

CHAPTER - IINTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Education as a subject attracts the interest and attention of all and sundry. This almost universal interest in education is a welcome sign of the importance an average citizen attaches to it, because of its influence, both visible and invisible, on the well-being and prosperity of mankind. Education is the basis of all social and economic progress, and it is widely accepted that it, being an investment in human material, should be of vital concern to the nation. Education is concerned with one of the most natural phenomena, that is the growth and development of the human mind. Some basic attributes of the mind are a product of inheritance, but a person develops or fails to develop in a particular way as a consequence of the use to which it is subjected as the individual grapples continually with the problem of his environment.

The knowledge that is radically reshaping our intellectual, political, industrial, cultural and defence environment, is stimulated greatly by researches initiated in the institutions of higher education. Thus, such institutions, of which the universities are a standing example, have a role of significance to play in the moulding of the character of the individual, and, through him of the society in general. The Education Commission, during its discussion on the objectives of universities,

has to say that the universities are " essentially a community of teachers and students, where, in some way, all learn from one another, or at any rate, strive to do so. Their principal object is to deepen man's understanding of the universe and of himself in body, mind and spirit, to disseminate this understanding throughout society, and to apply it in the service of mankind. They are the dwelling place of ideas and idealism, and expect high standards of conduct and integrity from all their members."

The university culture thus represents the creation, generation by generation, of a continuous flow of a body of men and women who share a sense of civilized values, who feel responsible for developing them, who are united by their culture, and who, by the simple pressure of their existence and outlook, will form and enlighten public opinion. A very intimate bond unites university and life. All educational and cultural activities at the university must be so directed that they enrich social life and help the nation in its march towards its destined goal. The universities are the nurseries not only of ideals but also of noble vision.

The youth of the nation that comprise the university are the pillars on whom rests the future of the nation. Mr. Mc Clelland thus says " give me all the dreams of the youth of any country and I shall provide the future of the country". Society, in the throes of a phenomenal

crisis, looks for help and guidance to the body of intellectuals which makes up the academic world. These are the trustees of our cultural heritage and it is their responsibility not only to preserve it but also explore and develop new directions of thought and sensibility. They should not be satisfied merely with criticism of the present state of affairs but should also seek a way out of the present dilemma. They have to prepare themselves to be emotionally committed, deeply and enduringly, making the sufferings of people their own. Thus they are in that unique position which enables them to deal with the emerging problems and the ideological issues of our times.

Higher education is responsible as much for extending the boundaries of knowledge, as for training of citizens. The Indian Education Commission (1966), has also pointed out that "a university is a place of intellectual adventure, wherein new knowledge can be sought out and cultivated". Similarly, according to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, "the primary function of a university should be the constructive work of imparting knowledge and cultivating wisdom. Men should, therefore, be the overflow of the spring of culture, spontaneous and inevitable. Moreover, the education should be in full touch with our complete life ; commercial, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual. It must not only instruct, but help to live, not only to think and feel, but to act and produce". This newly developing sense of one world confirms the ideas of

Cardinal Newman, who said that, " the university should be a place of concourse where students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge. They should eschew of all compartmentalism and stand for freedom of travel and intercourse between professors and students all over the world. Thus, universities must serve as centres to foster international knowledge and understanding".

The university should provide training with a definite direction in mind, which enables the student to secure success in all the various aspects of his private and public life. University education should enable the student to revitalize the society and to understand and undertake new responsibilities.

The university, thus, aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, and at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principle to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political powers and refining the intercourse of private life. In 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while delivering his convocation address at the Allahbad university, said in these words, " A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search for truth." These words emphasize the role of our learning institutions in the life, welfare and strength of the nation.

The entire responsibility of achieving these ideas and of fulfilling these functions rests with the present generation. The privilege of meeting the challenges that society and the world throw to them, and of defending the freedom and integrity of the country as also her chosen way of life, rests with the young men and women who comprise the educational institutions of the country. However, universities of the world are unable to fulfill their aims, objectives and ideas as a result of which, the student community, which is the main organ of the university machinery is not satisfied with the existing educational system and its progress. This awakening of dissatisfaction in the minds of the students creates an atmosphere of tension, which affects the university climate. This feeling of dissatisfaction with its resultant unrest, has become a highly controversial and debatable topic for politicians, social workers and educationists alike.

This feeling of unrest, which has become so commonplace in society, and especially so among the student community, may stem from a number of causes, either political, social, economic, moral, spiritual or psychological. That the student community is in a profound state of unrest and uneasiness today, is an undeniable fact. This state of unrest and rebellion has far-reaching results, often violent and destructive. It is therefore that one would endeavor to look for and discover both the causes, and the remedies for such a deplorable state of

affairs.

The problem of unrest , the questions it raises, and the quest for solutions to this spreading problem is what the investigator wishes to undertake in the present study.

1.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY

The present investigation has therefore been entitled :-

" A STUDY OF STUDENT UNREST AND STUDENT WELFARE ACTIVITIES IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF GUJARAT STATE ".

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following major objectives were framed for the present study :-

1. To study the causes of student unrest in the university campus in the following aspects :
 - a) Student unrest activities.
 - b) Reasons for unrest among the university students related to students, teachers, university administration and the general public.
 - c) Students' academic expectations.
 - d) Students' general expectations from the university
 - e) The university campus climate.
2. To study the welfare activities of the five universities in Gujarat State and relate it with the present student unrest.

3. To study the suggestion of the Dean of students with regard to the academic and campus climate of these universities.

4. To suggest suitable remedies for the student unrest in the university campus.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

An attempt has been made below to define some of the important terms, mainly the variables in the context of the present study :-

1. STUDENT

A person devoting himself to some branch of learning under instruction at a university or at other places of higher education and having an interest in academic pursuit.

2. UNREST

The Webster's Seventh Dictionary denotes the meaning of unrest as a physical, mental and emotional restlessness. An individual or a group of individuals is affected by personal uneasiness and disturbed by the external environment.

3. STUDENT UNREST

Student unrest refers to the disillusionment and dissatisfaction that is rampant among the student community because of the thwarting of their desires, needs, safety expectations and aspirations. This feeling can be either temporal or long term, depending on the gravity of the situation and the speed and efficiency with which a solution is provided.

KABIR (1956) defines student unrest as a spirit of general turbulence and rebellion among large sections of the young and is today a common phenomenon in many countries. An attitude of mind has been fostered, by which success in a worldly sense is the only value that society recognizes. The destruction of old values, and the failure so far to create new values have led to the growth of a spirit of cynicism, avarice and rebellion. As an integral and perhaps the most sensitive section of the community, it is among students that the malice is most acute.

BHATTACHARYA (1967) says that " student unrest is a symptom, not a disease. Human unrest is prevailing all over the world today. It is a passing phase of the students' struggle for betterment of their opportunities; academic, social and economic. This indiscipline shown today is the result of strain and stress on the students' emotional life. "

PATEL (1967) defines student unrest as " the undisciplined behavior of the frustrated and hence aggressive student community. Student unrest results mostly from lack of provision of student welfare activities or from want of meeting adequately with student grievances."

Taking into consideration the above definitions of unrest, we may safely conclude that unrest is the expression that the student gives to his bottled-up feelings of dissatisfaction and disillusion which, while

not entirely totally devoid of justification, often erupts into a war of destruction and damage. 4. WELFARE

ACTIVITIES

COWLEY (1969) defines student welfare activities as " all activities which are undertaken or sponsored by an educational institution aside from curricular instruction, in which the students' personal development is the primary consideration."

The conclusion that this definition brings us to is that welfare activities have the root purpose of the students' personality development. As such, they may be primarily moral, social, or spiritual. Physical aspects such as health care, sports, food and accommodation, also fall into this category in the long run.

5. UNIVERSITY

The UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMISSION (1966) points out that "the university is a place of intellectual adventure, wherein new knowledge can be sought out and cultivated."

The UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (1964-65) adds that " the university is not a barren ante-room to life, and the students stay there and share happy and stimulating experiences. A congenial environment and healthy corporate life are the essentials for serious intellectual pursuit and proper development of personality. The conditions in which the students have to live and work, the provision of essential amenities, is generally important in student behavior and should prove a healthy curb on student

unrest."

1.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is comparative in nature and encompasses a vast scope with regard to the strength of the student population, the feelings of unrest rampant among them, the causes for this unrest, and other related variables. This study is, however, limited to the five major universities of Gujarat, namely :-

1. The Gujarat University.
2. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.
3. The Sardar Patel University.
4. The South Gujarat University.
5. The Saurashtra University.

The main respondents in these universities were the students and the Deans of the students of various colleges/faculties.

Only the internal factors of the university campus, which contribute to student unrest have been taken into consideration for the present study.

The study has been confined to the major educational streams such as Arts, Commerce, Science, Fine Arts, Home Science, Law, M.S.W., etc.

1.6 STUDENT UNREST AS A MEANS OF AGITATION FOR STUDENT DEMANDS

The beginnings of student unrest can be traced back to the pre-independence period with the boycott of Government educational institutions in 1920, and later, the

Quit India movement of 1942, both instances of a protest against the tyranny of the British Empire, and in this context, totally justified.

Then came the NAV- NIRMAN movement of 1974, wherein university students and, to some extent, their professors, sought to battle against the forces of corruption and anarchy which seemed to have caught the nation in a vice-like grip. This was thus a battle for a better social order- a highly honorable end to achieve, and yet, the means they resorted to were not highly commendable in that they ended up wreaking havoc and destruction, the after-effects of which linger till today. The use of violence as a mode of achieving their ends became a trend in the student community as also in society, after the success of this movement.

The NAV NIRMAN movement was later followed by the riots of 1984-85 which dealt with the reservation issue. The bloodshed and violence were far more pronounced during these riots.

With the passing of every successive year, the instances of students resorting to violence in order to achieve their ends have gained far more momentum.

The overall picture is not, however, as gloomy as it is made out to be in that a vast majority of the student community is entirely blameless and it is only the few anti-social elements around that are the root evil behind the troubles that plague a university.

As against this, there is another side to the picture. By and large, the university students are caught up in the whirlwind of rapid change and growth. The value concept of the the old traditions has been undergoing a great change. They find themselves lost and bewildered in the world around them. They are struggling for new worthwhile, purposeful ideas, values and efforts.

In this situation, a systematic study of critical issues and problems of universities of Gujarat is required. It has become important to find out as much as possible about this crucial issue, its causes and after-effects, and, last but not least, the solutions to it.

The investigation has been undertaken in the five major universities of Gujarat in order to cover a vast cross-section of students. Because of the change in city and society and in environmental conditions, the student character differs enormously in the five universities. More detailed information about these universities has been provided in the section about selection of universities for sample study in chapter III.

Note :- Refer map representation of the location of various universities and affiliated colleges selected for the present study of Gujarat State.