

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION : HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT ACTIVISM

#### Changing Concept of Student Activism

Increasing knowledge in the field of natural and social sciences helps man to explain or interpret a natural or social phenomenon in a novel or modified way. Student activism, which was often referred to, in India, as student indiscipline - and action not meeting the approval of the authorities (Altbach, 1968)-is being considered, to some extent, as an instrument quickening the process of change with some positive effects (Suraj Bhan, 1972).

Available literature on student activism produced during the last decade suggests that it is neither limited to a particular span of time or place, nor to certain type of student community in particular and society in general. There are hints of its continuation in future too. A few important points in this direction are being dealt with in the following paragraphs.

#### An Age Old and World-wide Phenomenon

Viewing student activism in its historical perspective, it is not intended to justify its legitimacy, rather it is an attempt to understand its present position. Though never in the history, remote or recent, have the students so much drawn the attention of the society as they do now. It might have differed in intensity, which is the consequence of changed socio-economic and political conditions in a given period.

Some instances of youth discontent have been reported even in ancient India, which made *the Gurus* very critical of the former's way of life (Achyuthan, 1974). This was the case with Socrates in Athens (Sarkar, 1974). In the 12th Century Europe, when the modern universities in their unceremonial ways were in the offing at Paris in France and Bologna in Spain, organised student communities used their collective power in the conflicts

against towns people on the one hand and teachers on the other (Haskins, 1971). The clashes occurred over the issues of availing freedom from the local law, enjoying, privileged elite status and so on (De Conde, 1971).

Almost since the middle of the last century in some countries students have been showing interest in university or/and community problems. Nations of Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America have been witnessing student turmoil in one form or the other. In all types of nations, developed or developing, capitalist or socialist, white or coloured, students have been indulging in direct actions for realizing their objectives. According to the differences in socio-economic and political conditions of these nations, student activism might have differed in form, content, intensity or frequency, but some of these have established it as a tradition. In the year 1969 there were reports of student demonstrations in as many as sixty countries (Bhatt, 1972).

In Table 1.1, are reproduced some data (Bhatt, 1972) which may prove students' involvement in activism in a number of countries. In these countries, student activism have been responsible for the downfall of the governments in the year noted against their names.

Table 1.1: Downfall of Governments in Ten Countries Due to Student Activism

Sr.No.	Nation	Government Headed by	Year
1	Venezuela	Marco Perez Jimenez	1958
2	Japan	Nobosuke Kishi	1960
3	South Korea	Syngman Rhee	1960
4	Turkey	Menderes	1960
5	South Vietnam	Ngo Dinh	1963
6	Bolivia	Victor Paz Estenssoro	1963
7	Sudan	Ibrahim	1964
8	Indonesia	Sukarno	1967
9	France	de Gaulle	1968
10	Pakistan	Ayub Khan	1968

Very recently in May 1979 Nepal witnessed a similar scene. In the countries of Asia and Latin America which were ruled and dominated by colonial powers, students' role had been very important in the nation's freedom struggle.

#### A Stable Rather Than a Passing Phase

For more than a hundred years student activism has been recurring in many countries of the world and bringing about changes as well as crises. In many developing countries student

activism cropped up and spread as a result of their participation in the national liberation movement. In India also student activism started towards the end of the 19th century. It was at its climax during the civil disobedience movement (Altbach, 1968). In this period students joined the farmers and labourers, and assumed the responsibility of the struggle when the senior leaders were arrested. After the independence was achieved in the year 1947, the national government and the authorities wished that students abstain from politics or be made to. The problem so arose as the leaders had thought that after independence the students would stop indulging in politics, but changing socio-economic factors, towards which Prabodh Chandra had already drawn the attention, (Feuer, 1969) falsified their expectations. Likewise, Reddy's (1947) observation that 'communalization' and 'decentralization' of Indian student movement after 1946 seems to have been affected by socio-political factors which were not identified even much after 1947.

But because of the complicated nature of such behaviour and its genuine and deep association with societal forces, scholars working in this area have started professing about the possibility of its becoming a permanent feature. Suraj Bhan (1972) issued a warning in this respect :

"With whatever name we may call it - the student movement, activism, power, unrest or revolution - the youth upsurge has come to stay. The intermittent disruption of the work of colleges and universities all over the world is no longer a phenomenon. It is an established fact, a reality of the time....."

#### A Societal Movement

Some progressive thinkers have started considering student activism as a part of the greater movement going on in the society, as a whole. They, Gupta (1968) and Rao (1972), advocate that the scientific and technological developments have reduced the size of the world and what is happening in one part of the world is leaving its impact on the other. The education has also created awareness and awakening in the weaker and the ignored sections of the society about their rights. Forming organizations and unions, they are striving for better living conditions. The society is continuing to face movements, such as the labour movement, women's liberation movement and the struggle for freedom from imperial powers. Student activism is also one such like the above mentioned movements. Rao (1972), further, defends violence, in such

movements as a consequence of acute dissatisfaction.

There are others who find some students playing their role as citizens of the nation (Soares, 1970). Since these students are 'environment orient<sup>ed</sup>' as Fields (1970) call them, they take greater interest in political and social affairs and never consider themselves a segmented part of the society. Politics for them is not a taboo and they do not limit their activities within the four walls of the schools. They concern themselves also with the social problems. Singhvi (1972) with, some modifications, favours the above idea and suggests that the 'integrated socialization' of the students should be emphasised, so that they cease to be the social outsiders and rebels. This widening range of student activism has very well been pointed by Renu Maheu, Director General of UNESCO (Upadhyaya, 1975), in his declaration that student dispute has gone beyond the university walls into the society.

#### Aspects of Student Activism

Social movements have their roots in scientific and technological developments. Development of scientific knowledge has been influencing peoples' views regarding human nature and social life. There is an age long controversy regarding human nature, whether it is good or bad. Brubacher (1969)

concludes that human nature can be conceived of having both 'strengths and weaknesses' depending on the 'environmental forces'.

Scientific discoveries are not only adding to the body of knowledge, but bringing about changes in peoples' outlook and approach. The culture of science is encouraging people to advance towards democratic and equalitarian theories and practices. This is not a new phenomenon. Even in ancient India and Greece, the theory of controlling the people through supernatural fear as a motivating force to do (or not to do) the things, has also been under challenge (Rahman, 1977). All this has accelerated the thinking that many of the constraints and discriminations imposed on the people are social and can be removed if efforts are made.

### Educational

The value of education has been realized at every stage of human civilization, but perhaps this century has added a new meaning to it. In modern times, education is being considered as an instrument of social change and a means of social mobility too. But, it very much depends on who uses it, and, also for what purposes. However, expectations of a good job and desire for a social status have been created by

education in general, and by higher education in particular. Goal (Sharma,R.,1976) has shown very high positive correlation between education and economic growth (Primary .85, Secondary .94 and Tertiary .96). It is highest at Tertiary level. Awareness of this relationship has been growing and enhancing the demands and aspirations for higher education. It is very much evident by Shah's (1971) finding that about 87% of S.S.C. students in Ahmedabad aspire for college education. This has resulted in an ever increasing rush for higher education even from the lower middle strata of the society. This situation has created two difficulties :

1. that the existing inadequate facilities of men and material at this level have continuously been decreasing while institutions imparting education in liberal disciplines are multiplying, and
2. that there is a popular opinion that a large number of students who have neither developed taste nor liking for education, except for a degree, comprise of first generation of college goers (Sampurnanand, 1968).

As a result of inadequate facilities and lack of motivation, students' interest in academic activities is

continuously and progressively eroding and if and when they encounter any exciting situation, they hardly hesitate to join and participate in it.

### Social

A society, at a given time, is composed of many generations. They are generally discriminated from one another on the basis of age. The older generation sticks to the values and ideals transferred to it from its previous ones and discovered by itself. All such values adopted by older generations are transferred by it to the younger, while the latter does not find all such values worthwhile. So, the older tries to impose them. During the process of imposition of values by the older generation on the younger and its rejection by the latter, the conflict between the generations begins and continues. As a result, this conflict starts the destruction of some established values and the emergence of new ones.

Kashyap (1967) finds a generation as an organism, and observes that after achieving its specific purpose, the utility of a particular generation is over. But since the older generation controls important public institutions, offices and machineries of production, distribution, destruction and propaganda, it keeps on dominating the new. While, the younger ones out of their own hopes and aspirations make constant efforts

to create their own ideals and values. So, the struggle continues. This, Kashyap characterises as a 'new kind of generation' and not as a mere new generation.

There are others (Gupta, 1968) who think that destruction of values is not started by the present generation, but is further enhanced. It has, already, been started by the previous ones. The gap between preachings and practices of the adults is further increasing. The adults live in reality but expect from the youth an ideal behaviour. It is when the real actions and doings of the older generations are imitated by younger generations that the trouble begins. Really, what is happening is the blocking of the perpetration of social values. The values which are being inculcated in the students are not accepted by the society, as very often they are found to be obsolete. Lalwani (1975) observes that such crises are occurring in many social institutions of family, of politics, of economics at the national and international levels, but the supersensitivity of the students is aggravating the situation in the centres of higher learning.

### Political

After achieving her freedom, India opted for the democratic ideology as her philosophy. In a democratic society, therefore, children are prepared as citizens to play their

future role. According to political scientists, for effective participation in such a system, political socialization is essential. This view is based on the 'multi elite' system, which advocates active participation of greater number of people as against a few political influentials to keep the democratic system operating (Eakin, 1972).

Besides, students through developed techniques of mass media get greater opportunities of being acquainted with a variety of situations the like of which they had not come across before. As a result they are obtaining social and political maturity earlier than their previous counterparts (Mookerjee, 1972).

For their political socialization, students get greater opportunities in schools through students' union and other co-curricular activities. The other, rather more significant source of political socialization is the existence of the different political parties. It is observed that in India the centres of higher learning have become, more or less, a political laboratory for training the future cadre. Due to this, political awareness among the students, is increasing. This is creating (over) consciousness among students about their rights and privileges (Bose, 1973).

### Cultural

It is observed that the established culture of developing countries is passing through the process of transformation. Socio-economic and political changes are affecting different aspects of such culture very seriously. Kripal (1976) recognized three sources - the traditional past, the colonial experiences and the aspiration for the future - from which the present day Indian culture had been derived. He identified nineteen characteristics of present day Indian culture. In his study, he found that 6 out of 19 'were decisively and emphatically' rejected by the Indian youth. Out of these six, three were hierarchical structure, authoritarianism and gulf between thought and action.

In an established culture great premium has been put to age, authority, caste, sex etc. of which almost all are social constraints imposed through ages. High respect for elders, leaders, teachers, administrators, husbands, so called higher castes and even for head of the family, is fast eroding. Not only liberty but equality also, in every field of work, has become a slogan of the day. There seems to be an eager desire to bridge the gulf between the elite and the masses. Though this trend is very much evident in the society as a whole, families are influenced in the least, while educational

institutions most. Cormack (1961) classified family as 'in group' where behaviour of the people is responsible and other institutions as 'out group' where it is indifferent.

### Economic

The present age has recognized education as a means for climbing the social ladder. Bhatnagar (1972) reported that a large number of educated persons in villages aspire to award to their children higher education and 'higher status occupation'. The result is that the educated persons are giving up traditional jājmani system in the 'hope of taking up new occupation suited to their training and qualifications'. On the other hand, educated persons, even today, are not developing healthy attitude towards the blue collar jobs. While, job conditions in the country are very pitiable and deteriorating day by day. Thus, the students have to face two grave situations:

1. since the students are provided with higher education by their parents, the latter expect them to acquire a job by which the parents could be supported and gain a status in the society, but the former fail to, and
2. being unable to get a job, the students are forced to continue their education without having inclination for it. As a result,

over-education and over-staying at the campus has become the youth's lot.

In a country where there is lack of coordination between economic planning and educational planning, production and profit is more emphasised than provision for employment opportunities and education is treated only as a means for industrial development. So long as the development of education is not reciprocated by economic growth, the unemployment condition will further aggravate (Tripathi, 1978). Under such circumstances only a few of the educated persons will be able to manage some sort of job and the remaining will go on adding to the large group of the unemployed.

Such conditions are very frustrating to the university youth and this frustration is much related to activism. Some researches gave contradictory reports too. They found out that in certain region (Aikara, 1977) and university (Dasgupta, 1972) student activism is not the expression of frustrated minds but is based on a revolutionary ideology for building up an ideal society or establishing the progressive government. Whatever be the explanation or finding, economic aspect is playing an important role in student activism in India.

### Psychological

The socio-economic conditions of the aspirants of higher education do not seem to be encouraging. A large number of students are coming from families which have no tradition of education. Gore (1973) found that 20 percent or more students at high school level, in any Indian State, come from illiterate families. In a survey of Calcutta University Bose (1973) reported that about 43 percent of students are not able to buy even essential text books. Absence of a tradition of education and lack of the provision of educational facilities on the one hand, and constantly decreasing job opportunities on the other are creating tension and anxiety in the minds of students. In such a situation adjustment of the students within the family as well as out of it, particularly in the school campus has become difficult. The tension which develops between parents and children in the family is reflected in many situations out of the family where students' reaction is hostility to all types of authorities. Shils (1968) observed that the anti-authority activities of students during the post independence era are continuation of such attitudes developed during the British raj.

Another important dimension of psychological aspect of student activism is personality. Because of the varying

personality traits the students possess, they react in different ways to a given situation. This is how one finds that all the students do not respond to a particular situation in the same manner. The same situation elicit violent, moderate or mild reactions on the part of students having different personality characteristics and family background.

The above aspects provide different models for understanding student activism. In the following ~~pages~~ <sup>history and geographical distribution</sup> ~~pages~~ <sup>in India</sup> are discussed <sup>^</sup> ~~contents and types~~ of student activism <sup>^</sup> which will assist further comprehension of the reality.

### History of Student Activism in India

India is one of the countries which has a long tradition of student activism. During the British rule, students fought against the colonial power and contributed a lot towards the achievement of independence. A survey of the student activism in the past may be helpful in understanding it at present.

#### Emergence of Student Activism

Even before the first war of independence of 1857, some political organizations were in the offing in Bengal though they were only short lived. In 1852 while the new Charter Act

was under consideration, several political organizations sent petitions to the British Parliament recording their grievances and praying for redress' (Ghosh, 1969). In the following years, the middle classes started showing interest in politics and by this time in the year 1875, Anand Mohan Bose established a student organization called 'Student Association'. After joining as a Lecturer in Metropolitan College, Surendra Nath Banerjee had a feeling that 'the seed of politics must be sown among student community in the interest of the country' (Ghosh, 1969). Later in the year 1883, students went on strike under the leadership of Ashutosh Mukherjee in protest against the trial of Surendra Nath Banerjee. This may be one of the first few students strikes that occurred in India.

Here it is to be noted that Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, but prior to that, commotion among the youths in general and students in particular existed even at manifestation level. The difference of student community with Indian National Congress was quite clear when :

"A section of youths of Bengal, mostly students were not satisfied with the programme of Indian National Congress and were desirous of achieving independence through revolution".

and by the end of 19th century some youths were trained to

manufacture bombs in the research laboratory of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose and Acharya P.C.Roy in Calcutta (Ghosh, 1969). In the last decades of the same century, such revolutionary organizations started cropping up in Maharashtra also. 'Chapekar Association' was one among them.

From the foregoing discussions, it appears that before the Indian National Congress was founded, there had been some awakening among the students, and for executing their programme they were not dependent on any other organisations. Had they been, the students would have not shown their disagreement to the then congress way of achieving freedom.

#### Pre-independence Student Activism

Student activism till the beginning of the 20th century can be considered as a preface to the student movement in India. This helped in spreading the spirit of nationalism and political awareness among the students, particularly in Bengal. In protest against the partition of Bengal and his attitudes towards Indians, students launched strong and intensive movement boycotting classes and burning the effigy of the author of the partition, Lord Curzon. This spirit of the students of Bengal influenced the students in Bihar, U.P. and the Punjab in north India. Between 1905 and 1908, there was intense

student upheaval (Reddy, 1947).

Figures (Ghosh, 1969) in Table 1.2 may throw some light regarding awareness among students in comparison to other sections of the society.

Table 1.2: Persons Convicted in Bengal in Connection with Revolutionary Crimes Between 1906 and 1918

Different Sections of the Society	Number of Persons Convicted
Students	68
Teachers	16
Land owners	19
Persons of no occupations	24
Persons employed in trade & commerce	23
Doctors or compounders	7
Clerks or persons in govt. services	20
News papers and press owners	5
Cultivators	1
Opium smugglers	1
Total	184

Though it is difficult to arrive at some conclusion with so limited an information, the proportion of the students

in Table 1.2 is high enough to show that even before they were encouraged during the later years by the national leaders, the former had indicated political awareness. The point here may be that the awakening among the student community was enhanced and strengthened during the subsequent years by the national leaders and as the time passed, association between national movement and student activism went on increasing to the extent that students became wholly dependent on the national leadership for guidance and formulation of policy.

The spirit of student movement in Bengal had the support of Indian National Congress. When Mahatma Gandhi gave the famous call for boycott of government institutions, student activism gathered momentum throughout north India. It was in this period that the controversy regarding students' participation into active politics arose between the top leaders. Indian leaders were sharply divided on this issue with Lala Lajpat Rai for active participation and Gokhale and Malaviya against it. Mahatma Gandhi, who till 1917 was against the active participation, decided by 1921 in its favour. The following quotations reproduced from the addresses of Mahatma Gandhi may throw some light in reflecting the conflict and indecision of contemporary Indian mind.

Bihar Students Conference at Bhagalpur in 1917

"The students should be introduced to the theoretical study of the politics but they should not concern themselves with the practical aspect because it is harmful for them. So student should keep away from the party politics". (Singhvi, 1972)

On or about 23rd January 1921

"Gandhiji explained the importance of Charkha to the nation and declared 'Swaraj first and education next'. He asked the students to boycott the government institutions and carry the message of economic independence through Charkha". (Reddy, 1947)

As seen from the above quotations, Mahatma Gandhi decided in the favour of active participation and thereafter till 1936 vigorous efforts were made to prepare a common platform and clear the issues for Indian students. From 1920 to 1936, many conferences and conventions of All India College Students were organized on regional as well as national levels in

different parts of the country in towns like Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Gaya, Madras, Lahore, Karachi and so on. Since the national leadership was visualising the decisive role of the students, these conferences were presided over by no less important personalities than Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarojini Naidu, Bhagwan Das, C.R.Das, Pandit Malaviya and Jawahar Lal Nehru. In 1936, the All India Student Federation (AISF) was formed. The Federation put forward 16 demands, which later in 1937 were marshalled to provide more political colour. Some of the demands were as below (Reddy, 1947).

1. Reduction of fees by 50%
2. Complete freedom of speech and organization
3. Vernacular as medium of instruction
4. Representation of students on governing bodies of universities and colleges
5. Recognition of student union as student representative
6. Provision for vocational training and relief from unemployment
7. Provision for free and compulsory education
8. Travelling concessions to students
9. Abolition of all degrading punishment.

Though at its 6th conference at Nagpur on 25th Dec. 1940, the All India Student Federation was divided, on the

basis of demands mentioned above, a real student movement started. In his presidential address at Patna in 1941, students were advised by Mehrally to take interest in Student Unions and strengthen them, to study rural problems and form study circles for ideological discussions. College and school buildings and hostels became meeting places for student leaders to make plans. But before the students could intensify their activities throughout the country, the national leaders <sup>were</sup> put behind bars. Even then, the students in different parts of the country continued their vigorous activities in response to Gandhiji's Call of Quit India in 1942. But the movement fizzled out due to the repressive measures adopted by the British Government.

During the period of 'Quit India' movement, about 15,000 students (ten percent of the student population) were involved in day to day organizational work in India (Altbach, 1968). But as a result of the intensive repressive actions of the government, the student movement was soon suppressed. Again in 1944, the All India Student Federation started organizing itself but by that time the situations had changed. Many political parties, other than Congress, started making claim over the students. They were Communist, Congress Socialist, Marxist and Forward Block. To capture the student

forces some conflict started within the All India Student Federation. The rival groups attempted to achieve their objectives of capturing the Federation, though they did not succeed. But perhaps, this was the beginning of the formation of rival student organizations in this country. (Reddy, 1947).

#### Post independence Student Activism

Student activism of preindependence era was centred around the common cause of achieving independence. Like all the other sections of the society, the students also supposed that remedy for all the ills lay in the achievement of independence. But, this panacea for all evils might have been visualized and interpreted by each section in its own way. The word 'freedom', for instance, did not mean the same to the political leaders, industrialists, common men or the students. Every section of the society visualized it in the way it would suit its interest.

Political freedom and emerging rival groups among the student organizations were the two factors which led to the departure of student activism from its previous nature in the post-independence era. After 1947, many conflicting interests which during the struggle had subsided, started reappearing in the society. As Altbach (1968) observes :

"The spirit of individual self sacrifice which had marked the independence struggle almost disappeared and many political leaders and others became more concerned with their own careers than ideology or national development. Regional linguistic and caste loyalties, temporarily put aside for the national cause, regained their old hold. For the post-independence student leader, a political career depended not only on dedication to the Congress cause, as had been the case before 1947, but involved fighting and winning elections, placating various economic and ideological tendencies and many other mundane details which did not appeal to most students."

A misleading image of the Congress party and leaders among the people as one and the only political organization which fought for the cause of independence and also its continuation in power immediately after the independence 'caused frustration and anger' in the opposition parties which never hesitated to utilize the student forces.....to topple the constitutionally established government by resorting to mass agitation accompanied with violence (Ghosh, 1969). This

resulted in an endless race on the part of political organizations to capture students through their youth wings. Thus, it was thought essential by every political organization to have its corresponding student wing. This served two purposes, firstly it provided opportunity of entering into educational institutions, and secondly that it could recruit cadres from among the students. This tendency among the political parties has, of course, generated some political awareness but never encouraged the student community to develop an independent organization as has happened in many other countries. Student activism, in India, has been unique in the sense that student organizations could never be free to have their own independent policy and programmes.

Though it is a fact that in post independence period, agitations aimed at specific and local grievances (Altbach, 1968) and lost their ideological broad bases, yet, so far as recurrence of agitations was concerned, it was on the increase, followed by violent actions. In 1964, there were 700 demonstrations with 113 violent and in 1966, there occurred 2206 of which 480 were violent (Altbach, 1968).

The factors which are contributing to the continuance of student activism in India are many and varied. They are

discussed, in detail, in chapter two. Here one point is to be made clear that during the pre-independence period entire student movement was centred around the freedom struggle but it might not be treated as the only cause of student activism. Really it was an occasion, and one of the causes too, when different sections of the society united for a common purpose. Students too had to play their role. Sixteen demands, mentioned on page 23, prepared and put forward by the All India Student Federation on behalf of the student community, also supported this contention. However, there were some other underlying motivating factors of student activism which were reflected in the demands and perhaps political independence was considered to be an instrument for achieving other goals and fulfilling certain requirements of the then society. The students were not only sentimentally attached to liberation struggle, but to some extent they were also aware of the socio-economic problems which they had been facing, the remedy for which seemed to be in independence. This is why when Gandhiji preferred 'Swaraj to Education' he advised students to 'carry the message of economic independence' also (Reddy, 1947).

Changes in the Post Independence Student Activism

Changing societal forces in the post independence period had their bearings on the student movement resulting in its transformation in various ways (Altbach, 1968). It has been observed that with the increasing violence in student activism, its association, rather dependence on political parties, is much the same, with the only difference that most of the leadership of student activism has passed into the hands of opposition. The changes may be identified as under :

<u>Pre Independence Student Activism</u>	<u>Post Independence Student Activism</u>
1. one national issue	national as well as local issues
2. was patronised and encouraged	is rather criticised and condemned
3. one organization	many organizations
4. ideological	rather pragmatic
5. full of militant spirit	lack of militant spirit
6. spirit of sacrifice	increase in careerism

During the pre independence era, liberation struggle was such a strong cementing force that it united all the elements of various shades keeping away their differences for

the time being. After the independence was achieved, the centripetal forces of patriotism and nationalism started losing their effects and the centrifugal forces of regionalism, parochialism, communalism, careerism and the like started exerting their pressure on the society. Students being a part of the Indian society could not keep themselves unaffected by these forces.

Due to its long association with the national movement, Indian student activism could not establish its independent identity. In the national movement, students were not partners or cotravellers, but mere subordinates or followers with one single goal to be achieved. The difference that can be observed among the student activists in the post-independence era is that they are seeking for varied goals and are being led by different pressure groups. But, this changed phenomenon is quite in tune with the changes occurring in the present society. After a long period of thirty years of stable administration a great political change occurred in India in 1977. National Congress which had been dominating in the country's politics for about a century, engineering the struggle for liberation and contributing to the national development through its governments at the Centre and in the States was not only dislodged from power and position but was

also fragmented. The Janta Party born during the later period of the emergency (1976-77) through the mutual patchwork of different political parties, succeeded in winning the support of the people and in forming government at the Centre as well as in many states for a period of about two and a half years. During this period of 1974-1976 students were much instrumental in the political changes too, particularly in Gujarat and Bihar. It seems, though late, students have started realising the role of independent student organization in a developing democracy. This is why some wish to play an effective role in bringing about social change rather than taking side with political parties of different shades. This may perhaps be the beginning of student movements operating independent of vested political pressures. Arun's statement very much reflects the mind of a section of students (The Times of India, 1977) :

"But certain fundamental reforms, to bring about social change, are yet to be undertaken. It is here that the students deem it necessary to have a powerful, independent group".

Looking at student activism in India, from the pre to the post emergency period, the above contention can not be substantiated. What one can draw from the student activism of

the above period is that when there is a unity of purpose imposed through some common threat, a wide spread intensive student movement may occur. But after the disappearance of that danger, students may be divided again, as has been witnessed during the post emergency period. Again, the unity and division seem to be very much dependent on the political forces/parties. Hence, given a certain condition, further transformation in student activism in India may occur provided internal political forces shift to make some meaningful equation. But an independent student movement does not seem to be a near possibility (Jayaram, 1979).

#### Geographical Distribution of Student Activism

Student activism is the product of unique conditions which may prevail in certain parts more intensively in comparison to others. What appears from the pre independence student movement in India is that the students in the then provinces of Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Punjab were more active. It started from Calcutta in Bengal and reached Lahore in the Punjab and later engulfed most of the big towns of Ganga Valley such as Aligarh, Meerut, Kanpur, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, Banaras and Patna. The role played by the students during Quit India movement of 1942 in north India was much more prominent than in the south.

Even during the post independence period, the states in north India are more disturbed regions in respect of students. This is very much evident from the press reports. Table 1.3 provides some data in support of what has been contended in this paragraph.

Table 1.3: Regionwise Frequency of Incidents<sup>1</sup>  
Between November 1970 and February 1972

S.No.	Region	Number of Incidents	Percent of Incidents
1	Andhra Pradesh	7	1.1
2	Assam	16	2.5
3	Bihar	19	3.0
4	Delhi Territory	118	18.4
5	Gujarat	4	0.6
6	Haryana	24	3.4
7	Himachal Pradesh	5	0.85
8	Jammu & Kashmir	5	0.85
9	Kerala	23	3.4
10	Madhya Pradesh	14	2.2
11	Maharashtra	11	1.7
12	Mysore	22	3.4
13	Orissa	17	2.7
14	Punjab	58	9.1
15	Rajasthan	40	6.3
16	Tamil Nadu	117	18.3
17	Uttar Pradesh	64	10.0
18	West Bengal	68	10.6
19	Others	7	1.1
Total		640	100.00

1. Parker defined 'incidents' as a particular happening reported which together make up the events (Parker, 1976).

Table<sup>2</sup> 1.3: presents 640 incidents reported in seven National news papers from November 1970 to February 1972. It indicates that whenever there are waves of student activism in the country no part remains unaffected thereby. But the States which account for 76% of the incidents are Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Out of these seven States all, but Tamil Nadu, are located in north India. The whole of Ganga plain where student activism caught flare first is still most active.

#### Student Activism in U.P.

Towards the end of 19th century student movement spread in India from ~~the~~ Bengal. It intensified, somewhat, in protest against Lord Curzon's policy on partition of Bengal. Later, sparks of student activism started appearing in U.P. in the first decade of the present century. In 1907, the students of Aligarh College went on a general strike against the severity of the principal and European staff. More or less, at about the same time increasing student participation in politics made Mrs. Annie Besant worried and on 'one occasion'

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2. The table has been rearranged on the basis of data given by Parker (1976).

she did not allow the students of Central Hindu College at Banaras to proceed to Buxar to welcome B.C. Pal on his release (Verma , 1978).

In U.P., actually, student activism gathered momentum sometime about 1920 in response to the call of boycott of government institutions given by the nationalist leaders. In October 1920, students of Aligarh invited Mahatma Gandhi and Ali Brothers to address them (Reddy, 1947). The students were so much agitated that they refused to be controlled by the authorities and there was an open talk of converting the college into a nationalist university. Immediately on the 10th of the following month first convention of college students of U.P. was held at Agra in connection with the call for boycotting government institutions. When All India Student Federation was formed in the year 1936, the U.P. student organizations played a significant role in organizing the students under its banner, thus making one common platform for the students. By this time, almost all the important town of U.P. i.e. Agra, Meerut, Kanpur, Aligarh, Lucknow, Allahabad and Banaras became the nucleus of student activism where even before the Quit India movement, meetings, addresses, processions, agitations, demonstrations had become the order of the day. In August 1942,

almost in all these towns there were firings and lathicharges on student processions and gatherings. The students in Allahabad, Lucknow and Ballia vigorously participated in the activities. Thus, U.P. students played a tremendous role during the 1942 movement.

During the post independence period, student activism did not disappear. The old universities of Aligarh, Allahabad, Banaras and Lucknow remained disturbed. There might have been tides and ebbs of student activism, but a lasting peace among the students with respect to time and place has never been noticed. Late sixties followed by early seventies were the period of high tide. Table 1.3 lists incidents of student activism for a specific period, yet it gives some idea of the problem in the State of U.P. which was responsible for 10 percent of the total incidents in India, ranking fourth preceded by Delhi, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. But what is more important regarding student activism in U.P., is its constant involvement since 1920 till date. Continuously for about more than 50 years, in U.P. universities, student activism has been on progressive increase.

Jafar (1977) has compiled 1415 titles.<sup>1</sup>

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1. These titles include articles, essays, papers etc.

Table 1.4: Statewise Distribution of Titles on Student Activism

S.No.	States	Number of Titles	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh	5	1.12
2	Assam	6	1.34
3	Bihar	21	4.72
4	Delhi	62	13.93
5	Gujarat	11	2.46
6	Jammu & Kashmir	2	.45
7	Kerala	8	1.80
8	M.P.	19	4.27
9	Maharashtra	24	5.39
10	Orissa	4	.90
11	Punjab	31	6.96
12	Rajasthan	9	2.02
13	Tamil Nadu	6	1.35
14	U.P.	208	46.74
15	West Bengal	29	6.52
Total		445	100.00

on student activism, of which 445 are related to different States of the country. Statewise distribution of these titles

has been given in Table 1.4. Out of 445 titles, 208 i.e. 46.74% belong to U.P. only. Thus, table 3 and 4 lead one to conclude that U.P. is one of the few most disturbed States of India with respect to students.

#### Increasing Involvement of Students

Student involvement in activism may have two dimensions- quantity and intensity. These two may influence each other and for a successful student movement both are essential. There are many other factors which influence these two. They may be occasion, issues, timings etc. These factors may also include such demands which attract greater number of students and others which do not. This is why while planning the agitations student leaders take care of raising some such issues which may draw students in large numbers.

It is true that movements are planned, engineered and started by some leaders whether committed or having vested interests. But, they are followed and supported by a majority of students with differing intensity. When quantity and intensity of student involvement increase, movements fully or partially may succeed, otherwise, they may fail. However, these may not be the only reason leading to their success.

Opinions, held by all sorts of authorities, have very low estimation of student involvement, while some scholars differ. Ahluwalia (1972) observed that awakening among the students regarding their problems was increasing and even those who opposed the actions of the radicals recognised the importance of issues involved in agitations. Findings of researchers in this connection have, in detail, been discussed in Chapter 2 but a few observations may be made here :

1. What incidents of activism are increasing
2. that activism is increasing to more and more campuses
3. that student activists are increasing in numbers
4. that student activists are adopting more daring tactics, and
5. that their actions are becoming more intense and violent.

#### Student Activism in the Banaras Hindu University

Towards the beginning of the present century, students in the big towns of U.P. started participating in agitational activities supporting the national movement. Students of Central Hindu College which later became a constituent college

followed by a period of fluctuating series of nationwide movements in which students were invited to contribute, and

3. that involvement of students in the movement was considered to be of positive value.

All these helped the students of the Banaras Hindu University to take interest in national movements. In the pre independence period the three occasion of B.H.U. student activism need special mention.

Soon after the foundation of the university, J.B.Kriplani (a teacher of the university) left the University with about 200 students to participate in national politics (Srivastava, 1974).

In 1930, the B.H.U. students and teachers joined local congress workers in picketing in response to the call of civil disobedience movement demanding ~~purna~~ swaraj, though Pandit Malaviya was against such involvement of students (Ray, 1977).

In 1942, students all over the country participated in the Quit India Movement. Banaras became one of the major centres of student activism in those days. The movement became

so uncontrollable in the campus, and in the surrounding areas that the university authorities were forced to close it down. Students led by two teachers of the university became so violently involved that they 'raided the armoury, burned the railway and police stations and disrupted the telegraph wires, telephone connections and railway lines'. The government asked the university authorities to get the campus 'cleared of all the students'. Without any further delay, the police and military forcibly entered the campus on 9th August 1942, ousted the students from hostels and started camping therein. The contribution of the B.H.U. students in this movement can be assessed from what U.P. Governor wrote to the university authorities :

"..... A very considerable number of students under the particular leadership of Dr. Gairola and Professor Radhey Shyam did embark on a campaign of sabotage which has had no parallel elsewhere in the province" (Dar, 1966)."

Thus, the students of the Banaras Hindu University participated very actively in the Quit India Movement employing various sorts of methods to paralyze the British Government. But, after independence, as in the other parts of

the country this university also witnessed a shift in its original character of student activism. During the post independence period, there were many occasions when normal functioning of the university was disrupted, but at least three events occurred in the year 1958, 1965 and 1968 have left some mark in the history of student activism. After 1970, almost every year, except in the emergency period, the university happened to be closed sine die during the periods specified below :

1. from 13th March, 1970 to 7th April, 1970;
2. from 13th January, 1971 to 7th February, 1971;
3. from 13th September, 1971 to 7th November, 1971;
4. from 8th December, 1972 to Mid February 1973;
5. from 14th March, 1975 to 7th April, 1975;
6. in anticipation of some student disturbances, the university was closed in advance to its schedule for the Durga Puja holidays in 1977, and
7. from 11th March, 1978 to 30th March, 1978.

In BHU, in the events of 1970 onward, Srivastava (1974) observed the reflections of polarization of political parties at the national level. A close analysis of the events, in the light of the above observation, leads one to conclude that :

1. major events of student activism during seventies occurred comparatively at shorter gaps than the previous ones. Whatever be the precipitating causes, the trend indicates of their power, and
2. political influences on the students got more intensified in the period.

According to the statistics available for the session 1972-73, about three fourths of the B.H.U. students hail from Uttar Pradesh. If to it is added the student strength coming from Bihar, which has also similar background, it adds up to 84 percent. This sort of analysis is significant from two view points :

1. that students coming from a particular geographical or administrative region start cherishing some peculiar advantages and vested interest.
2. that student activism would be much influenced by the socio-political situations of that area in which the majority of students are born, brought up and are still living.

It seems that agrarian culture, low literacy percentage, casteism, and unstable political situations in the region have created a sort of consciousness which stimulates interest in the personal gain rather than socio-political awareness. This is why progressive orientation among the students seems to be absent. The beginning of the 'nationwide battle' in B.H.U. between the 'CPI - Congress' alliance on the one hand, and the 'Right - reaction' on the other, as Srivastava (1974) observed, was reflected in the campus. But whether it was 'ideological' is doubtful. Perhaps, the students in the region have reached only to the trade union stage of consciousness rather than political awareness. The spirit of easy and quick gain generally observed in the people is reflected in the students also. They seem to be more concerned with mere gain rather than why and how of it (Jha, 1977).

The above observations are made by sociologists and scholars. How far are they correct? These need to be investigated. B.H.U. which was established in a period when student movement was gathering momentum in the region and students of the university participated and provided leadership in freedom struggle of the country. There are many questions with regard to the present student activism in BHU. How far is

the present activism ideology based? Is it only a trade union type movement for personal or narrow gains for a group of students? Who are the students, who take part in these movements? What is their socio-economic background? How much are they politically oriented? How far are they committed to their academic pursuit? These are some of the questions which motivated the investigator to undertake the present study. To have greater clarity with respect to the problem, methodology, approach etc., the next Chapter has been devoted to the review of related literature.