UNIT 14: STUDENTS MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- gain a perspective about student movement
- know about some major student uprisings in India and across the globe.
- know the different issues, impacts of different students movements in India.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times student movements vary widely in subject, size, and success, where students partake in all kinds of events concerning educational settings, government policy, advocacy against several social issues, etc. In this unit, we shall know about the emergence, important issues and achievements of different students movements.

14.3 STUDENTS' MOVEMENT: EMERGENCE

Student activism, in simple terms, is defined as the work carried out by students to usher in political, environmental, economic, or social transformation. Essentially, student movement is focused on matters concerning higher education, curriculum, and educational funding and so on. But history stands testimony to the fact that several student movements have been exceedingly instrumental in influencing greater political scenarise.

Although student activism is ordinarily linked with left-wing politics, right-wing student movements are not rare; for instance, large student bodies fought on both sides of the apartheid fight in South Africa.

Additionally, it is important to note that history of student movement at the seat of higher education, like the university, is practically as old as the university itself. For example, students in Paris and Bologna staged collective crusade as early as the 13th century, primarily over town issues. Student protests over larger political subjects also have a extensive pedigree. Take the case of Joseon Dynasty Korea, where 150 Sungkyunkwan students staged an extraordinary dissent against the king in 1519 over the Kimyo purge.

At the time of communist rule, students in Eastern Europe were the leading force behind numerous of the well-known instances of protest. The sequence of events leading upto the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was propelled by peaceful student protests in the streets of Budapest, which managed to attract the workers and other Hungarians. In Czechoslovakia, one of the most recognized façades of the remonstrations after the Soviet-led invasion that concluded the Prague Spring was Jan Palach, a student who immolated himself on January 16, 1969. The action elicited a major disapproval against the occupation.

Student led youth crusades have also played a major role in the "color revolutions" which emerged in the post-communist societies of the recent past. One of the first instances of this was the Serbian Otpor formed in October 1998 as a rejoinder to suppressive university and media regulations that were announced that year. In the presidential campaign of

September 2000, the organization caused the “Gotov je” (“He’s finished”) crusade that spurred Serbian dissatisfaction with Slobodan Miloševiæ, eventually resulting in his defeat.

Closer home, student movement in Bangladesh is reactive, provocative and violent. Student organizations function as the mobilization unit of the political parties with which they are associated. Thus, off and on, there are scuffles and disorders. Over the years, political clashes and factional disputes in the educational establishments have killed many, completely hampering the academic environment. To curb those difficulties, universities have no alternatives but go to prolonged and unforeseen closures.

In Canada, New Left student bodies from the late 1950s and 1960s were dominated by two groups: SUPA (Student Union for Peace Action) and CYC (Company of Young Canadians). SUPA emerged out of the CUCND (Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in December 1964, at a University of Saskatchewan conference. Whereas CUCND was engrossed in protest marches, SUPA aimed to transform Canadian society completely. The scope extended to grass-roots politics in underprivileged communities and consciousness rising to radicalize and create awareness. SUPA was a regionalized organization, embedded in local university campuses. SUPA nevertheless fragmented in late 1967, over debates regarding the role of working class and Old Left.

In Israel, for example, the students were amongst the prominent participants in the 2011 Israeli social justice demonstrations that emerged out of the Cottage cheese boycott.

Furthermore, Japanese student crusade began at the time of Taishô Democracy, and its undertakings gained momentum after World War II. They were commonly carried out by student activists. One such historic episode was the Anpo opposition movement, which took place in 1960, in opposition to the Anpo treaty. In the following student rebellion in 1968, leftist activists fortified themselves in universities, resulting in armed war with the Japanese police force. Some broader causes were reinforced including

resistance to the Vietnam War and apartheid, and for the recognition of the hippie way of life.

Student political activism has been in existence in U.K from the 1880s with the establishment of the student representative committees, which were the forerunners of union organisations, intended to present students' welfare. These later progressed into becoming unions, many of which became segments of the National Union of Students formed in 1921.

In the United States, student crusade is often understood as a method of youth activism that is precisely concerned with bringing in transformation in the American educational structure. Student movement in the United States dates to the start of public education, if not earlier. Some of the first well recognized, focused activism transpired on the campuses of black establishments, like Fisk and Howard in the 1920s. At Fisk, for example, students' apprehensions surrounding disciplinary guidelines intended to demoralize black identity, amalgamated into demands for the resignation of President Fayette Avery McKenzie.

In India the history of student movements is more than 150 years old. Many are of the opinion that with the establishment of the Students' Scientific and Historic Society in 1848 Dadabhai Navaroji founded the seeds for student's movement was sown. The Student's Scientific and Historic Society was established with an aim to create a forum for discussion and debate. During this period of time, the focus of the struggle was to critique the education system itself. The first student foray took place at King Edward Medical College, Lahore, concerning academic discernment between the English people and Indians. This crusade was a complete success. In the freedom struggle of India, numerous student protests emerged and engaged in it, and were also very impactful. It is reported that in the years 1906 to 1918, of the 184 persons that were convicted in Bengal in association with revolutionary undertakings, 68 were students. It is noted that 'Charka Swaraj first, and education after" was the dictum of the second All India College Students Conference held at Ahmedabad in the year 1912. The students were completely dedicated to the cause of freedom of the India.

The first Students' Union in India was formed in 1919. The earliest elected students' union of India were form Ripon College, with Niranjan Sengupta as its President, who later went onto become a revolutionary and a communist leader. The students union of Scottish Church, Presidency, City colleges among others ,created the platform for anti-imperialist struggle to thrive. Students' Unions were also founded in numerous colleges outside Kolkata, and in the absence of an integrated stage, they helped to voice the expression of the student community. There would be annual provincial political seminars in those times, and corresponding students' conferences would be conducted, in which students from all various alley ways of the movement came to partake.

14.4 INDIAN INDEPENDENCE: AN IMPETUS TO STUDENT MOVEMENT

The independence of India is considered to be one of the turning points of the student movements in the country. There was a noticeable transformation of perspective within the headship of the student movements. Instead of the large student organizations, a substantial number of local groups, typically of an ad-hoc nature, emerged. Activism had a tendency to be localized forced, on university problems or local political engagements, instead of focusing on rational or wider ideological enquiries. It was in the year 1947 that the All India Student Congress Federation (AISCF) came into formation. Post a split, it was named as National Students Union of India (NSUI). NSUI is a student faction of the Congress party. There was growing consciousness among the student community and intellectuals, that the fight for national independence has to be connected with the workers and farmers crusades for a better life and freedom from exploitation. In 1943 when severe famine hit Bengal, the Students Federation joined in the united opposition to black-marketing and the crusade against the food crisis. The Bengal Provincial Student Federation (BPSF) arranged a relief fund and established relief camps. At the appeal of the AISF, students from other provinces also extended support for carrying out relief activities.

With independence, the milieu of student politics had transformed along with a modification in the character of national politics. The common opponent, the foreign potentate had left the land, and fresher struggles developed. Instead of displacing all remaining smidgeons of colonial regulation the new government conversely developed an understanding with the colonial countries. Post the dawn of independence, the new government became fanatical of any movements by the people. It expediently forgot the assurances that had been made to common masses about eliminating poverty and universalizing education. It became obvious very early that it was not possible to safeguard the interests of the moneyed classes and the common mass simultaneously. Not only had the people's expectations of economic development been ruined, the democratic rights of people were also under substantial pressure. In a short span of time, laws were passed to permitdetention without trial. Efforts were made to limit rights to gathering and limit freedom of speech. For example, the Communist Party was affirmed illegal once again, since it was the leaders of workers and farmers crusade across the country, like the uprising against the Nizam by the farmers of the Telengana region. During this time the AISF's mouthpiece "The Student" came out with a list of 50 cases of police firing on citizens between the 15th August of 1948 and 1949. The government dispensed a prohibitory notification against all activities of the AISF, and it was only after a litigation in the High Court that the notice was withdrawn and the ban lifted.

It is important to note that the Congress began to promulgate an argument that the student's movement in new India had become extraneous and that students must not worry about national or international politics, and that their only responsibility was to study and build their individual careers. This was the dominant message in Nehru's speech at the foundation of the National Union of Students in 1950. It must be noted that the United Student's Movement that had been conscientiously assembled in the pre-independence years underwent a critical phase in these years. The provisional stillness in the campuses wafted over very rapidly as students became disenchanted with the new government's education programs and with sustained attacks on democracy.

14.5 ISSUES, LEADERSHIP, AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIFFERENT STUDENT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA FROM PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD UPTO THE PRESENT

It us important to reiterate that student movements in India have arisen in precarious historical junctures reacting to problems and challenge confronted by them and society as a whole. Student movement in India can be divided into three phases a) pre- independence period b) post independent period and c) globalisation period. With respect to the mentioned classification, the following account highlights the various issues that different movements engaged with, the emergence of leadership in different circumstances, and their consequences.

- **Pre- Independence Phase**

  In the pre-independence, era some of the most important struggles for freedom were led by students.

  Swadesi Movement (1905) gave students a revolutionary viewpoint which called them to refuse colleges as well as British goods and student clubs. This movement created the arena for students to take active part in politics. 'Charka Swaraj First and Education after' was the main dictum of students at that time.

  1st Non Cooperation Movement (1919) was the segment of this movement. The All India College Students Conference was held at Nagpur in1920 and the resolution on non-co-operation and embargo of schools and colleges was passed with an overpowering majority.

  2nd Non Cooperation Movement (1930) was the second instance wherein the students were invoked. Students led demonstrations, planned hartals and courted detention in large numbers in Punjab, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bombay. This was the most dynamic period of political campaigning by Indian students. In 1936, at the first All India Students Conference at Lucknow, a

whooping number of 986 student representatives from 210 local and11 provincial groups from Punjab, UP, CP, Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa joined the conference.

Quit India Movement (1942) was the uprising in the history of India that saw the participation of students in such an enormous majority. The students magnificently managed to close down most of the colleges and became the vital connection between the underground leaders and the Indian freedom movement.

- **Post-Independence Period**

As discussed early, during the post-independence era there was a remarkable change of perspective within the leadership of the student crusade in the post independent era. Students were aggressively occupied in the Naxalite movement,Chipko movement, Anti Emergency Movement and more.

The Naxalite movement was commanding in the states of West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. For instance in the 1967 Naxalite movement in West Bengal brought out the best of students from Calcutta and other places in to the struggle. Huge number of students and youths from Calcutta joined in the movement against landlordism, feudal mistreatment and social mortification of the tribal people land less farmworkers and agricultural workers at the hand of zamindars and moneylenders.

Republic Yuvak Sangatan (RPI) 1961 is considered to be the first Dalit student movement in India. It was formed to crusade against casteism and to provide security to scheduled castes.

In the 7th of August 1990, the VP Singh Government announced, at the Rajya Sabha, it's verdict to implement the Mandal Commission report. Unplanned but well executed student campaigning rose against the implementation of Mandal Commission. Students from the higher caste of the St.Stephens College and Delhi School of Economics led the campaign. The uprising caught most of the political student groups in the universities off guard and 2000 Delhi University students remonstrated at the

directorate of Dooradarshan Kendra with streamers of Anti Mandal Commission Forum.

The Assam Movement (or Assam Agitation) of 1979-1985 was a popular crusade against illegal immigrants in Assam. The movement was spearheaded by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad' (AAGSP), which carried out a sequence of protests and demonstration to force the government to classify and banish illegal immigrants. One of the violent incidents of the movement was the Nellie massacre, and it is considered to be one of the extreme cases of violence. The agitation ended in August 1985 succeeding the Assam Accord, which was signed by leaders of AASU-AAGSP and the government of India. At the end of the movement, the student leaders formed a political party, Assam Gana Parishad, and it came to power in the state of Assam post a win in the Assembly elections of 1985 and later in 1996.

- **Globalisation Period**

At this point of time most of the student movements were faced with ideological complications including the left student movements. The rationale and conduct of the students completely transformed. But a rise was seen in the movement for gender rights.

'MANUSHY' was a crusade of some women students in Sanskrit College Pattambi 1990 for resolving the issues of women student in campuses. It was an uncommon initiative of the women students in Kerala.

Cyber activist student movements led to Free Software Movement. This is the crusade against the domination of the Microsoft corporations in the software industry. It is struggle against the hegemony of knowledge. Currently, this movement is active in most of the Engineering Colleges in Kerala. Calicut NIIT, for example, hosted India's biggest free softwere workshop as a move to end digital knowledge hegemony.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) What is student movement?

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Q2) When is international student's day?

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Q3) Which event marks the commencement of student movements in India?

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Q4) When was the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) formed?

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Q5) Which year did Assam student movement begin?

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14.6 LET US SUM UP

- Student activism, in simple forms is defined as the work carried out by students to usher in political, environmental, economic, or social transformation.
- In India the history of student movements is more than 150 years old. Many are of the opinion that with the establishment of the Student's Scientific and Historic Society in 1848 Dadabhai Navaroji founded the seeds for student's movement.
- The Independence of India is considered to be one of the turning points of the student movements in the country. There was a noticeable transformation of perspective within the headship of the student movements.