

RESEARCH THEME

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Student unrest is a global problem affecting almost every part of the world and occurring almost every day¹. Gravity of this ever increasing daily phenomenon is felt by one and all².

The problem requires proper attention and specifically thorough analysis. But the few systematic attempts³ in India, so far dealing with the problem, have mostly viewed it broadly.

Overview of Literature

Available literature relevant to the present study may now be overviewed.

So far, there have been such general writings on student unrest mostly from the view points of the elders in authority. The present study is a modest attempt to examine the problem of unrest from the point of view of students, their expectations from their teachers and other elders in the college and outside of it.

"While there have been too many explanations of student unrest in India", writes Anil Baran Ray, reinforcing the above statement, "there has not been much analysis of the problem from the perspective of students — their expectation from the political and educational systems".⁴

Further, it is relevant to quote Singh and Albatch when they write "Studies of the nature of professors in India, their incomes, social backgrounds, attitudes and other aspects have seldom been made"⁵.

" very little attention has been given to the problems and attitudes of students. Academic institutions must understand their students and begin to deal constructively with their problems. Attitude surveys of student needs, studies of the conditions of activism, and of the physical, psychological and academic problems facing students are all important"⁶.

While the present study is undertaken with the above stated need in view, efforts are now being made to overview the relevant literature and to bring in sharp focus the pertinent finds while pointing out the relevance and justification of the present work.

Kabir, Humayun. Student Unrest : Causes and Cure (1958). As an educational adviser to the Government of India, ~~as a~~ Kabir thought over the problem of student unrest and sent letters, on it, to the Ministers of different states of India. In 1958 he dealt with the analysis of the problem in the present form -- Student Unrest : Causes and Cure.

Writing about the work, P. N. Bhatt observed, "This was perhaps the first attempt to look at the problem of student unrest in

the perspective of social changes -- effected by the Second World War and the attainment of independence".⁷

One of the significant observations of Kabir is : "The authoritarian character of the existing system of education is also an important factor in the growth of student unrest and indiscipline. This is a reflection of the authoritarian temper of our society where difference of opinion with an elder is often regarded as disrespect for him. The students are generally passive recipients of orders from above."

Sarkar, Chanchal. The Unquiet Campus : A Statesman Survey (1960).

It is a survey of some Indian universities namely, Calcutta, Jadavpore, Viswa Bharati, Lucknow, Madras, Ballava Vidyapith, Mysore and Osmania.

Sarkar collected relevant information, by observing students' activities, by interviewing them and the university authorities while staying in the above mentioned university towns for brief periods, about the conditions and factors leading to student unrest. The above mentioned work (a pamphlet) is the outcome of his qualitative findings and impressions.

Sarkar finds, among other things, that "there are two very painful things in Indian universities to-day. One, the rooted distrust which students have about motives and purposes of university authorities, the other, the demoralization and apathy among teachers.

Cormack, Margaret. She Who Rides A Peacock (1961). Cormack has based her work on the opinions collected on student unrest from students, teachers and others of the twelve south Indian universities. 'She Who Rides A Peacock', analysing the causes of student unrest, is the outcome of Cormack's findings and impressions.

Shils, Edward has written a number of books and articles on Indian students and intellectuals. An important observation of Shils in his "Indian Students : Rather Sadhus than Philistines" in Albatch, P. G. ed. Turncoil and Transition (1968), "The mass of students would never have come forward into the arena of agitation unless there were a few who showed that it could be done with impunity."

To Cormack, Indian students appear as persons who have been caught in the whirlwind of rapid social change. To Shils, the Indian students are rather "Sadhus than Philistines", a sadhus without a great cause.

Albatch, Philip G. Students Politics In Bombay (1968). Albatch's work on the political activities of students of Bombay higher educational institutions was based on his reading of the British Indian political history and his impressions of the present situations on the campus.

Ross, Aileen D. Student Unrest in India (1969). This study on the college students in India is mainly based on newspaper reports and interviews.

Certain relevently significant findings from the book may be referred to :

Teachers and not the students are indisciplined. Majority of the teachers are either late for their classes or do not turn up at all and when they lecture, it is often in the easiest way.

Student frustrations can mostly be traced to indifferent teachers and unprogressive teaching.

Ross (herself a woman) is very much critical of the Indian women teachers :

Ross finds them "particularly unsure of themselves especially when lecturing to boys." Their weak control over their students may be partly due to the fact that they tend to lecture in low, monotonous voices which are very hard for the students to hear." Another factor is that "they are less interested in their students They go to college to lecture, — which usually means dictating notes which they themselves often do not understand — then they go home Part of their attitude results from the fact that the great majority of them lecture only for a few years before marrying. they pass the time lecturing and waiting for a husband. This is the main reason why they do not give their work the devotion that the task demands."

Sarkar, S. N. Student Unrest (1974). It is an empirical study based on Sarkar's Ph. D. thesis on the problem -- 'Student Unrest : Factors Underlying it'. The study was conducted on students in Bihar and data for it were collected in the year, 1963. The sample consisted of four hundred persons including teachers, students, guardians and administrators of Bihar.

Sarkar notes one of his important findings in this way: "The researcher as a college teacher has been observing for about seven years the affairs of many colleges of Bihar. Most depressing affair is the disharmonious relationship among members of certain departments, among the heads of certain departments, and at times, between certain subordinate members and their departmental bosses."

In another place of his book, Sarkar notes another of his important findings: "According to the consensus of the population under the purview of the present study, the factor of the lack of adequate teacher-taught contact has been considered as responsible, to a great extent (83.50% agreed to this view) for developing student indiscipline in this state."

Srivastava, H. C. The Genesis of Campus Violence (1974). It is an academic study in "historicistic explanation of the genesis of campus violence. Banaras Hindu University is the field.

It represents a thesis that "the campus violence is a self-generating process out of a system of constant causes. The historicistic casual design, based on well-established truth of Hindu society and culture, has created an obscurant social type. The university is mechanism of stratification and preservation of differential opportunity structure. It creates a polysigmental structure of vested interests which resort to feudalistic intrigues in driving away the vice-chancellors as a show of power-supremacy in the campus These groups are now determined to 'physically crush' the opponents. The social type is an ideal host to the germs of Rightist-revivalist politics prone to revolutionary process, reducing it to an anti-university campus where prevails an acute crisis of confidence."

Vidyarthi, L. P. The Students Unrest In Chotnagpur (1975).

It is an empirical study of 422 college students under the Ranchi University. Data for the study were collected in the academic year, 1969-70, with the aid of postal questionnaire. Opinions of teachers, principals, administrators and guardians were also surveyed.

One or two of Vidyarthi's findings may be noted : The organised minority group of students with the blessings of a section of non-conformist teachers of the respective campus and owing to the actionless and unimaginative role of the university or college executives and sometimes supported by the visible or invisible outsiders succeed in creating chaos and disturbances in the campus.

There "two classes of teachers co-exist in the colleges or university" -- (1) "conformist" and (2) "non-conformist".

"The conformist teachers are those who are dedicated to teaching and research and has a pent up desire to maintain a decent academic atmosphere

"The non-conformist teachers are essentially the dissenters and they compromise with extra academic norms. They are not fully devoted to teaching and research and develop political affiliation or enter into caste-based factions or cliques. They get greatly involved in university politics and use their offices and power politics for achieving extra academic objectives.

"While the few non-conformist teachers wield powerful influence in the university and exercise control on the decision-making, the conformist teachers with their high ideals and rich experience get alienated from the main stream of unacademic activities, and are mainly adored silently by the disorganised students, teachers and serious minded public men".

Mehra, L. S. Youth in Modern Society (1977). It is an empirical study of five hundred male students of seven colleges affiliated to Lucknow University in the 1964-65 academic session. Data were collected by questionnaire and interviews. Questionnaires were administered and interviews held by Mehra himself.

Of the important findings, according to Nehra, "the respondents do not generally find the environments of their colleges congenial to studies. Some are not satisfied with the mode of teaching, some find the libraries inadequate and some are dissatisfied with the amenities provided by the institution."

Ray, Anil Baran. Students and Politics in India (1977).

A product of doctoral research, it is a case study of local, regional and national politics in Benaras Hindu University. It traces the history of parochialization and politicization at the Benaras Hindu University from Pre-independence to the early Post-independence ~~and~~ years. It also analyses three cases of student agitations (1958, 1965 and 1968) to elaborate the themes of parochialization and politicization in the Benaras Hindu University in recent years.

Very important, the study shows the interrelationship between student politics, faculty politics and party politics in India in the context of a national university — the Benaras Hindu University.

Materials for the study have been drawn from the documents relating to the founding and development of the university and from newspapers, legislative debates, government reports, periodicals and books.

Aikara, Jacob. Ideological Orientation of Student Activism (1977)

An outcome of Aikara's Ph. D. thesis, it is an empirical study on the

Students ~~of Kerala~~ of Kerala. Data for the study were collected from the college students of Kerala in November-December, 1971, with the aid of self-administered questionnaire consisting of 73 questions.

Student activism, according to Aikara, is both desirable and functional to the social system. It actually is a facet of mature but normal behaviour of the students. Student unrest is not a "senseless reflex action" but is worthy of initiating a social movement.

"Devoid of ideology" writes Aikara, "student activism or for that matter any social movement has very little prospect of being effective".

It appears from the overview of the works referred to above that all the works, except those of Ray, Albatch and Aikara, viewed the problem broadly. Ray, Albatch and Aikara only viewed it from specific angles -- all of the three authors, by coincidence, viewing it from the political side. When the problem is dealt with from one specific angle of view, it appears to have generally more thoroughness and depth than when the problem is dealt with broadly covering all conceivable factors responsible for student unrest.

It further appears from the overview that no work had viewed the problem of student unrest from the point of view and the perspective of the present work. But it is necessary to note that all the works on

student unrest, in one way or other, have recognised the importance of the teacher-student relationship in dealing with the problem.

Statement of the Problem

It is a fact that harmonious teacher-student relationship is an important medium of education, including education of the young minds, apart from its significant role in reducing tension in the relation. It is desired that in every educational institution — school, college or university — a close and cordial teacher-student relationship should exist to serve as an useful channel of smooth transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. And in the act of the transmission of knowledge from one to another, personality⁸ of teacher is an important determinant of the type of teacher-student relationship that is to follow. This is true through the Indian history — from the early Vedic times down to the present.

In ancient and medieval India, teacher-student relationship in the Hindu, Buddhist and Mohammedan centres of learning was apparently close because the centres were residential and the number of students per teacher was small. But the close teacher-student relationship soon began to suffer with the emergence of the regular institutions like Takshashila and Nalanda.

When judged by the "rules of respect" governing the teacher-student relationship in ancient and medieval India, it was more a relationship between a god and a man than a relationship between a man

(teacher) and a man (student). It was an intimate relationship more in the physical sense than in the real sense.

Hindu teachers, backed by a rigid educational system and certain other social conditions, were very much authoritarian and the Hindu system much more pervasive and permanent than the Buddhist and Moham- edan systems in its influence upon the educational centres, particularly, on their teachers, upto the present times.

During the British era in India, it was the "ruling race idea" that dominated everything tangible. Indians as a whole were neglected, their merit was hardly appreciated. As an inevitable result, Indian teachers were not honoured people and much less the Indian students. There were occasional clashes between Indian teachers and European or Anglo-Indian students, on the one hand; European, particularly, British teachers and Indian students, on the other. However, teachers (not the Indian but the European) remained authoritarian in their relation to their students.

Teacher-student relationship, in this era, was a bitter one. It was a relationship of domination and exploitation of the Indians (including teachers and students) by the Europeans (including teachers and students).

In the Post-independent India, situations changed but teachers, among others, failed to part with their centuries-old authoritarian mentality further reinforced by the Britishers. Students, conscious of their power (power that helped driving the imperial British from India) broke into protesting spree for their expectations of sympathy and understanding from their teachers stumbled over the hard rock of reality.

It is under this perspective that efforts have been made to understand empirically the students, the teachers and others of the seven undergraduate non-professional colleges in the 1879-1980 academic session of North Bengal (the northern half of the state of West Bengal in India.)

It is found that images of teachers are created by their own activities inside or outside of the class rooms and it is in response to these activities of teachers that students are respectful, indifferent or even disrespectful towards their teachers. Good teaching followed by sympathy and good behaviour wins the respect and admiration for a teacher from students.

Teaching and research are acknowledged to be complementary but a few teachers are research oriented. They spend a good deal of their time on politics, private tuition, their easy going nature etc. Devoted and academically serious teachers are few.

Teachers are dwarfed, in the eyes of their students, by their unedifying personal lives, discriminatory attitudes among teachers of different subjects of different faculties, of colleges with different managements and between teachers of university and colleges.

It springs no surprise when, in such a background, teachers are insulted or even assaulted by their students.

Teachers are, more or less, politically involved and this paves the way for students' political involvement. When both the teachers and students are politically involved, there emerges in the next stage, political grouping among teachers followed by similar grouping among students. Common faith in a political party leads to grouping. Teachers bound by a common political faith are linked to students bound by the identical political faith. Thus, politics divides teachers as much as students. There are more than one political parties having their student-wings. This leads to many groups among teachers and, consequently, among students. And political division frequently entails clashes with serious consequences leading to manhandling of teachers, damaging of college property and the like.

There is another dimension of the problem. Teacher-non-teacher relationship is strained and this strained relationship affects, in turn, the teacher-student relationship. When students find that their teachers are not respected by the non-teaching employees, Governing Body members

and others, students' already indifferent attitudes towards their teachers are encouraged. When insults or assaults upon teachers by their students are not decried by the non-teaching employees, Governing Body members and others, students feel justified in their actions. Thus, the teacher-non-teacher strained relationship leads to the teacher-student strained relationship.

In the background of the analysis of the problem, the following specific inquiries are proposed to be made :

1. Whether the continued authoritarian and negligent behaviour of teachers through the ages — from the Vedic down to the present times — has driven the students of the present to behave indifferently and disrespectfully in relation to their teachers and others;
2. Whether the attitudes including the political attitudes and personal outlooks of the present teachers contribute to the aggravation of teacher-student relation as it is found these days; and
3. Whether the strained teacher-non-teacher relationship plays any role in the destabilisation of the teacher-student relationship.

Relevance of the Study

In view of the discussion so far, it clearly emerges that personality of a teacher is very important in establishing a harmonious relation with his students. Students behave as they are behaved to. They are what they are led to be.

A harmonious teacher-student relationship is the most urgently needed thing. While the importance of it is well recognised, there is no work exclusively on it. The researcher has not come across any. The present work is a modest attempt to fill up the vacuum.

As a result of mass education, there is less of teacher-taught contact. "Students proclaim that they are little more than units in an anonymous mass, numbers on a computer tape, and to the professor faceless beings in a lecture hall. They insist that they have no opportunity to develop meaningful personal relationships with professors who are indifferent to their needs and problems."⁹

The neglected students, as a result, clamour for attention through unrest and attempt at self-assertion through indisciplined behaviour.

"We are informed", writes Singhvi, "on the authority of an unpublished study of 1200 cases undertaken by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs that fifty per cent of the students participating in

agitations were dissatisfied with their teachers or educational institutions and the remaining fifty per cent participated at the instance of political parties."¹⁰

Almost echoing Singhvi, M. N. Srinivas writes "Large numbers of indifferent students badly taught by ill-qualified teachers with no concept of decent teacher-student relationships provide an ideal 'culture' for the fomenting of student unrest"¹¹

The decreasing teacher-taught contact played a crucial role in precipitating the Berkeley unrest and the like in the United States of America.

The increasing importance of it is felt by all concerned. According to the Report of the Education Commission, 1964-1966 (1966), under the chairmanship of D. S. Kothari, "what binds together students and teachers in a deep and creative partnership is the sharing of common interests, mutual regard and sense of values, and working together for their main purpose which is the pursuit of knowledge and discovery. Anyone who is not committed to this philosophy or prepared to honour it has really no place in an institution of higher education."

Quite aware of the enormous importance of the problem of the decreasing teacher-student relationship, the researcher has undertaken the present study and that also in an unexplored area — North Bengal.

There has been no work on the problem of student unrest in this area, let alone researching on it from the researcher's point of view.

It is a study of students, their expectations from their teachers and other elders in a college and out of it. It is probably the first study of its nature. This fact gives further justification for undertaking the present work and gives it an added importance.

Aims and Purposes

1. It is aimed to be a study of the attitudes and behaviour of teachers, non-teaching employees, Governing Body members and other elders of the non-professional undergraduate colleges (including the respective institutional milieu and the socio-political background) to understand students, their expectations, their frustrations and their reactions, overt or covert, to their teachers and others;
2. It is aimed, further, at exploring the various factors affecting the desired teacher-student relationship and the pattern of relationship that evolves out of the interacting factors; and finally,
3. It is aimed to study the present teachers in the background of their counterparts in the ancient, medieval, Pre-independence and latter times to find out a link, if any, connecting the teachers through the ages of Indian history.

Notes and References

1. The portion dealing with the series of incidents of student unrest in different parts of India since 1960s and still earlier under the heading 'Present Background' as recorded in the first part of the third section in chapter - iii (P.76-77) may be looked into.
2. Taking note of the gravity of the problem, Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi as well as Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Mrs Madhuri Shah, are "in favour of having a full-time University Security Force in almost all the universities in the country ... to curb student indiscipline on campuses." — The Statesman (Calcutta) dated 15.12.81, P. 11.
3. "We have had no systematic studies of student unrest in the country except by a few visiting scholars from the United States"
[The observation, made almost a decade ago, continues to remain more or less true.] Joshi, A. C. "The Problems and Possible Remedies" in Singhvi, L. M. ed. Youth Unrest (1972), P. 220.
4. Ray, Anil Baran. "Revolt, Activism and Apathy : Reflections on Socio-political Expectations of students in India", Journal of Higher Education, 4(3) 1979; P. 301.
5. Singh and Albatch. ed. The Higher Learning in India (1974), P.XIV.
6. Ibid. P. XIV - XV.
7. Bhatt, P. N. "Problems of Student Unrest : An Analysis of its causes and cure" in Singhvi, L. M. ed. Youth Unrest : Conflict of Generations (1972), P. 288.
8. " one's personality is the totality of impressions one makes on others". — Ogburn and Ninkoff. A Hand Book of Sociology (1972), P. 159.
9. Grayson L. Kirk is quoted in George, B. I. "Needs and Problems of students" in Mehta, Prayag. ed. The Indian Youth : Emerging Problems and Issues (1971), P. 26.
10. Singhvi, L. M. "Quest for fulfilment" in Singhvi. ed. Youth Unrest (1972), P. 16.
11. Srinivas, N. N. "Our Angry Young Men : Troubled Social Background" in Singhvi, L. M. ed. Youth Unrest (1972), P. 102-3.