CHAPTER X

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Student politics constitute a pervasive theme in contemporary social science literature. The focus of most of the scholarly works on student politics has been on student protest politics and student organisational politics. Only a few empirical studies concerning student political activists, the key actors in student politics, has been carried out. Analysts of student politics in India have usually given a passing reference to and a theoretical picture of the profile and role performance of the student activists in short articles and monographs. The paucity of empirical studies on student activists has motivated the researcher to undertake the study of student activists in Orissa with special reference to the city of Rourkela, the most industrialised and the second largest in the State. Situated in a backward and predominantly tribal district, namely, Sundargarh, Rourkela has become a model of modernisation since 1955. The focus of the study is on the student political activists of eight major colleges in Rourkela city.

The study entitled, "Student Activists in Orissa: A Study of Educational Institutions in Rourkela", has a broad scheme with ten chapters. The study provides a broad conceptual framework and review of literature on student
politics and leadership in its global, Indian and Orissan contexts. Chapter I is the introductory one which formulates the problem. It begins with a conceptual framework which includes: importance of the study of student politics; meaning and scope of student politics; characteristics of students and student groups and typologies of students. It also covers the scope and objectives of the study, the hypotheses to be tested and the method adopted. Chapter II deals with 'student politics in global perspective'. It analyses the world wide nature of student politics and activism through a comparative study of three broad groups of countries, namely, the advanced capitalist countries, the socialist countries and the developing nations of the third world. Chapter III dealing with student politics and student activists in India examines the evolution of student movement; a comparative assessment of student politics in the preindependence and post-independence periods; the sources and roots of student activism and protest politics; and a short review of literature on student leadership in India. Chapter IV relates to the 'Setting' which covers the analysis of student politics in the State of Orissa; a profile of the district of Sundargarh; the city of Rourkela and of the eight major colleges under study, namely, Government College, Government Evening College, Sushilavati Government Women's College, Regional Engineering College, Rourkela Law
College, College of Educational Training, Municipal College, and Ispat College. The inclusion of eight main colleges provide scope for comparative analysis and a comprehensive account of student activists in the city for about a decade i.e., from 1980 to 1989. The study covers student activists, both formal and informal. In all, 160 student activists including 119 formal leaders and 41 informal leaders were interviewed personally through schedule for the purpose of providing an overall picture of the profile and performance of the student activists.

The primary focus of the study is on the student activists who are politically oriented and politically articulate. Student academic elites who are career oriented and excel in curricular and cocurricular activities have been precluded from the purview of the study. In attempting to present the overall profile and role performance of student activists of eight colleges in the city of Rourkela, various facets of leadership, namely, profile, political socialisation, political recruitment, perception and orientation, and political participation have been studied. Chapter V, VI, VII, VIII and IX covering these various facets through empirical enquiry constitute the core chapters. In this concluding chapter, chapter-X, a brief summary of the foregoing chapters relating to the various facets of student activists and the major findings and conclusion are presented.
Chapter V of this dissertation presents the profile of student activists of our survey. An enquiry into the social, economic, educational, residential and such other background of the student activists is imperative for an understanding of the nature and quality of leadership emerging from the student community. On the basis of the responses of the student activists relating to their backgrounds, it is possible to test the seven hypotheses relating to their profile.

The first hypothesis, namely, "student activists hail from middle class family background", is supported by the study. Of the 160 student activists, 58.12% belong to middle income group and 17.5% to lower middle income families. Taken together, they constitute an overwhelming majority (75.62%) of the total leadership. This is applicable to all the colleges under study except Regional Engineering College where 50% of the student activists belong to upper income families.

Father's occupation is an important indicator of socio-economic status and data show that most of the student activists belong to families in which the occupation of the father is industrial work (36.25%), administration (26.25%),
professions (10.62%) and cultivation (10.6%). It is significant that only one (0.62%) student activist belongs to a family in which father's occupation is 'politics'. Most of the student activists come from families with a stable source of income. Almost all the activists belong to literate families and a majority of their fathers possess impressive educational qualifications.

Data relating to socio-economic status of student activists in our study show that students from middle and lower middle class families provide much of the leadership to the student community. The middle and lower middle class background of a substantial majority of student activists is a feature of the state of political leadership in a developing society. Since independence there has been a significant change in the socio-economic composition of the student population. Students from peasant families in rural areas and lower middle class families in urban areas have joined educational institutions in large numbers. The large percentage of middle and lower middle class students in the student population is necessarily reflected in the leadership composition.
The residential status of student activists substantiates the second hypothesis: "student activists come from rural background". A majority of the student activists (58.2%) has a rural background. The rural background of the majority in our study is rather surprising in a highly urbanised and industrialised setting. This is on account of the fact that student activists having continued links with their villages choose to affirm their rural background even though their parents have residential accommodation in Rourkela city for a considerable length of time.

The hypothesis that "students belonging to the upper brackets of the caste system predominate student political arena" is partly substantiated. The caste composition of the student activists shows that 'Khandayats', a middle caste group, constitutes the single largest category (36.86%), while the Brahmins and the Karans, two upper castes in Orissa, taken together constitute 47.5% of the total. One noteworthy finding is the very low level of representation of the Scheduled Castes (1.87%) and Scheduled Tribes (6.87%) students
In the leadership. It is indeed surprising that in a district with 51.26% tribal population, tribal students account for a meagre 6.87% of the leadership population. The low level of representation of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes demonstrates the hegemony of the caste Hindus in student politics.

Information relating to academic disciplines of the student activists generally support the hypothesis that "students in Social Sciences and Humanities are more politically involved than their colleagues in the Sciences and Professional Courses". Taking the total leadership into account, 47.5% are from the faculty of Arts and the Social Sciences, followed by 22.5% from Professional Courses and an identical percentage (15%) from the faculties of Science and Commerce respectively. Activists with Arts and Social Science background constitute the single largest group although they fall slightly short of the majority. This is mainly due to the sizeable number of student activists belonging to the three professional colleges under study. So far as the five general colleges (non-professional) are concerned, student activists with 'Arts' background constitute a clear majority. This finding is consistent with many other studies in India.
One important reason for the greater activism of students from the faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in the Indian situation is that these disciplines are less demanding in their curriculum than those of Science and other Professional Courses and leave students ample time for political activity. Students in the Sciences and Professional courses are better engaged in their studies and are more inclined to build up a career on account of better job prospects. Moreover, students in Arts/Humanities in general, suffer from uncertainties and frustration which find an outlet through activism. The fact that better students have generally gone into the Sciences and the Professional courses has an important implication for student leadership. It has reduced the number of meritorious students for continuing political activity and consequently lowered the quality of student leadership.

Academic ability is an important indicator of the quality of leadership in the student community. Academic merit enables a student activist to understand the social situation, cultural and ideological trends and academic issues. The academic career of the respondents proves the hypothesis that "student activists are academically average". Student activists with average/fair academic performance
constitute almost half (49.39%) of the total, while the 'poor' category constitutes a significant 22.5%. Taken together student activists with average and poor academic career constitute a majority (71.87%). An overwhelming majority of student activists in Rourkela Engineering College and a good number in Municipal College as well as in S.G. Women's College possess excellent or good academic record. Our study shows that student activists are, in general, academically average and this finding is consistent with a few other studies in the Indian situation. One major trend in student politics in India since independence is that students of academic merit maintain a safe distance from the din and bustle of campus politics and as a result student leadership has gradually passed into the hands of the academically mediocre.

The accommodation of the student activists during studentship shows that most of them (86.25%) stay at home. This refutes the hypothesis that "hostel life provides stimulus for student activism". This finding is at variance with most other studies which show that a majority of student leaders reside in hostels and messes which provide greater freedom from parental control and greater organised support base for student activists. Inadequate accommodation in hostels and lack of hostel facilities in a number of colleges
in our study primarily explain the predominant home accommodation of student activists.

Only a minority of the student activists have some distinction in extra curricular activities like literary competitions, debates, sports, dramatics and social work. It is significant that social work has attracted only a small minority. This indeed reflects the trends in the larger society since independence. Most of the respondents have no independent source of maintenance and spoke of their dependence on parental/guardian source.

The predominant male representation (79.75%) in our leadership population supports the hypothesis that male students are more politicised than female students. Out of the 34 female student activists as many as 31 belong to S.G. Women's College. In all the co-educational institutions under study, women students are under represented so far as student politics and leadership are concerned. Of the various inhibiting factors, the conservative social milieu seems to be the most important.

Chapter VI presents the political socialisation of student activists in our study. The process of political socialisation has an important bearing on the attitudes
and orientations of students which motivate some to become political activists. Early political socialisation in the family, the school and the peer groups provide the necessary impetus to some students to play an activist role in student politics. To ascertain the political socialisation of student activists prior to their role in campus arena, the impact of the family and the school as agencies of socialisation has been studied. Family is the first and foremost socialisation structure. Student activists are generally supposed to come from politicised families. Family's social attitude and value commitments, parents' political affiliation and the overall political background of students are important variables in socialising a student politically to assume activist role.

Data obtained from the student activists support the hypothesis that "student activists are brought up in a liberal familial milieu". An overwhelming majority (82.5%) belongs to liberal family background. Most of the families provided scope for free discussion of political issues and were not opposed to their participation in campus politics.

The reaction of parents/guardians about students' participation in campus politics was ascertained to determine the overall encouragement or indifference or opposition of
the elders. Parents of a minority of the student activists (33.12%) encouraged their wards for participation in student politics, while a majority (51.25%) remained neutral. Parents who remained neutral did not stand on the way of student activists in the pursuit of their activist role. In a developing area like Orissa most of the parents/guardians look upon active political participation of students as prejudicial to academic pursuits.

Data obtained from student activists relating to their political patrimony refute the hypothesis that "student activists come from politicised families". Only a minority (15.62%) of student activists' parents have political affiliation and a minority of them (22.5%) belongs to families in which any member other than parents or near relative has assumed leadership role in politics, local bodies, trade unions, campus politics etc. Thus most of the student activists are first generation leaders with little tradition of political activism in their respective families.

Information collected from the student activists relating to their ideological orientations partly supports the hypothesis, namely, "student activists display a radical ideological orientation". Student activists with leftist and rightist ideological bias could be bracketed under radical ideological stance and constitute 43.12% of the total. However,
exactly half of the respondents do have a 'centrist' ideological orientation and they take a balanced and moderate approach to issues and problems. Data relating to the involvement of student activists in certain forms of political activities during school career were collected to ascertain their possible impact on the political socialisation and on the assumption of activist role during college career. Data support the hypothesis that "school is an important agency in the political socialisation of student activists". A substantial number of student activists championed the cause of students during school career; discussed politics with friends; led or joined any strike and attended political meetings. An overwhelming majority read political items from newspapers, books and periodicals. Thus school career provided the necessary impetus and training to a large number of student activists to assume a greater role during their college career.

III

Recruitment of individuals into leadership position is an important aspect of politics in any context. The nature and quality of leadership depend, to a large extent, upon the process of recruitment. Election is the most important criteria of recruitment. Most of the student activists in our survey assume leadership position by virtue of election.
The College Union is the most important and powerful official student organisation around which student activities are organised. Key posts like the President and the Secretary in the college union carry prestige and power for its incumbents. Out of a total sample of 160 activists in our survey, 119 were subjected to a formal recruitment process while the rest were informal leaders.

Analysis of data relating to political recruitment of student activists in our survey enables us to test certain hypotheses. The hypothesis that "motivation of contestants in fighting college union elections is to prepare the ground for future political career", finds slender support from the study. This motivation was stated by a small minority (12.6%) of student activists. The primary motivation of a substantial majority of student activists (71.42%) was to serve the student community by protecting their interests and solving their problems. This is an important finding in so far as most of the student activists do not aspire for a political career through the assumption of college union leadership. Other important motivations were: building up of personality, representing student political associations, persuasion of friends, reforming the college administration and gaining popularity/publicity.

Student activists were asked to indicate their response to some suggested bases of support in getting
votes in campus elections. Out of the 119 student activists who offered themselves for election, 99 were practically involved in the electoral process and mobilise support for them. Most of the student activists (85.85%) referred to the support of personal friends. This was followed by support of student organisations, support of hostel mates and support of party leaders. The study confirms the role of extraneous agencies like party leaders and student fronts of political parties in promoting the electoral prospects of their sponsored candidates.

Of the 119 student activists who offered themselves as candidates, 109 were elected. Data collected from the victorious leaders relating to the factors contributing to victory refutes the hypothesis that "political patronage primarily contributes to the victory of contestants". The support of political parties and their student fronts has been cited as a factor by a minority (32.11%) of the victorious student activists. It is evident that 'personality' has been suggested by an overwhelming majority (87.15%) as a factor contributing to their success. Other factors like oratory, popularity due to extra curricular activities, support of political parties and student organisations, past service and suffering were suggested by a sizeable number of respondents. Thus various factors are stressed by student
activists of the colleges under study and a combination of factors contributed to electoral success. That only a few elected student activists (mostly from R.E.C., Municipal College and Ispat College) refer to 'good academic career' as a factor, is indicative of the fact that the academic standing of student contestants has minimal influence on the student voters.

Student contestants usually give a conservative estimate of their electoral expenses. The amount spent in electoral contests has varied (as per respondents' version) from a few hundred rupees to a few thousands. The sources of finance, as stated by the respondents, for electioneering are the following in order of importance: parents, political parties, friends and student organisations. It is significant that financial contribution by political parties and their student fronts together account for a sizeable (44.44%) of the total responses. In recent years campus electoral outcomes have assumed importance for political parties and personalities and they have liberally contributed to the election expenditure of their sponsored candidates.

Data substantiate the hypothesis that "political parties primarily contribute to the politicisation of the campus". Political parties and their student fronts are
active on the campuses. Student activists do have linkage with them. The majority of student activists in our survey are members of student fronts of political parties. These student political associations propagate the policies and ideologies of their respective parties and recruit young members from the campuses. They receive organisational and financial support from the political parties. They sponsor their candidates in the college elections and try their best to use various unions and associations in the campus as bases for party operation. Thus youth and student fronts of political parties constitute dynamic elements on the campuses and contribute to the overall politicisation of campus life.

In our study the political competition is primarily confined to the student front of the Congress Party (N.S.U.I.) and the student fronts of Leftist parties (mainly S.F.I. and D.S.O.).

Political parties and personalities in India are deeply involved in campus politics. The linkage between the student activists and party elites is an established fact of Indian political life. Students have increasingly become targets of recruitment by political parties and ideological movements. The very fact that the majority of student activists in our survey are members of student front of political parties, goes to prove their connection with political parties. Moreover, a majority of student activists (61.87%) does have
connections with political parties, of which 7.07% are office bearers and 37.37% are members of various political parties and the rest are supporters/sympathisers. Student members and office bearers of the political parties together constitute a sizeable 44.14%. Of the political parties, the Congress I, Janata Dal, CPI(M) and the SUCI exercise greater influence on the student activists. Student activists with party connection explain that factors like ideology, organisational stability, personality of party leaders and family's political tradition provided the necessary motivation. Thus the involvement of political parties and their student fronts in campus affairs primarily contributes to the politicisation and activism of campus life.

Our study shows that, unlike the larger political sphere, political defection has not been a significant feature of student politics. Only 2.1% of student activists having membership of student political associations and 3.03% having connection with political parties, changed their affiliation during studentship. This small minority changed its affiliation on account of ideological differences, personality clashes and dissatisfaction with the functioning of the organisation. The overall picture shows the continuous loyalty of student activists to the political parties and student political associations of their initial choice.
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. 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.

Active participation of students in politics continues to be a controversial issue. Leftists and radicals hold that students and members of the faculty should be deeply involved in politics, while moderates and liberals argue that political and academic roles should be sharply differentiated and inmates of the campus should be least involved in politics. Seven related questions pertaining to student involvement in politics were posed to the student activists of our survey. As to the first question, namely, "Should students be members of political parties and render active service to them?", a minority (41.25%) of the student activists agrees. Most of them view interaction with political parties and leaders injurious to the long term interests of the students. Students have, more often than not, been
exploited by political manipulators from outside. Those who favour party membership and linkage argue that as important segments of the population, students cannot keep away from politics and political parties. Interaction with parties helps them to develop leadership traits and support of political parties strengthens student movements and enables them to achieve their objectives.

A majority of the student activists (60.62%) agreed to the suggestion, "Should students take part in politics"? They argue that as a conscious, enlightened and energetic segment of the community, students should take interest in political affairs and do something worthwhile to provide solutions to the multifarious problems of the country. Those who disagree put forth the argument that active involvement of students in politics would convert the campuses into hotbeds of politics and affect academic pursuits adversely.

To the third question, namely, "Should students seek support from political parties and other sister organisations for various issues"?, 41.37% agreed. Thus the majority is apprehensive that support from extraneous elements will do more damage than good to the student community. 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 should join hands with them to promote public good.

41.37% of the student activists agree to the suggestion: "Should student political associations be affiliated to political parties"? It is significant that while majority (58.12%) of the student activists are actually members of student organisations having linkage with political parties, a lesser number (41.37%) favoured affiliation of such organisations. Those who favoured affiliation argued that such affiliation would result in ideological conviction for their members and grooming up of a second front of political leadership in the country. Those who disagree put forth the view that affiliation would compromise the independent functioning of student political associations and would create unhealthy competition among the groups.

The next question related to an intense form of student political participation: "Should students take part in agitations and movements affecting the broader society"? The overwhelming majority (95.62%) who agreed to the suggestion felt that such student participation would remove sectarian outlook from the student community and enable them to fight for the multifarious issues and problems of society.
An overwhelming majority of the respondents (96.87%) favoured attendance at study circles/seminars organised by political parties. 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 political and ideological trends.

A substantial majority (70%) disagreed to the suggestion: "Should students follow the advice/command given by political personalities from outside the campus"? They feel that political leaders use students for partisan purposes and deem it safe to keep away from the direct command of extraneous political elements.

The second group of questions sought to test student activists' attitude towards student unionism. Controversy has been generated in recent years about the necessity of students unions in educational institutions. It was thought necessary to obtain the opinion of student activists on various facets of student unionism and in all seven questions were posed.

An overwhelming majority (98.12%) affirms that there should be students unions in educational institutions. They believe that students union is the only agency to represent student interests, to fight for students cause and to solve their problems. A few, who disagreed to the suggestion, believe that students unions fritter away the
energies of the student community by resorting to protest activities. The respondents listed a number of objectives and functions of the students unions which include both cultural and educational issues on the one hand and non-educational on the other.

To the suggestion, "Do you think that your students union is fulfilling such objectives?", an overwhelming majority (95.62%) agreed. Such an overwhelming positive response is quite natural in so far as student activists are supposed to present a positive image about themselves. An overwhelming majority (97.5%) of the respondents in our survey favours student participation in the management of educational institutions. They demand student participation and representation at all levels of the educational system. This will go a long way in projecting student interests and demands and in solving their problems.

To the fourth question, namely, "Are you in favour of student participation in matters pertaining to student welfare in the college?", almost all agreed. They feel that student participation in such matters would ensure impartial distribution of funds to the deserving students.

In recent years, there has been persistent demand from the students for autonomous students unions. However,
only a minority of the student activists agreed that students union should be totally autonomous. Thus the majority oppose the concept of a fully autonomous students union on the ground that such autonomy would be misused by self-seeking and the ambitious student leaders.

Student activists were asked to state their opinion on the controversial question: "Do you favour replacement of election by nomination in the light of the adverse impact of college elections"? Despite the adverse impact of college union elections, almost all the respondents (99.37%) opine that elections must continue. They feel that the system of election is in harmony with broad democratic values of life and it throws up the fittest candidates whose popularity can hardly be matched by nominated student leaders. However, some of the respondents suggested suitable modification to the present system of election.

Nomination of office bearers to various cultural associations is operative in colleges like Regional Engineering, Educational Training, Ispat and Municipal. Keeping this in mind student activist were asked: "Do you favour replacement of nomination by election"? Almost all the respondents strongly favour the introduction of the system of election in colleges in which some form of nomination is in practice.
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. They feel that college unions during most part of the year organise cultural and academic functions for the students. Again most of the protest activities are organised in support of the demands of the student community for the improvement of physical and educational facilities in the colleges. Those who agree to the suggestion argue that the growing politicisation of the students unions has led to the non-fulfilment of the expressed goals of the campuses.

The third group of questions seeks to test student activists' perception of the factors/causes of student unrest. The factors relevant to the Indian situation are classified into six broad groups - economic, political, social, psychological, administrative and academic. An overwhelming majority of activists consider 'unemployment' and 'price rise' as important factors of unrest. All the political factors like 'political corruption', 'decline of standards in public life', 'interference of political parties/leaders in educational institutions' have received significant weightage by an overwhelming majority of respondents. Among the social factors 'influence of mass media' and 'conflict
between traditional and modern social values have received greater weightage than parental permissiveness and influence of trade unionism. All the psychological factors like 'identity crisis', 'generation gap', 'display of student power' get positive responses from an overwhelming majority with the last one topping the list. The two administrative factors suggested, namely, 'unsympathetic/tactless handling of students by authorities' and 'lack of firm and impartial administrative measures' have received overwhelming response from student activists. The suggested academic factors like lack of proper facilities in the colleges, lack of communication between teachers and students, defects and deficiencies in the academic system, lack of definite goals in most of the students and absence of proper guidance and counselling of students directly affect the students and form a part of their daily experience and as such have been perceived as significant by an overwhelming majority of the respondents.

The overall picture that emerges from an analysis of the responses to suggested factors/causes of student unrest is that most of the respondents consider such factors as very significant in generating frustration and anger that lead to protest politics among the students. Student unrest is a complex phenomenon which can be traced to multiple and diverse factors/causes.
The fourth group of questions deals with the perception of local issues/problems. Student activists in our survey belong to the eight 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. As many as eight questions were posed to the student activists relating to local issues/problems.

Student activists gave various reasons for under-development of the district of Sundargarh ranging from lack of proper utilisation of human and material resources to lack of enlightened and selfless leadership to project the needs and demands of the region at the State level. Asked to state the efficacy of the political elites of the district in projecting the needs of the region, an overwhelming majority (90%) gave a negative view. They feel that most of the leaders are self-centred and lack the necessary ability and commitment to putforth the needs of the region at the appropriate level.

An overwhelming majority (90%), mostly non-tribals, does not subscribe to the idea of a separate Jharkhand State for tribals comprising sixteen districts of Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. They feel that the movement is politically motivated; it will accelerate sub-regional
forces and create tension between tribals and caste Hindus and argue that tribal development would be speedier by greater investment in the region and proper implementation of plans and programmes.

All the tribal student activists support the idea that Rourkela city 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 them take credit in championing such regional issues 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, they referred to pollution, labour unrest, problems of slum areas, lack of social cohesion, blackmarketing, inadequate facilities for cultural and intellectual pursuits. Most of them admit that they have done very little to solve such problems.

90% of the student activists agree that Rourkela Steel Plant has generated the tempo of economic development. It has improved the conditions of the people in the locality by providing employment opportunities, educational facilities
and overall prosperity of the region. However, about half of the activists feel that economic development has seldom touched the peripheral areas of Rourkela inhabited mostly by tribal people.

About 60% of the respondents think that industrialisation has reduced poverty line in the region by generating employment opportunities for the local people. The rest complain of the baneful consequences of unplanned industrialisation.

In the last group of questions, student activists' perception of the national problems was tested. Most of the leaders refer to economic problems like poverty, unemployment, population explosion and price rise. The major political problems 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 activists and they offered some well thought-out solutions to these problems. In particular they stressed the role of self-less political leadership in setting an example for the elites in different walks of life and felt that well formulated political solutions backed by strong and impartial administrative measures and effective public opinion would go a long way to provide solution to the country's major problems.
A minority of the respondents (30.75%) in our survey agreed to the continuance of reservation as a policy for safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of the community. The majority felt that the continuance of reservation will stifle talent and merit and will perpetuate a vested interest in backwardness.

To the suggestion, "Should there be compulsory social service by students during vacations?", a majority (62.65%) agreed. They feel that compulsory social service will develop community spirit and inculcate a sense of dignity of labour among the students; it will bring them nearer to the people and harness their energies constructively for nation building activities. Those who disagreed argued that social service should not be made compulsory as the very concept involves voluntary participation and commitment to social welfare.

The foregoing analysis of the perception and orientation of student activists in our survey towards various issues and problems supports the hypothesis that "the overall perceptions and orientations of student activists towards various issues and problems are liberal and progressive". A majority and in some cases an overwhelming majority of student activists has given positive response to various suggested issues and problems. Such liberal and
progressive views of student activists in an essentially traditional society making slow progress towards modernity is indeed creditable and praise worthy.

V

Student activists constitute the 'active few' who play an important part in articulating issues, in aggregating interests, in focussing public attention on academic issues and in participating in larger movements. The mass of students who are politically apathetic and career conscious are galvanised into action by the leadership of the active few.

Student activists are politically oriented and politically participant. Their political participation may range from soft forms like reading political material, discussing political issues, taking interest in political affairs to effective political participation in agitations and movements affecting the campus and broader society. Student activists in our survey have performed both 'on campus' and 'off campus' roles. Our study supports the hypothesis that "student politics is primarily interest oriented". An overwhelming majority (95.62%) of the student activists took keen interest in academic issues and the protection and promotion of student interests. This
is consistently applicable to all the colleges under study. Although some student activists fought for social, economic and politico-administrative issues, their involvement in academic issues and campus affairs is most intense. The specific demands made by activists of the colleges under study have a large measure of commonality and relate primarily to physical deficiencies from which most of the colleges suffer. In addition, student activists of all the colleges have lent their support to some public demands projected at the city and the district levels. Thus student activists in our survey are mainly concerned about the things that directly affect their life. This is consistent with the Indian campus scene. In general, student activists in our survey have shown little interest in broader educational issues and have seldom organised sustained agitations for tackling the complex problems of educational reform. Moreover, the concern of our student activists with deeper socio-economic and political problems was on the whole marginal.

Student activists employ various techniques of protest to achieve their objectives. The hypothesis that "the techniques of student activism are mostly extra-legal" is not supported by the study. Most of the student activists have used techniques of protest which are legal and peaceful.
Only 11.37% of activists did resort to disorderly forms of protest, namely, threats and violence, on some occasions. By and large, student activists in our survey have not resorted to 'strong arm politics'.

Our findings partly support the hypothesis that student leadership does not reflect the aspirations of the people in the region. Only a minority (21.97%) of the activists has taken part in such public agitations in the region as establishment of a second steel plant, construction of Talcher-Bimlagarh railway line, opening up of post-graduate centre in Rourkela, adequate employment opportunities for local people and protest against price rise and pollution of the environment. However, an overwhelming majority of student activists has chosen to remain away from the mainstream of public agitations and given more attention to campus issues and problems.

An important index of student political participation is their role in off-campus elections. A majority of the activists (65.62%) have played an active role in various elections outside the campus. Political parties have mobilised the energy and dynamism of student-youth in electioneering. Student activists have taken greater interest in Assembly elections than the parliament elections.
While a small minority (5.71%) has participated in the elections to the local bodies, both urban and rural, a substantial majority (72.38%) campaigned for friends in other campuses during college elections.

In a developing society like India proper and effective mobilisation of human resources and utilisation of material resources are called for to contribute to the gigantic task of nation-building. Students perform certain functions for the welfare of the community which receive less attention. Most of the student leaders in our survey are members of the National Service Scheme and some are members of the Red Cross Society and of the ROTRACT Club. They have taken part in adult literacy campaigns, environmental protection, family planning drive, anti-dowry movement, 'shramadan', and a few other activities like blood donation, relief work during flood and drought and adoption of some villages for their overall development.

Student activists encounter a number of problems and are subject to manifold pressures which put physical and psychological strain on them. Our study partly supports the hypothesis that "student activists are subject to diverse stresses and strains". In a developing area like Orissa conditions of life and study in most of the
institutions of higher education are far from ideal. A majority of the student activists in our study refers to examination worries, organisational instability and apathy of the student mass as sources of stress, while a sizeable number refers to such stresses as harassment by authorities, political interference and dissuasion by family.

The last hypothesis, namely, "student activists aspire for a career in politics after completion of study" finds slender support from our study. Data relating to the occupational aspirations of student activists show that only a minority among them (18.75%) aspires for a career in politics, while the rest project non-political occupational goals. They prefer to enter into the stable world of employment rather than risk their future in the hazardous and fluctuating game of politics. The present occupation of student activists corroborates this finding in as much as only 14.14% are presently engaged in politics. Most of them are at present engaged in business, industry, academics, legal practice, industrial work and administrative job. The middle class and even the insecure economic background of the majority of student activists in our survey compel them to look upon leadership in student politics as a temporary engagement in the exciting days of student life and the urgency for a secure job, after completion of
studies, a dire necessity. The most significant finding is that an overwhelming majority of student activists neither aspired for a political career during student days nor do they adopt a political career after their entry into the world of adult responsibility.

It is hoped that the profile and role performance of student activists of eight major colleges in the city of Rourkela, the nerve centre of the district of Sundargarh, Orissa with a predominantly tribal population considered in this study, provides some valuable insight into student politics and leadership in one important developing area. The microcosmic analysis of student activists has facilitated a close examination of the focus and dimensions of student activism in recent years. The study has focussed attention on the problems of underdevelopment in the backward regions of the country and the role of student activists in articulating and aggregating the interests of the people and in projecting the needs and aspirations of the student community. An indepth analysis of the nature of student politics and the character and role of student leadership in an industrial-cum-tribal setting will, it is hoped, contribute to the understanding of some facets of student politics in Orissa and India at large. The conclusions and inferences drawn may have some relevance to other regions of India as well as to other developing societies of the Third World.

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