"? While a minority (28.75%) agreed to the suggestion, a substantial majority (70%) disagreed. Most of the respondents feel that political leaders use students on the campus for partisan purposes and as such students should be cautious about such leaders. It often becomes difficult to distinguish between good and bad advice given by political leaders in the heat of excitement generated by protest politics on the campus.
Hence the majority deems it safe to keep away from the direct command of extraneous political elements.

II

The right to form Students Unions/College Unions in educational institutions is a part of the democratic right to form free associations and to enjoy free speech. Democratic politics guarantees to the student community the right of forming various associations on the campuses. Students Unions provide a forum for the ventilation of grievances, articulation and aggregation of interests and as instruments to fulfil the demands of the student community. However, student unions have sometimes failed to fulfil their avowed objectives. This has generated acrimonious controversy about the necessity of student unions in educational institutions.

One school of thought holds that there is no need for students union and it should be dispensed with. They argue that the students union "forms an informal shadow government on campus". 

It has been alleged that student unions have been amenable to extraneous political influence and act as politically oriented groups exerting pressure on the educational institutions and the government. They do very little constructive for the student community and the union leaders often disrupt the academic atmosphere by resorting to strikes and agitations. Sanjib Ray offers a sad commentary on the Indian situation: "The gulf between precept and practice, wilful distortion and widespread exploitation have converted the concept of elected student union into a farce. Undetected embezzlement of funds, unimaginative planning, practically non-existent execution of student welfare programme and a rhetoric long on talk and short on action have created a feeling of distrust and aversion among the majority of students towards the institution".

According to the other school of thought students unions are the democratically elected bodies which protect and promote the overall interests of the student community. A students union is the sole tribune of students' opinion on the campus. It provides necessary training to the students in democratic method and practices. Students union is a

progressive forum which raises its powerful voice against socio-economic and political evils. The protagonists argue that the functioning of students unions ensures educational democracy which is an integral part of all round education. Moreover, students, like other segments of the population, do enjoy a fundamental right to form associations or unions.

Despite this controversy students unions continue to operate in most democratic societies although their powers have been curbed or suspended during crisis situations. It was thought necessary to obtain the opinion of student activists in our survey pertaining to student unionism. In all, they were asked seven questions and their responses have been presented in Table no.8.2.
### Table No. 8.2
**Attitude Towards Student Unionism**
(N = 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Should there be students union in educational institutions?</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>98.12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you think that your students union is/was fulfilling such objectives?</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>95.62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are you in favour of student participation in the management of educational institutions?</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are you in favour of student participation in matters pertaining to student welfare in the college?</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>99.37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should students union be totally autonomous?</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>51.25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you favour replacement of election by (a) nomination in the light of adverse impact of college elections?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>99.37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>158</td>
<td>98.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you feel that students union activities adversely affect the academic interest of the student community?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25.12</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>71.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question posed to the student activists reads: "Should there be students union in educational institutions"? An overwhelming majority (98.12%) affirms that there should be students union. They believe that students union is the only agency to represent students' interests, to fight for students' cause and to solve their problems. A few who disagreed to the suggestion believes that students unions fritter away the energies of the student community by resorting to protest activities. Asked to state the aims and objectives of the students unions, the respondents gave the following answers: (a) Students Union is primarily a cultural association which should promote the academic, cocurricular and extra-curricular activities on the campus. (b) Students Union should protect the legitimate interests of the student community, ventilate their grievances and put forth their genuine demands. (c) Students Union should promote a democratic outlook and a spirit of cooperation among the students. (d) Students Union should promote consciousness among the students for nation building activities. Students union should undertake extensive community welfare programmes during vacations. Students union should project the local demands and aspirations and serve the weaker sections of the community.
To the suggestion, "do you think that your students union is fulfilling such objectives"?, an overwhelming majority (95.62%) of the student activists agreed. Such an overwhelming positive response is quite obvious in the sense that student activists are supposed to present a positive image about themselves. Some of the respondents qualified their affirmation by saying that their college unions could fulfil the objectives "to some extent". A few who disagreed, offered some explanations like incompetence of the Union office bearers, political infighting among office bearers and vested interest of some Union leaders for the non-fulfilment of the aims and objectives.

An overwhelming majority (97.5%) of the respondents in our survey favours student participation in the management of educational institutions. Student participation in the decision making process of the academic institution has been a success in the Latin American countries, while in the liberal democratic West students have some share in the management of their institutions. In the developing nations including India, a very limited participation in the decision making process is allowed to the students. Student activists in our survey, belonging mostly to the non-government (private) colleges, make a vociferous demand for student representation in the college management. Student activists in general demand
student participation and representation at all levels of the educational system including membership of the Senate and Syndicate of the university. They argue that due student representation can ensure the proper projection of student interests and demands and solution of student problems.

To the fourth question, "Are you in favour of student participation in matters pertaining to student welfare in the college?", almost all (99.37%) agreed. In recent years, the problem of student welfare has assumed importance as the provision of adequate welfare schemes and student services may reduce the incidents of student protest activity.

Student welfare activities in our survey include the activities of Social Service Guild, Poor Boys Fund, Free-studentship and liberal scholarship under student welfare schemes. They feel that student participation in such matters can ensure impartial distribution of funds to the needy and deserving students and do away with favouritism and misappropriation.

In recent years there is persistent demand for the autonomy of the students union. In India students unions are mostly guided by the teachers and the principal of a

college is the final authority relating to all union matters. Only a minority (45%) of the student activists agreed that students union should be totally autonomous. They argue that in the absence of autonomy office bearers of the students union are unable to take independent decisions. They resent the various checks exercised by the principal and the teacher advisers on union activities. The majority, who oppose the concept of a totally autonomous students union, argue that such autonomy will be misused by the self-seeking and the ambitious student leaders. Moreover, the political and ideological division and competition among the various functionaries of the students union will create stalemate and render the students union dysfunctional.

Yet another problem and controversial question relates to election to the students union. In recent years the involvement of extraneous political forces in college union elections has disturbed campus peace and destroyed the academic atmosphere. Elections have been occasions for the trial of strength of competing political parties and groups resulting in the use of brute force and naked violence. Drastic remedies like the system of nomination replacing election to the students union have been suggested. With a view to eliciting the opinion of
student activists on this controversial question they were asked: "Do you favour replacement of election by nomination in the light of the adverse impact of college election"?

Despite the adverse impact of college union elections, almost all the respondents (99.37%) opine that elections must continue. They feel that campus elections promote broad democratic values at an important stage of life. Elections throw up the fittest candidates whose popularity can hardly be matched by nominated student leaders. Again a nominated leader is likely to be pliable to the direction of principals and advisers. He can hardly function independently. Some of the respondents suggested suitable modifications to the present system of election including a code of conduct for the observance of student contestants and their political mentors.

Some of the colleges like R.E.C., College of Educational Training, Ispat College and Municipal College in our survey do not have formal students unions. Nomination of office bearers to various cultural associations is operative in these colleges. Keeping this in mind, student activists in our survey were asked: "do you favour replacement of nomination by election?" 98.75% agree
to the suggestion which means that almost all the respondents desire introduction of the system of election in colleges in which some form of nomination is in operation.

Many analysts of the Indian campus scene have strongly disapproved the role of students unions and union leaders in distracting the student community from academic interest. In recent years, one disturbing trend in student politics has been the capture of students unions by the growing number of politically motivated but academically average students who have been operating the unions "more or less as trade unions and pressure groups". Professional student leaders turn students unions into bargaining counters and resort to agitational politics even on trivial issues.

A majority of the student activists (71.25%) feels that students union activities have no ill effect on the overall academic interests of the students. It is probable that as leaders who manage the students unions, they do not like to give a negative picture of their own activities and look upon students union politics as an integral part of the academic life of the campus. Those who agreed to the suggestion (25.12%) that students union activities

adversely affect the academic interest of the student community felt that the growing politicisation of the students unions has led to the non-fulfilment of the expressed goals of the campuses.

III

A lot of discussion has been held and much concern has been expressed by people belonging to cross sections of the Indian society relating to what is frequently described as student unrest and indiscipline. Explanations of such unrest and indiscipline are many and divergent. On the basis of the relevant literature we classify the factors/causes of student unrest into six broad categories, namely, economic, political, social, psychological, administrative and academic. Under each category a few factors of unrest relevant to the Indian situation have been listed. The student activists in our survey were asked to record their opinion on the various factors of unrest on a three point scale. Their responses appear in five sub-tables under Table no. 8.3.

Under 'economic' category, two factors, namely, unemployment and price rise are mentioned. Majority of the Indian students come from unprivileged socio-economic backgrounds and experience poverty and stress during
student life. The poor prospect of unemployment is clearly a cause for anxiety and consequent indiscipline for most of the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important to some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unemployment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>60.62</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29.37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Price rise</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41.97</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>36.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overwhelming majority (90%) of the student activists in our study deem unemployment as an important factor of unrest. Again a majority considers price rise leading to economic hardship for most of the students as a factor of unrest.

The problems and pressures of the larger political sphere do influence the political behaviour of campus inmates. Political corruption is being increasingly viewed as the most important malady of the Indian polity. It is often said that in India corruption has been institutionalised. Reports of corruption published in the press disturbs the honest and hardworking citizens including the idealistic students. Students get disenchanted with the noble principles enshrined in the Constitution and the virtues of the democratic experiment. The system loses legitimacy for most of them.
Leaders of the Freedom Movement were, in general, guided by value-based politics. Since the mid-sixties there has been a progressive erosion of values and decline of standards in Indian public life. If elders—parents, teachers, elites—do not observe certain basic principles of morality and public conduct, it would be too much to expect students to behave and conduct well. "Eloquent words or windy oratory from our public platforms and from speakers who believe in a different set of life values may produce more anger in the young mind than any salutary effect in the moulding of his character".\textsuperscript{11}

One of the important and serious factors of student activism and unrest is the interference of extraneous political forces in campus affairs. The structure of most of the institutions of higher education in relation to government is too political.\textsuperscript{12} Members of the government put pressure on universities and colleges in matters of supplying the funds, appointments, promotions and admissions. Political parties and personalities vie among each other to win the support of the student mass. The entry of outside politics into the campus has led to the emergence of teacher-politicians and the professional students.

As evident from the Table an overwhelming majority of student activists in our study has ascribed importance to all the three suggested political factors discussed above. Factor 'three' gets the maximum response (90%) which is the highest among all political factors.

Four important social causes of unrest were listed to elicit the response of activists in our survey. Parental permissiveness comes first. Family is the first and primary socialising agency. In recent years a large number of students with unsatisfactory family background is admitted into the educational institutions. Parents and guardians take little care of their children and lack control over them.

Another social factor of student unrest is the influence of trade unionism on the functioning of the students union. Students unions, primarily meant to be cultural associations, are emulating the tactics of the trade unions. The Report of the University Grants Commission points out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important No.</th>
<th>Important to some extent No.</th>
<th>Not at all No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Political corruption</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decline of standards</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interference of political parties/leaders in educational institutions.</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>44.37</td>
<td>11.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.62</td>
<td>51.87</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.37</td>
<td>30.62</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"In India students have come to regard students union merely as a bargain counter or as a forum for voicing their 'grievances'. In fact the unions have become a peculiar type of trade union. Like trade unions, the office bearers negotiate with the university authority on behalf of the students." 13

Another social factor contributing to student indiscipline is the pernicious influence of mass media, especially, the cinema, cheap literature, and yellow journals. Students are exposed to violent and criminal ways of life by such media.

Developing societies like India are subject to a conflict between traditional and modern social values consequent upon modernising activities. With rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and expansion of education, some of the traditional social values are bound to shatter. Radical change in values has affected our social life to such an extent that the relations between parents and children, teachers and students and between the state and citizens have been altered.

TABLE NO. 8.3(C)
SOCIAL FACTORS OF UNREST
(N=160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important to some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Parental permissiveness</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.62</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Influence of trade unionism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Influence of mass media</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conflict between traditional and modern social values</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident from Table no. 8.3(C) 'influence of mass media' has received considerable number of 'very important responses', although a majority of student activists considers all the four factors as important causes of unrest. However, 48.75% respondents do not consider 'influence of trade unionism' as a factor of unrest.

Student unrest in India is related to certain psychological factors, of which four have been tested in the study. One such factor is the 'identity crisis' that students undergo in institutions of higher education characterised by complexity, bureaucratisation, anonymity and impersonality. "The academic institutions nourish the feeling of powerless anonymity that leads to alienation, frustration and resentment. The complexity of the university has lessened the coherence of the student body and weakened..."
their sense of identification with the institution".\(^{14}\)

In developing societies student unrest is often related to 'generation gap' or the 'cleavage between generations'. Under the influence of modern education and ideas, the outlook and orientation of students lead to a clash with the traditional values and patterns of behaviour of the older generation. Modern students come into conflict with various authorities - familial, institutional and political.

Students in recent years not only assert their rights but are deeply conscious of their power potential. They are assuming all features of a new social class. They highlight issues, arouse public opinion and put pressure on the educational and political authorities. They demand a fair share in the decision making process of the academic bodies and have partly succeeded. The over confidence of students in their own power is a stimulating factor for activism.

Students suffer from stresses of adolescence. They are at an age characterised by restlessness, excitability, oversensitivity, impatience, idealism, defiance of authority and emotional instability. Such material is eminently suitable for activism and unrest.

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TABLE NO.8.3(D)
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF UNREST
(N=160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important to some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Identity crisis</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generation gap</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Display of student power</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39.37</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stresses of adolescence</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table no.8.3(D), all the psychological factors get positive response from an overwhelming majority of respondents with 'stresses of adolescence' topping the list.

Student unrest is often caused by acts of omission or commission of the academic and administrative authorities. One such factor is unsympathetic/tactless handling of students by authorities. Academic authorities appear to the students as incompetent, corrupt, impersonal, pliable and vacillating. They are amenable to extraneous political and bureaucratic pressures and ignore student grievances until protest is organised. Shils remarked: "The hesitation of universities and college authorities to respond to often legitimate student desires and their sometimes cowardly alacrity to yield when threatened with open indiscipline further discredit these authorities". Law enforcement authorities have sometimes been tactless and inept in handling student protest demonstrations resulting in

Another lapse of the administration is the lack of firm and impartial administrative measures. The impartiality of the administration is often suspected by the students. Moreover, the general attitude of leniency and softness in dealing with erring students is construed by them as a weakness of the administration. The principles of discipline laid down in 'Education Code' are seldom enforced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important to some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unsympathetic/tactless handling of students by authorities.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lack of firm and impartial administrative measures.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41.87</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from Table no.8.3(E) that an overwhelming majority of student leaders attach importance to the administrative factors discussed above. They feel that educational administration needs an overhauling to suit to the needs of the academic community.

Some major factors of student unrest must necessarily stem from defects and deficiencies in the
academic system. "Indian students find it easiest to promote collective action around issues which are nearest to the students' interest."¹⁶ Five important academic factors of unrest have been suggested to elicit student activists' responses.

Perhaps the most important factor is the lack of proper physical facilities in the colleges and universities. Since independence there has been an unusual expansion of higher education without adequate provision for physical facilities. There is overcrowding, dearth of proper libraries, laboratories, provision for interesting cocurricular and extracurricular activities and recreational facilities. Poor working conditions in the colleges and poor living conditions for the majority generate the frustration and anger most propitious for unrest.

Teachers are the central element in the academic system. Teachers are overworked and underpaid. Some of them lack ability for and commitment to teaching. They are a disgruntled lot. They find little time and interest to interact with students. Lack of contact, guidance and control by teachers has created conditions of unrest on most campuses.

The academic system is beset with many defects and deficiencies. The curriculum is rigid and sterile. The syllabus has little relevance for entering into the world of employment. Many ills and deficiencies characterise the examination system. It encourages unintelligent memory work and various malpractices. The medium of instruction is another academic problem. The English medium at the higher level without adequate preparation at the lower levels puts severe strain on the majority of the students. The academic system is far from democratic as the structure is hierarchical and members of the academic community, namely, teachers and students, are given minimal share in decision making.

Many students lack definite goals in life. Of course, they aim at a job after getting college/university degree. But it has become very difficult for students in the liberal Arts and the Social Sciences to obtain suitable employment after studies. This uncertainty in career prospects creates anxiety and frustration which are often released through student protest activities.

There is no proper guidance and counselling to students in most of the campuses. Counselling may take different forms - educational, vocational and personal. In the absence of proper guidance and counselling, most of the students sail like radarless ship in uncharted ocean. Such people are prone to indiscipline and unrest.
TABLE NO.8.3(F)
ACADEMIC FACTORS OF UNREST
(N=160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important to some extent</th>
<th>Not at all all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of proper facilities in colleges</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>70.62</td>
<td>40.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication between teachers and students</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>83.51.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defects and deficiencies in the academic system</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>60.62</td>
<td>65.40.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of definite goals in most of the students</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>56.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of proper guidance and counselling of students</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73.45.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident from Table no.8.3(F), all the academic factors are considered significant by an overwhelming majority of our respondents. The factors outlined, affect all students and quite naturally a substantial majority of the student activists ascribes great importance to them.

IV

Student activists operate in a local/regional setting. In our study they belong to the major colleges in the city of Rourkela, the nerve centre of the district.
of Sundargarh, which is one of the backward districts in the State of Orissa. Despite vast natural resources, there has been an underutilisation of manpower and material potential. Despite prosperity in some centres of industrialisation, the district as a whole with a predominantly tribal population remains at the stage of underdevelopment.

It is expected that student activists, an enlightened and energetic segment of the overall societal leadership, should understand the problems of underdevelopment of the district and region and project and champion local/regional issues and aspirations. Keeping this in mind, student activists in our survey were asked eight relevant questions for the purpose of testing their perceptions of local/regional issues and problems. An attempt is being made to describe and analyse the responses without subjecting them to tabulation.

Student activists were asked the first question: "What are the primary causes of underdevelopment of the district of Sundargarh"? The main causes emerging from their responses are the following: (a) With a predominantly tribal population the level of political consciousness so imperative for articulating and aggregating local/regional demands is rather low; (b) Failure of self-centred and ineffective political leadership in the district to project
the needs and demands of the region at the State level;
(c) Corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy;(d) Lack of proper utilisation of human and material resources;(e) Uneven industrialisation in the district which results in the utter neglect of some regions; (f) Exploitation by the capitalists who own a large number of ancillary industries.

Asked to state the efficacy of the political elites of the district in projecting the needs of the region, an overwhelming majority (90%) of the respondents in our survey gave a negative view. The district has a predominantly tribal representation in Orissa Legislative Assembly with five out of seven members of the Assembly belonging to tribal population. Respondents feel that most of the leaders are self-centred and lack the necessary ability and commitment to put forth the needs of the region at the all Orissa level.

The third question relating to the creation of a separate Jharkhand State is as follows: "Do you feel that a separate Jharkhand State is necessary"? "Will it result in speedier development of your region"? Before analysing the views of student activists, it is pertinent to examine the background and evolution of the movement for Jharkhand.

The demand for a separate State for tribals consisting of some areas of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh can be traced back to 1940 when Major
Jaipal Singh of Ranchi formed 'Adivasi Mahasabha' to redress tribal economic grievances. Soon the Jharkhand party was founded to provide a political forum for the tribals and its spokesman, Jaipal Singh, demanded a separate Jharkhand State in 1954. The States Reorganisation Commission, 1955, however, ruled out the feasibility of a tribal State on the following grounds: the tribals are in a minority in the region; there is no specific link language; and the economic balance of the neighbouring States would be disturbed, were the Jharkhand State be formed. That the SRC mistook the issue of Jharkhand State as a minority demand belied hopes of tribal freedom fighters who see Jharkhand as one of the provinces in the country.

The proposed Jharkhand State comprises sixteen districts of the four adjoining States covering an area of 187,646 sq.kms. and a population of more than thirty million. The most striking aspect of the Jharkhand movement is the manner in which it surfaces every now and then. The movement was peaceful until the rise of its firebrand leader Shibu Soren and the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in the early 1970s. The movement has at times been

18. Interview with X.P. Surin, a tribal student activist in May 1989 at Rourkela (Steel Township).
19. Memorandum for Formation of Jharkhand State Presented to Prime Minister of India on 24th April, 1987 on behalf of Jharkhand party, Rourkela City.
weakened due to factionalism and lack of consensus among its top leaders. With the formation of the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) led by Suraj Basra in October 1986, the movement has been reinvigorated. The strategy is being planned by Jharkhand Coordination Committee which is controlled by a group of Ranchi based intellectuals.\textsuperscript{20}

So far the AJSU story is one of success. It has been able to unite different tribes for the causes; it has made strides in building up of a cadre based party; its politics is pragmatic and radical. It has impressed the villagers by the frugal life style and the commitment of the student workers.

A survey conducted in the area shows that the picture is appalling: the area can be cited as an example of massive economic exploitation with all its ramifications\textsuperscript{21}. Leaders of the movement claim that "the demand to have a separate State grows out of the strong desire of the people to liberate themselves from economic, social, cultural and political exploitation. It is a human problem affecting over three crores of Jharkhandis who desire to live with equality, justice and peace."\textsuperscript{22} It is indeed ironical that an area rich

\textsuperscript{20} See Gupta, Kanchan, "If the 'Dikus' Leave", \textit{The Sunday Statesman, Calcutta}, April 17, 1988.
\textsuperscript{21} Chkarabarthy, Vidyut, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{22} Memorandum For Formation of Jharkhand State, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.11-12.
in mineral resources and forest wealth should remain one of the most backward even to-day.

The affected four State governments are reported to have expressed anxiety over the movement. The movement is obviously a threat to Orissa in as much as the districts of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sambalpur are proposed to be a part of Jharkhand State.

About 90% of the student activists in our survey, mostly non-tribals, do not subscribe to the idea of a separate 'Jharkhand' State for tribals on the following grounds: (a) The movement is politically motivated (b) It is parochial in nature in so far as it will give a Phillip to sub-regional forces and create tension between tribals and caste Hindus; (c) Tribals are in a minority in the proposed Jharkhand State region and there is no specific link language, (d) Tribal development would be speedier by more investment in the region and proper implementation of plans and programmes.

On the other hand, all the tribal student activists favour the creation of a separate Jharkhand State on the following grounds: (a) Historically 'Akbarnama' identifies this region of hills and forests as Jharkhand meaning the forest country; (b) It is administratively and politically
necessary for the region's development through a uniform and homogeneous process; (c) Political power will be mostly in the hands of tribals and will contribute to speedier socio-economic development; (d) It will give the tribals of the area an identity of their own as they are being treated as second class citizens in the various parts of the State; (e) Tribals will be free from exploitation by the more advanced and privileged non-tribal population. It will accelerate educational advancement of the tribals by enabling them to overcome the language barrier (with regard to the medium of instruction) faced by students in different parts of the four States.

All the tribal student activists support the idea that Rourkela should form a part of the proposed Jharkhand State as the area is originally tribal.

Student activists were asked whether they project/champion local/regional issues and aspirations. Most of the activists take credit in championing regional issues and aspirations such as the demand for greater employment for local people in various industries; construction of Talcher-Bimlagarh railway line, second Steel Plant in Orissa and take-over of private colleges by the State Government.
Asked to state the main problems of the industrial city of Rourkela, most of the respondents mention the following: (a) pollution, (b) labour unrest, (c) drug addiction, (d) problems of slum areas, (e) absence of social cohesion, (f) black marketing, (g) inadequate facility for cultural and intellectual pursuits, (h) inadequate transport facilities. Most of them admit that they have done little to solve such problems. However, some of them state that they have gone to slum areas and highlighted the problems before the local authorities. They have organised seminars and submitted memoranda to the authorities of the Rourkela steel plant to check pollution.

Student activists were asked the next question: "Do you think that Rourkela Steel Plant has generated the tempo of economic development"? An overwhelming majority (90%) of the respondents agrees that the steel plant has improved the conditions of the people in the locality by providing employment opportunities, educational facilities and overall prosperity for the region. However, almost half of the activists feel that economic development has seldom touched the peripheral areas of Rourkela comprising mostly tribal people.
The last question in this category is: "Do you think that industrialisation has reduced the poverty line in the region"? Out of the total 160 respondents, 95 testify that rapid industrialisation has reduced the poverty line in the region. The proliferation of industries and factories has generated employment opportunities for local people. Other activists complain that industrialisation has resulted in exploitation and misery of the native people, mainly tribals. They have lost their land and other immovable assets without being properly compensated. Most of them have not got permanent jobs and reel under poverty and deprivation.

In the last group of questions student activists' perception of the national problems was tested. The first question elicited an answer from the respondents relating to the main problems facing the country. Most of them refer to economic problems like poverty, unemployment, population growth and price rise. The major political problems as stated by them are political corruption, political instability, threat to national integration, decline of value based politics and bureaucratic apathy. Thus economic and political problems rank high in the perception of student activists.
Student activists were asked to suggest solutions to national problems. For poverty eradication they suggest equitable distribution of land and other resources through rational and more-effective planning. Poverty eradication programme should be implemented both in letter and spirit. They emphasized the role of agro-industries and small scale industries to generate employment potential in rural areas. In addition, government should encourage individual entrepreneurs to undertake self-employment schemes with liberal financial assistance. Price rise can be controlled by greater production and elimination of blackmarketing, profiteering, hoarding through strong and impartial administrative measures. For checking population explosion they stressed stringent family planning measures by the government combined with incentives.

They spoke of the role of self-less political leadership in setting an example for the elites in different walks of life, strong and impartial administrative measures and effective public opinion to check corruption, nepotism and favouritism. They feel that personality oriented politics and parochial forces contribute to political instability. Ideology-based parties and evolution of national consensus on major issues and problems of the
country can go a long way in containing political instability. Mass education to raise awareness among the people so as to perceive national interest and to become participant citizens is one of the major solutions of the threat to national integration. To restore value based politics the primary responsibility lies with the political and administrative elites, who constitute the key elements of the power-elite in India. Bureaucratic apathy and incompetence can be tackled by self-less and competent political leadership who remain at the apex of the power structure.

Questions 'three' and 'four' relate to some important issues concerning the educational institutions and student community in India. The responses of the student activists to these suggested issues are presented in Table no.8.4.

**TABLE NO.8.4**
VIEW CONCERNING SOME SUGGESTED ISSUES  
(N=160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reservations</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>38.75</td>
<td>61.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compulsory Social Service.</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65.62</td>
<td>36.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes relating to admission
into educational institutions, seats in representative bodies and recruitment to jobs has been guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Such 'protective discrimination' in favour of socially and educationally backward classes continues even four decades after the Constitution came into operation. This issue has generated controversy and ill-will between the pro-reservationists and the anti-reservationist groups. It was thought pertinent to ask student activists in our survey: "Should reservation of seats relating to admission into educational institutions and recruitment to jobs continue?"

A minority of the respondents (38.75%) in our survey agreed to the continuance of reservation as a policy for safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of the community. Some of the respondents in this category opine that reservation should be made applicable to economically backward classes and handicapped people and not to any special category of people. But the majority of the student activists (61.25%) disapproved the continuance of reservation. They felt that its continuance will stifle talent and merit and will perpetuate a vested interest in backwardness. Moreover, continuance of reservation has already created much bad blood between pro and anti-reservationists and threatens social harmony and national consensus.
In recent years college and university students are taking part in constructive activities in an organised way under the National Service Schemes (NSS). One of the major weaknesses in the present system of education is the lack of adequate and organised programmes for developing the community spirit in youth. A developing society like India has a lot of expectation from its vast manpower of student youth to accelerate the tempo of nation building activities.

To the suggestion, "Should there be compulsory Social Service by the students during vacations?", a majority (65.62%) agreed. They feel that compulsory social service will develop community spirit and qualities of leadership among the students; will bring them nearer to the people and enable them to understand their problems and harness their energies constructively for such community development works as adult literacy, health care and sanitation, education, building and repairing of roads, slum cleaning in urban areas, plantation of trees and educating the people about the need for protecting and maintaining the environment. Others who disagreed argued that social service should not be made compulsory as the very concept involves voluntary participation and commitment to social welfare. A few others argued that vacations
are meant for rest and pleasure for the students and as such they should not be compelled to render socially useful work during such period.

Conclusion:

The foregoing analysis of the perception and orientation of student activists in our survey towards various issues and problems supports the hypothesis that their overall perceptions and orientations are liberal and progressive. A majority and in some cases an overwhelming majority has given positive response to various suggested issues and problems relating to political involvement of students, student unionism, factors of student unrest, perception of local issues and problems and last but not the least national problems. Student activists, as an enlightened, energetic segment of the student community, have displayed a progressive insight into issues and problems of the society, the economy, the polity and the academic world. Such liberal and progressive views in an essentially traditional society making slow progress towards modernity is highly creditable and augurs well for the future.