CHAPTER VIII

PERCEPTION AND ORIENTATION
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The attitude, orientation and overall perception of student leaders to social, economic and political problems have an important bearing on their political culture and political behaviour. The role performance of student leaders is considerably influenced by their attitudinal orientation. To ascertain the overall perception and orientation of student leaders, four broad groups of questions were asked and answers elicited from them. The first group of questions seeks to test their attitudes towards political involvement; the second group towards student Unionism, the third group seeks to test their perception of local/regional issues/problems and the last group tests their perception of problems of the country.

I

Active participation of students in politics has generated much controversy. Studies of student groups show that students are divided on this issue. Leftists and radicals believe that students and faculty should be deeply involved in politics. Conversely, 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 leftists seek to integrate the two.¹

Metta Spencer writes about the Indian situation: "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." When controversy is generated over the fundamental question of the political involvement and participation of students, it is pertinent to discern how student leaders themselves perceive such a question. With this objective in view, seven questions relating to student involvement in politics have been posed to the leaders. They were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the suggested questions and their responses appear in table no. 6.1.

The first question reads: "Should students take active part in politics?" While India illustrates a glorious history of student political involvement in the freedom struggle, their active participation in the politics of the larger society is disapproved by many in the post-independence period. Parents, guardians, elders, students in general, view student participation in 'off campus' politics as a source of distraction which adversely affects academic pursuits.

As to the first question, 74.35% of the leaders agree which means that they want the students to take active part in politics. The arguments of those who favour active

2. Spencer, Metta, "The Partisan Student in India", in Ibid., p. 121.
TABLE NO. S.1
ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS
(N=195)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Should students take active part in politics?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>74.35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Should students be members of political parties and render active service to the parties and organisations set up by them?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.94</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>82.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Should students seek support from the political parties for public issues?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>70.25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Should student organisations be affiliated to political parties?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>50.76</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48.71</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should students attend study circles/seminars conducted by political parties?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>68.20</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Should students take part in off-campus agitations and movements?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>78.97</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the proliferation of student organisations affect adversely the unity and strength of the student community?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>40.51</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>59.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participation of students in politics are: (1) As conscious, knowledgeable and enlightened section of the society, students should know about the country's problems and do something worthwhile to provide solutions to them. (2) As future citizens and leaders of the country, they should undergo training in public life at a formative stage of their life. (3) As an energetic and idealistic section of society, they can provide an antidote to political corruption, administrative impropriety and economic offences. The people generally regard youth's movements as pure, meaning thereby that they do not have vested interests or selfish motives behind such a struggle. (4) Students can mobilise the masses and create consciousness among them. This educative role is an important pre-requisite for the successful operation of democracy.

Those who disagree advance the following arguments: (1) Active involvement in politics will prove prejudicial to an academic atmosphere on the campus and adversely affect their studies. (2) Studenthood should be viewed as a period of intense preparation for a career. (3) Involvement in politics will dissipate the time and energy of students for building a career. (4) Involvement in active politics will convert the campuses into hot beds of politics. (5) It will create more indiscipline and unrest on the campuses.
An important index of student political participation is the interaction between students and political parties. Political parties and personalities openly mobilise, utilise and recruit students by taking interests in their problems and by patronising student leaders. The interference of political parties in campus affairs and their link with student groups are facts of life. Research shows that student activism has been used by political parties for narrow partisan ends.

To ascertain the nature of interaction between students and political parties, student leaders were asked the second question: 'Should students be members of political parties and render active service to the parties and organisations set up by them?' A minority of 17.94% agreed to this suggestion, while an overwhelming majority disagreed. This provides an interesting contrast to the actual membership of student leaders in our survey of student political associations and political parties. While 44.89% and 74.35% of the leaders were actually members of political parties and student political associations respectively, only 17.94% agreed to the suggestion that students should be members of political parties and render active service to them. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that while, for practical reasons, many student


4. See table nos. 7.6 and 7.9 in Chapter VII of this dissertation for comparison.
leaders are members/office bearers of political parties and of student political associations, they do not favour such intense form of interaction on ideological or theoretical grounds. Some student leaders are quite conscious of the baneful consequences of interaction with political parties and disfavour active membership and support to them. Those who favoured alignment with political parties advanced the following arguments:

1. Politics is all embracing. Students as an important segment of the population cannot divorce themselves from politics and political parties.
2. Students over the age of eighteen should align with political parties for sake of commitment to definite ideologies.
3. Students should interact with political parties to develop leadership traits and get the necessary training for assuming leadership in future.
4. The support of political parties strengthens student movements and facilitates the fulfilment of student demands.

The arguments against party alignment are:
1. Party alignment will corrupt student leaders and debase their moral standards.
2. Political leaders use students for partisan purposes. They use them as tools and as a result, student leaders lose their identity.
3. The sort of training and grooming, students receive from political parties, are unlikely to develop the attitudes and values which are urgently needed for the gigantic task of national reconstruction.
To the third question, namely, 'Should students seek support from political parties for public issues?,' 70.25% agreed. Thus, a majority of the leaders deem it proper to seek support of the political parties and personalities for public issues affecting the broader society. Political parties articulate and aggregate public interest on several issues and students, as part and parcel of the enlightened public, should seek support from them on public issues. Some students suggested that in seeking support from the political parties, students should keep away from nasty party politics and enlist the support of parties and personalities who are committed to public welfare. Students who disagreed argued that seeking support from parties will result in political interference and destabilisation of academic atmosphere. They have a feeling that Party support has done more damage than good to the students.

It has been found that most political parties have their student fronts active on the campuses. These student organisations are a dynamic force on the campus. Political parties and personalities regulate the behaviour of students through these organisations. Student leaders were asked to register their responses to the question: 'Should student organisations be affiliated to political parties?'. About half of the leaders (50.76%) agreed to such affiliation, while 48.71% disagreed and one respondent was undecided. This finding is
inconsistent with the membership of student political associations. While 74.35\%(See table no.7.6) leaders are actually members of student organisations having linkage with political parties, a lesser number (50.76\%) wanted affiliation of such organisations with political parties. This is a discrepancy between reality and the ideological posture of the students. Those who favoured affiliation argued that such affiliation would result in ideological conviction for their members and the creation of a second front of political leadership. It would also result in financial support for the student organisations and enable them to have a voice in the decision-making process of the political parties. Those who disagreed put forth the following arguments: (1) Affiliation would compromise the independence of student organisations. (2) Political affiliation would result in narrowness, rigidity and unhealthy competition among student groups.

Since the degree and extent of student political participation have generated controversy, it was thought pertinent to ask student leaders about their opinion relating to the extent of such participation. Student leaders were asked the fifth question: 'Should students attend and participate in study circles/seminars conducted by political parties'? Attendance at study circles and seminars organised by parties is a soft form of political participation. As such, a majority of
student leaders (68.20%) have no inhibition about such attendance and participation. The main argument in support was that such participation would impart necessary political education and training to the students and would make them aware of the political and ideological trends. Those who disagreed put forth the argument that participation in party seminars would make students politically oriented and introduce partisan politics into the campus.

The next question was relating to an intense form of student political participation, namely, 'Should students take part in off-campus agitations and movements?' An overwhelming majority of the leaders (78.97%) agreed to the suggestion and the rest disagreed. Most of them felt that student participation in off-campus movements would remove sectarian outlook from the student community and enable them to fight for the multifarious issues/problems facing the broader society and the polity. They argued that students wholeheartedly support any cause which aims at furthering the interests of the masses. Some of the leaders justify such participation by judging the gravity and genuineness of the issues focussed by off-campus movements. Those opposing participation argued that participation in larger movements would waste the time and energy of the students, so essential for study.
In recent years, there has been mushroom growth of student organisations. Most of these organisations are personality-oriented and without any ideological clarity and public commitment. The multiplication of political parties has been reflected in the increasing proliferation of student organisations. To ascertain the views of the leaders on this issue, the following question was asked: 'Does the proliferation of student organisations affect adversely the unity and strength of the student community?'

40.51% of the leaders agreed to this suggestion while a majority (59.49%) felt that proliferation of student organisations did not affect adversely the strength of the student community.

Those who agree to the suggestion argued that proliferation of student organisations mirrors the fragmentation of political parties and contributes to rivalry among various student organisations. The conflict is less ideological and more personality-oriented. Such conflicts affect adversely the unity and strength of the student community. Those who disagree feel that it is quite natural and democratic to have a number of student organisations whose ideological orientations are different. These differences do not necessarily contribute to disintegration of the student community. All organisations provide a common front on matters of common interests and issues pertaining to the student community.
Much controversy has been generated about the necessity of student union in educational institutions. In general, there are two schools of thought about the utility of student union. According to one school, there is no need for the student union and it should be dispensed with. They argue that the student union "forms an informal shadow government on campus". In India, student unions are rather extreme in their capacity to ignite cheerlessly burning passions. They provide little opportunity for anything except politics. It has been alleged that student unions do very little constructive for the student community and the union leaders inspire the mass of students to resort to strikes and agitations on any issue, whether academic or non-academic. Student unions have been amenable to outside political influence. They appear as politically-oriented groups exerting pressure on the college, the university and the government. Sanjib Rai remarks: "The gulf between precept and practice, wilful distortion and wide-spread exploitation have converted the concept of elected student unions into a force.


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, student unions are the legitimate associations to articulate and aggregate the interests of the student community. They provide necessary training to the students in democratic methods and practices. Moreover, student unions raise their powerful voice against casteism, communalism, feudalism, corruption, economic exploitation and many other socio-economic evils. Students do enjoy a fundamental right to form a union in the educational institutions and if educational democracy is an integral part of all round education, then participation in the activities of the student union is as much the right of students as is their admission into an educational institution.

Student leaders in our survey were asked five questions pertaining to student unionism and their responses have been presented in table no.8.2.


### TABLE NO. 8.2

**PERCEPTION OF STUDENT UNIONISM**  
(N=195)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Should there be student union in educational institutions?</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Do you think that your student union is fulfilling those objectives?</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>77.94</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Are you in favour of student participation in matters related to student welfare in the college?</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>92.30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>1 0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Do you think that in the interest of campus peace, election should be replaced by nomination?</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>93.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Do you think that student union activities adversely affect the academic interest of the student community?</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>89.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question reads: 'Should there be student unions in educational institutions'? All the respondents affirmed that there should be student unions. Asked to state the objectives of the student unions, some of the answers were as follows: (a) Student union is a cultural association and it should play an important role for the academic and co-curricular improvement of the institution. (b) Student union should safeguard the interests of the students and ventilate their grievances and demands. (c) Student union can counteract the arbitrary acts of authorities. (d) Student union should promote mutual contact, a democratic outlook and a spirit of oneness among the students. (e) Student union should promote consciousness among the students with a view to building up a healthy student movement. (f) Student unions should promote harmonious relations among all sections of the academic community. (g) Student Union should project the local demands and aspirations and to serve the weaker sections of the society.

To the suggestion, 'Do you think that your student union is fulfilling those objectives?', a majority (77.9%) of the leaders agreed. Some of the respondents qualified their affirmation by saying that their respective college unions could fulfil the objectives 'to some extent'. Those who disagreed, offered some explanations for the nonfulfilment of the objectives, namely, inefficiency of the office bearers; lack of unity among the office bearers on account of political and ideological
differences; lack of time for the final year students who usually man the key union posts and vested interests of some leaders.

To the third question, "Are you in favour of student participation in matters related to student welfare in the college?", an overwhelming majority (92.30%) agreed, one leader remained undecided and the rest (7.17%) disagreed. In recent times, the problem of student welfare has assumed importance on account of frequent student violence and agitations on the campuses. It is thought that the provision of adequate welfare schemes and student services may reduce the incidence of student protest activity.

The student leaders in our survey include the activities of Social Service Guild, Poor Boys' Fund, Free Studentship etc. under student welfare schemes. They feel that student participation in such matters will ensure impartial distribution of funds to the needy and the deserving students and eliminate favouritism and misappropriation. Those who disagreed argued that student participation would politicise the whole matter as different student leaders support their respective groups.

In recent years, electoral politics on the campus (election to various posts in student union) has affected campus peace and destroyed the academic atmosphere. Drastic remedies like the principle of nomination replacing elections to the college union has been suggested. With a view to recording the opinion of student leaders to this controversial question, they were asked: 'Do you think that in the interest of campus peace, elections should be replaced by nominations'?

An overwhelming majority of the leaders (93.84%) feel that elections to the college union must continue notwithstanding their occasional disruption of peace on the campus. Only a small minority (6.16%) have favoured ban on elections and the introduction of the principle of nomination. Generally, student leaders feel that the system of election is in harmony with democratic principles and the student community should be given the opportunity for democratic experiments in their sphere of activities. Elections throw up the ablest and the fittest candidates and a nominated student leader cannot enjoy the support and confidence of the student community. It is quite likely that a nominated leader may be used as an instrument of educational administrators. Nominated student unions, a product of internal emergency, imposed on the country during June 1975 - January 1977 have not proved a viable alternative. Some of the leaders suggested suitable modifications to the present system
of election and prescribed a code of conduct for the observ-
vance of student contestants and their mentors outside the

campus.

The last question reads: 'Do you think that student
union activities adversely affect the academic interest of the
student community'? Many scholars of the Indian educational
scene have deprecated the role of student union leaders in
misleading the student community. In recent years, one
disconcerting trend in student politics has been the capture
of student unions by a growing number of politically - oriented
and academically average students who have been running the
unions "more or less as trade unions and pressure groups". Some
professional student leaders turn student unions into bargaining
counters and resort to the politics of confrontation and agita-
tions on non-issues.

An overwhelming majority (89.23%) of the leaders
feel that student union activities have no ill effect on
academic pursuits of the student community. It seems that, as
leaders, they do not like to give a negative picture of their
own activities and consider student union politics to be a part
and parcel of the academic life of the campus. Those who agreed
to the suggestion (10.77%) felt that the interaction between the

10. See Report of the Committee of Enquiry, Orissa Students
Disquietude, 1967-68, Government of Orissa, Education
Department, pp. 69-79.
selfish and ambitious student activists and self-motivated politicians definitely contributed to a decline in academic atmosphere on the campus.

III

Student leaders in our survey belong to the six major colleges in the district of Mayurbhanj which is one of the most backward in the State of Orissa. Despite vast natural resources, there has been an under-utilisation of human and material resources of the district. The low level of literacy, urbanisation, industrialisation, and a predominantly tribal population, steeped in traditional values, contributes to the underdevelopment of the district.

It is expected that student leaders, an enlightened and articulate segment of leadership, should understand the problems of underdevelopment of the district and project the local/regional aspirations. Student leaders were asked seven questions for the purpose of testing their perception of local/regional issues and problems.

Student leaders were asked the first question: 'What, in your opinion, are the primary causes of the underdevelopment of your district?' The causes emerging from their responses are the following: (a) A large part of the land belongs to the hilly regions and there is inadequate irrigation facility which impedes agricultural prosperity of the region. (b) There has not been
proper utilisation of forest and mineral resources. Most of
the raw-materials are sent outside. The pace of industrialisation
has been slow. (c) There is no dedicated, enlightened and
strong leadership to project the demands and problems of the
district. (d) Poverty, illiteracy and general backwardness con-
tribute to political apathy of the people in general. This inhi-
bits the growth of political consciousness so imperative for
articulating and aggregating regional demands.

Asked to state the efficacy of the tribal political
elites in projecting the needs of the region, almost all the
respondents in our survey gave a negative picture. The district
has a predominantly tribal representation in the Orissa Legis-
lative Assembly in as much as nine out of ten members of the
Legislative Assembly belong to tribal population. Respondents
in our survey perceive that except a few tribal political
elites, they are incapable of putting forth the needs of the
region.

In response to the third question, namely, 'Do
the tribal educated leaders imbibe the sense of selfless
service for the welfare of their brethren?', a majority of the
respondents replied in the negative. Student leaders have a
feeling that educated tribal leaders maintain a distance from
the mass of tribals; they prefer to stay in towns, far away

11. Student leaders specifically mention the role of
Bhagay Gobardhan and Chaitanya Prasad Majhi.
from the remote rural and hilly regions in which tribal people abound; they are guided by the non-tribal leaders and have greater interaction with them than people of their own community and above all they use their status and influence in promoting their own interests rather than rendering selfless service for the tribal masses.

The fourth question relates to the creation of a separate Jharkhand State. It is pertinent to examine the background and evolution of the movement for Jharkhand State before assessing the views of student leaders.

The demand for a separate State for tribals, cutting across Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh—Jharkhand—can be traced back to 1940 when Major Jaipal Singh of Ranchi formed 'Adivasi Mahasabha' to redress tribal economic grievances. The Mahasabha soon realised that economic problems called for a political solution and therefore, a political forum. The Jharkhand Party was founded and its spokesman, Jaipal Singh, demanded a separate Jharkhand State in 1954. The State 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
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 been weakened due to lack of unity among its top leaders. Each of the factions is powerful in its respective geographical locations. With the formation of the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), led by Suraj Bescra, in October 1986, the movement has been infused with new vigour. The strategy is being planned by a Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee which is controlled by a group of Ranchi-based intellectuals, largely academicians of Ranchi University and the XISS. There are also reports that the CPI(M-L) activists have been helping the AJSU in building a cadre-based organisation around the Jharkhand area. The AJSU has been able to infuse new blood into the movement. Instead of indulging in violence, which will divert attention from the real issue, the tribal students devote themselves to the building of a cadre-based party.

So far, the AJSU story is one of success; it has been able to unite different tribes for the cause; its politics

13. See Gupta, Kanchan, "If the 'Dikus' Leave", Ibid.
is pragmatic and radical. It has won over senior leaders and some academics. It has made inroads among villagers who have been impressed by the frugal life-style and the commitment of the student—workers.

A survey conducted on the villages of the proposed Jharkhand State, comprising twenty one districts of the four States, with an area of 2,00,000 Square Kilometers shows that the picture is appalling; the area can be cited as an example of massive economic exploitation with all its ramifications. It is, indeed, ironical that an area so rich in mineral resources and forest wealth should remain the most backward even today. Attending to tribal grievances and accelerating the area’s socio-economic development may slow down the tide of the Jharkhand movement.

The affected State governments are reported to have expressed anxiety over the movement for a separate Jharkhand State. The movement is a threat to Orissa in as much as districts of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Keonjhar and some areas of Balasore are proposed to be a part of the Jharkhand state. Student leaders, in our survey, were asked an important question: “Do you feel that tribal development would be speedier and would eradicate poverty among the tribal people, if there is a separate Jharkhand State?”

An overwhelming majority of the respondents do not approve of the idea of a separate Jharkhand State on the following grounds: (a) It will give a fillip to sub-regional forces and create tension between the tribals and the caste Hindus. (b) Tribals are in a minority in the proposed Jharkhand State region and there is no specific link-language. (c) Tribals may oust the non-tribals from the proposed State. (d) Tribal development would be speedier by more investment in the region and proper implementation of plans and programmes. Quite a few student leaders including the nine tribal student leaders argued in favour of the creation of a separate Jharkhand State: (a) Political power will be in the hands of the tribals who will contribute to speedier socio-economic development. (b) Tribals will be free from exploitation by the more advanced non-tribal population.

To the question, "What is the equation of Mayurbhanj political leadership with State political leadership?", an overwhelming majority of respondents replied that Mayurbhanj political leadership in general, is not on par with the level of State political leadership. They are not effective in projecting the needs of the region and in getting adequate financial grants for the socio-economic development of the district.
of the political leaders are tribals who have, by and large, failed to impress upon the State level political leadership about the fulfilment of the genuine demands of their local people. Of late, political leaders of the district have come forward to take necessary steps for the development of Mayurbhanj. They have organised all-party conferences under the auspices of the Mayurbhanj District Development Committee.

Student leaders were asked whether they project/champion local/regional issues and aspirations. Most of the leaders take credit in championing regional issues and aspirations while some of them frankly admitted that student leaders could succeed only 'to some extent'. Since the early 1980s, there has been steady growth of consciousness among students of the district and student leaders have come forward to project or champion such regional demands and aspirations as the establishment of North Orissa University (with headquarters at Baripada), an Engineering College, a Medical College; take over of all non-Government Colleges by the State Government; greater facilities to the students of the district, conversion of the narrow gauge Rupca-Bangiriposi Railway line into a broad-gauge line.

15. Out of 10 Assembly seats for the district of Mayurbhanj, 9 are 'reserved' for the tribal community. The only Lok Sabha Constituency is 'reserved' for the tribal Community.

Again, Orissa has ten members in the Rajya Sabha, out of which three, at present, belong to the district of Mayurbhanj and out of these three, one member belongs to the tribal Community.


17. See The Prajatantra (Oriya Daily), Cuttack, Dt.9.4.88.
Demands relating to the establishment of a Law College and T.V. Relay Centre have already been fulfilled.

Student leaders were asked the last question in this category, namely, "Do you feel the need of a University in North Orissa comprising of the districts of Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Keonjhar?" Almost all the leaders strongly feel the early establishment of such a University for the spread of higher education in the region and better facility for students of the region. Asked to offer the reason for the non-establishment of such a University so far they stated the following: (a) lack of strong initiative and endeavour by the local people; (b) lack of strong demand by the local leadership; (c) conflict among the districts for the location of the University; (d) governmental apathy and (e) lack of a protracted student movement over the issue.

IV

In the last group of questions, student leaders' perception of the problems of the country was tested. The first question elicited an answer from the respondents for the main problems facing the country. A majority referred to communalism, regionalism, political corruption, political instability, Punjab issue and India's involvement in Sri Lanka as the main political problems. They also spoke of population explosion, price rise, unemployment, debt burden of the nation and 'brain drain' as the primary economic problems. Some of them
referred to faulty educational system as a primary problem. It seems that political and economic problems receive top priority from the student leaders. They have correctly assessed the dangers to our polity and economy from diverse sources.

Asked to offer solutions to the country's problems, they spoke of the role of selfless political leadership in setting an example for the elites in different walks of life; strong and impartial administrative measures to check corruption, nepotism and favouritism; mass education to raise awareness among the people so as to become participant citizens; political solution for Punjab and SriLankan issues; greater stress on agriculture and small scale industries to generate employment potential; reform of the educational system so as to make it both job-oriented and value-based. So far as the government is concerned, the student leaders feel that well thought out political solutions, backed by strong and impartial administrative measures will go a long way to provide proper solutions to the country's problems.

Questions 3, 4 and 5 relate to some important issues concerning the educational institutions and the student community in India. The responses of the student leaders to a few suggested issues are presented in table no.3.

Reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes relating to admission into educational institutions, seats in representative bodies and recruitment
TABLE NO. 8.3

VIEWS CONCERNING SOME SUGGESTED ISSUES
(N=195)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Should reservation of seats relating to admission into educational institutions and recruitment to jobs continue?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Should there be compulsory Military Training (conscription) for able-bodied youth in the country?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Should there be compulsory social service by the students during vacations?</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 acrimonious controversy and ceaseless conflicts between the pro-reservationist and anti-reservationist groups. It was thought pertinent to ask the student leaders: "Should reservation of seats relating to admission into educational institutions and recruitment to jobs continue"?

A minority (20.51%) of the respondents in our survey agreed to the continuance of reservation as a policy for protecting the interests of the weaker sections of the community. Some of the leaders in this category opined that reservations should be made applicable to economically backward classes.
Some of the respondents argued that reservation should continue with regard to admission into educational institutions and not for getting jobs or employment. But an overwhelming majority of leaders (79.4%) disapproved the continuance of reservation. They felt that its continuance will stifle talent and merit and will continue to develop a vested interest in backwardness.

To the suggestion, "Should there be Compulsory Military Training (conscription) for able-bodied youth in the country?", the response of the majority (55.3%) was positive. The Indian student is not adequately engaged, both mentally and physically. It has been suggested that adequate arrangement for compulsory physical training or N.C.C. membership or even military training, may help our student youth "to acquire one of the clearest distinguishing marks of a university-trained person—-that he becomes an individual and cannot merge into a mob".18 Leaders in our survey who supported compulsory military training for student-youth stressed their commitment to the integrity and honour of the country and their responsibility to do so. Those who disagreed held that compulsory military training is unnecessary because India is a peace-loving country and such training would hamper studies.

In recent years, college students are taking part in constructive activities in an organised way under the National Service Programmes (N.S.S.). It is often said that one

of the major weaknesses in the present system of education is
the absence of adequate programmes for developing the community
spirit in youth. There is an urgent need for harnessing the
creative and youthful energies of students for nation-building
activities. A developing society like India expects a lot from
its vast man power of student-youth to speed up the process of
modernisation.

To the suggestion, "Should there be compulsory social
service by the students during vacations?", an overwhelming
majority (87.1%) agreed. They feel that compulsory social
service during vacations will bring the students nearer to the
people, understand their problems and harness their energies
for such community development works as adult literacy, health
and sanitation, education for villagers, building and repairing
of roads, slum clearance in urban areas, plantation of trees
and educating the people about the need for protecting and
preserving the environment. It will create in them an awareness
of the problems of the common man and inculcate in them the
dignity of labour.