Student politics constitute a pervasive theme in contemporary social science literature. Most of the scholarly works on student politics have focussed on student protest politics and student organisational politics. Only a few empirical studies on student political activists, the key actors in student politics, have been carried out. Analysts of student politics in India have generally given a passing reference to and a theoretical picture of the profile and role performance of student activists in short articles and monographs. The paucity of comprehensive empirical study on student activists has motivated us 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 the mid 50s. The focus of the study is on the student activists of eight major colleges in Rourkela City.

The study entitled "Student Politics in Rourkela" has a broad scheme with ten chapters.

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 includes the scope and objectives of the study; the hypotheses to be tested and the method adopted. Some important hypotheses tested in the study are as follows:

1. Student activists hail from middle class family background;
2. Students belonging to the upper brackets of the caste system predominate student politics;
3. Student activists are academically average;
4. Student activists come from politicised families;
5. School is an important agency in the political socialisation of student activists;
6. Political parties primarily contribute to politicisation of the campus;
7. The overall perceptions and orientations of student activists towards various issues and problems are liberal and progressive;
8. Student politics is primarily 'interest-oriented';
9. Student leadership does not reflect the aspirations of the people in the region;
10. Student activists aspire for a career in politics after completion of studies.

The study has utilised the methods of survey research. It includes content analysis of relevant literature, interview schedule and observation.
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 pre-independence and post-independence periods; and a short review of literature on student activists in India.

While developing the themes under Chapter-II and Chapter-III, the relevant literature on student politics have been cited. Hence it was thought redundant to present a separate chapter/sub-chapter on the review of literature on student politics and student leadership.

Chapter IV relates to the 'setting', which covers the analysis of student politics in the State of Orissa; and profiles of the district of Sundargarh, the City of Rourkela, and 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 study covers student activists from 1980 to 1989 numbering 160, which includes 119 formal student leaders and 41 informal student leaders.

The primary focus of the study is on student activists who are politically oriented and politically articulate. In attempting to present the profile and the role performance of the student activists, various facets of the leadership have been empirically studied.

Chapter V presents a profile of the student activists by analysing their socio-economic status, political patrimony, subject of study, place of residence, primary source of maintenance and academic career.

Chapter VI deals with the political socialisation process through which student activists have passed before the assumption of activist role in campus politics.

Chapter VII entitled 'Political Recruitment' deals with the process of selection of student activists. It includes a discussion of the motivation for contesting college union elections, support bases in electoral contests, factors contributing to victory, sources of finance for electioneering, membership of student political associations and of political parties.
Chapter VIII dealing with 'Perception and Orientation of Student Activists' attempts to ascertain their attitude towards student political involvement, attitude towards student unionism, perception of the factors/causes of student unrest, perception of local/regional issues and problems and of national problems.

Chapter IX entitled 'Political Participation' is by far the most important element of student activists. Student activists fight for both campus-oriented and societal issues. Again their political participation may have both constructive and disruptive dimensions. This chapter analyses issues involved in student activism, role in protest politics, techniques adopted by student activists in achieving their objectives, participation in off-campus elections and public movements, participation in community welfare schemes and the strains and stresses undergone by student activists during assumption of leadership roles.

The final Chapter, which is the concluding one, includes a brief summary of the core chapters relating to the overall profile and performance of the student activists and the overall findings of the study. The hypotheses suggested have been empirically tested and the results appear in this chapter. It is hoped that an indepth analysis of the nature of student politics and leadership in an important region of Orissa will contribute to the understanding of some facets of student politics in India and other developing areas.