

Youth Unrest and Agitations

Along with caste, religious and linguistic stereotypes, there exist many other stereotyped images in our country. One such image is about our youth. The stereotyped image is that youth are militant, rebellious, revolutionary, irrational and immature. It is true that the youth are susceptible to outside influences and imitate others but this does not mean that the youth only believes in destruction, killing, assault, and terrorism. When there is a total disillusionment in the society with the existing social structures and institutions, with the contradictions in the social system, with the politics and the politicians, with the decisions and decision-makers, and when everybody is conscious of the falling standards in all walks of life, social discrimination, prevailing corruption, and the search for monetary gains through illegitimate means, why should the youth alone be expected to conform to traditional moral values and lofty ideals? How can they look up to so-called self-proclaimed leaders for inspiration?

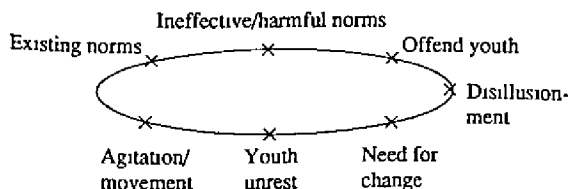
The youth tend to become angry when they notice the widening chasm between what the leaders preach and what they practice; when the leaders call for sacrifice but they themselves live in luxury; when the leaders talk of morality but they themselves maintain liaison with smugglers, criminals and anti-social elements; when they appeal for peace and harmony but they themselves revel in factional squabbles, when they shed crocodile tears for the poor but always live with and support the rich. Disappointed and disillusioned by this, the frustrated youth start some agitation to lodge a social protest. Some politicians start taking an interest in these agitations and in some cases, they use the help of anti-social elements to keep these agitations alive. When

these anti-social elements indulge in loot and arson, it is the youth who come to be blamed for these destructive activities. The frustrated youth, thus, become more frustrated and the unrest among them further increases.

Concept of Youth Unrest

What is unrest ? What is social unrest ? What is youth unrest ? 'Unrest' means 'disturbed condition'. It is 'the state of disillusionment and dissatisfaction'. Social unrest is the manifestation of collective disillusionment, discontentment and frustration of the group, community or society. If there is unrest among the students of one university, it is not perceived as the problem of 'student unrest' as such. It is only when students all over the country feel frustrated on common issues like admissions, content of courses, the examination system and the representations in academic bodies, can we say that there exists the problem of student unrest in our society. Similarly, it is not the unrest among the workers of one industry that is termed as 'industrial unrest' but it is the collective discontentment among all workers in different industries in the country on issues of minimum wages, safety measures, security of employment, and certain intra-mural and extra-mural facilities that is referred to as the problem of 'industrial unrest'. The same is true of the peasant unrest, tribal unrest and women unrest. The emphasis in the concept of social unrest is on "collective frustration and disillusionment on common issues of the groups in the society".

On this basis, youth unrest may be defined as the "manifestation of collective frustration by the youth in the society". It is manifested when the existing norms in the society are perceived by the youth as ineffective or harmful to the extent that they offend them, and they feel so disillusioned that they recognise the need for changing these norms.



Characteristics of Youth Unrest

On the basis of the above definition, it may be said that the youth unrest is characterised by (i) collective discontent, (ii) dysfunctional conditions, (iii) public concern, and (iv) the need for change in the existing norms.

Youth agitation on the other hand is characterised by (i) action based on the feeling of injustice, (ii) growth and spread of a generalised belief among the youth which identifies the source of discontent, frustration and deprivation, (iii) emergence of leadership and mobilisation for action, and (iv) collective reaction to stimuli.

It will not be out of place to explain the concept of student indiscipline at this stage. Indiscipline is disobedience to authority, or disrespect to elders, or deviation from norms, or refusing to accept control, or rejecting goals and/or means. Student indiscipline is the 'use of undesirable methods' by students. A committee appointed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1960 included three types of behaviour in student indiscipline: (i) disrespect for teachers, (ii) misbehaviour with girls, and (iii) destroying property. Further, it included the indiscipline of not one or a few students but of a large group of students. Some scholars described this definition as defective. They maintain that three situations create indiscipline among students (a) Students lose interest in the goals of the (educational) institution. In such a situation, they remain members (of the institution) but do not follow its norms. (b) Students accept the goals but doubt whether the institution can achieve them. They, therefore, try to 'improve' the institution by deviating from its norms. (c) Norms of institutions fail to achieve goals and students, therefore, want a change in norms.

Youth unrest may be viewed in three perspectives: (1) unrest among youth, (2) unrest due to the youth, and (3) social unrest in the country and its effect on the youth. We will focus our discussion in this chapter on the first and the third aspects, though in passing we may refer to the second aspect also.

Youth Protests, Agitations and Movements

Social protest is an expression of disapproval to something a person is powerless to prevent or avoid. It is a mode of communicating discontentment rather than direct action. It is an expression of outrage against injustice. The important elements of social protest are. (i) action expresses grievance, (ii) it points out to a conviction of injustice,

(iii) protesters are unable to correct the condition directly by their own effort, (iv) action is meant to provoke ameliorative steps by the target group, and (v) protesters depend upon the combination of coercion, persuasion, sympathy and fear to move the target group.

If the protesters indulge in looting, it is not to acquire property; if they indulge in breaking windows, it is not to seek vengeance; if they shout slogans against a person, it is not to insult him. All these methods are resorted to merely express resentment against their unfulfilled demands and towards the adoption of a callous attitude to their grievances.

Youth Agitations

Social protest may lead to aggression, agitation, and movement. *Aggression* is unprovoked attack. It is behaviour whose goal is the harm/injury of some person (Dollard, 1939) David Myres (1988 : 395) defines aggression as "physical or verbal behaviour that hurts, harms or destroys". This excludes accidental hurts or unintentional hitting; but it certainly includes gossipy 'digs' about a person which hurt him. Feshbach (1970) has given two types of aggression—*hostile* aggression and *instrumental* aggression. The former springs from anger and its goal is to injure. It is resorted to as an end in itself. The latter also aims to hurt but only as a means to some other end. The term 'aggression' is used more in wars, while the term 'agitation' fits more to the youth's collective behaviour.

Agitation is to bring grievance and injustice to the notice of people in power. It is to shake up, to move, to stir up, to cause anxiety, and to disturb the power-holders. *Social movement* is the activity of diffused collectivity oriented towards changing the social order. According to Turner and Killian (1972 : 246), social movement is a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist change in the society or group of which it is a part. It is characterised by (i) collective action which is initiated, organised and sustained, (ii) ideology, and (iii) orientation toward social change. The *pressure group* is one which wants the existing norms to be interpreted to benefit it. In agitation, there is always pressure group tactics but in social movement, it may or may not be there. The difference between agitation and social movement is that social movement may take the form of agitation but every movement does not do so. Many movements are peaceful, for example, the women's liberty movement, the prohibition movement or the anti-nuclear movement. These peaceful movements are the result of cultural drift.

Youth agitation is the behaviour of the youth whose goal is neither injury of a person nor destruction of public property but social protest. It is neither the result of innate destructive drive nor it is an inborn reaction to frustrations. It is learned. The various forms of youth agitations are: demonstrations, slogan shouting, strikes, hunger-strikes, road blocks (*rasta roko*), *gheraos*, and boycott of examinations. The preconditions for youth agitations are: (i) structural strain, (ii) identifying source of strain, (iii) precipitating factor, and (iv) mobilisation of action by a leader. The important functions of youth agitations are: (i) to create collective consciousness and group solidarity, (ii) to organise the youth to work for new programmes and new plans, and (iii) to provide opportunities to the young individuals to express their feelings and make some impact on the course of social change.

Agitations could be violent or non-violent. In 1988, of the 5,838 incidents of students' agitations in India, only 18.0% were violent, in comparison to 15.0% violent agitations in 1987, 43.0% in 1986 and 19.0% in 1985. Further, of the total students' agitations in 1988, 56.0% related to non-academic issues, (within the campuses, like changing the name of the university), 19.0% to academic issues, and 25.0% to some social issues (reducing bus-fare, communal tension). In August and September, 1990, many universities/colleges in Northern India faced the problem of students' agitations on the reservation issue and remained closed for about two months.

Students' agitations may also be classified as . (i) student-oriented agitations, and (b) society-oriented agitations. The former include problems at college/university level and at national level while the latter refer to taking interest in state/country's politics and policies and programmes. Student-oriented agitations are generally discontinuous and problem-oriented rather than value-oriented. For example, students will agitate for removing a particular vice-chancellor of a university but they will never fight for a change in the system of selecting vice-chancellors in universities in India. Similarly, they will fight to postpone examinations for a particular year but they will not agitate for restructuring the examination system as such.

Process of Growth of Agitation Due to Youth Unrest

A life-cycle which many youth agitations follow can be explained. The stages include. (1) the *discontent* stage, which is the stage of dissatisfaction and growing confusion with the existing conditions;

(2) the *initiation* stage, in which the leader emerges, the causes of discontent are identified, excitement increases and proposals for action are debated; (3) the *formalisation* stage, in which programmes are developed, alliances are forged, and support is also sought of some crusaders; (4) the *public support* stage, in which youth trouble is transferred into public trouble. This not only creates awareness among public but also seeks public support on the issue concerned. Initially, the action starts in one area but then it spreads in other areas. The youth fail to get the public support where (a) the claim is too vague, (b) the issue is incorrectly focussed, (c) the issue is not powerful to gain attention, (d) ineffective strategies are adopted by the youth for pressing claims, and (e) there is opposition from other groups; and (5) *official action* stage in which the agencies in power realise the importance of the issue, officially acknowledge the discontentment and agree to adopt strategies to solve the issue. Sometimes, the strategy adopted by the group in power is rejected by the youth leaders and the youth start a movement to counter the strategies of the people in power

Important Youth Agitations in India

After Independence, three important youth agitations may be cited in our country which, though functional in their own way, had some tragic consequences. These were the anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat in 1985, the All Assam Students Union agitation in Assam in 1984, and the anti-Mandal agitation in northern India in 1990. This is apart from the role the youth played in the anti-reservation caste riots in Gujarat in 1981, in terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir between 1985 and 1991, and in Jharkhand agitation in Bihar.

Gujarat Agitation

The anti-reservation youth agitation in Gujarat in 1985 had started when following the recommendations of the Rane Commission (which was appointed in April, 1981 and had given its recommendations in October, 1983), the Gujarat Government hastily enhanced the reservation quota in March, 1985, just before the Assembly elections, for the students of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC). The quota was increased from 10% to 28.0%, the maximum allowed by the Rane Commission. The Rane Commission had laid emphasis on income and occupation rather than caste as a criterion for backwardness, using Rs 10,000 a year as a yardstick. The Gujarat

government had already reserved 14.0% seats for the STs, 7.0% for the SCs, 3.0% for the handicapped, 1.0% for the children of the ex-servicemen and 10.0% for the SEBC. The increase of 18.0% more seats for the SEBC meant a total reservation of 53.0% seats in colleges. Since 70.0% of the State's population (of 3.4 crore) was covered by the reservation (of 53.0% seats), it meant that only 47.0% seats were open to the 30.0% population of the state. Further, out of every 100 seats in colleges, 30 seats were reserved for other states. Adding these 30 seats to the 37 reserved seats for STs, SCs and the SEBC (out of every 100 seats) meant that only 33 seats were available to rest of the students. Naturally, the students reacted and started an anti-reservation agitation. Unfortunately, the peaceful Gujarat *bandh* organised by the students on March 18, 1985, was followed by Hindu-Muslim clashes on March 19, 1985 when the Muslims refused to join the anti-reservationists against the Harijans. When six student leaders were arrested under The National Security Act (NSA), the agitationists intensified their stir. They were joined by government doctors which forced the government to suspend some striking doctors. The suspension of the doctors added fuel to the fire and the agitation flared up.

The students were now joined by their parents who formed a small body in Ahmedabad and decided to work shoulder to shoulder with their wards in their efforts to get the reservation policy scrapped. For calming down the communal riots which had simultaneously started, the police beat up people indiscriminately in some lower middle class residential areas in Ahmedabad. Soon the government started talks with student leaders, opposition leaders, and leaders of the parents' body and accepted all demands put up by the agitationists. It also agreed to review the policy of reservation. With the release of student leaders and the reinstating of the suspended doctors, another round of violence by the agitationists started. The stir gained momentum in other parts of the state too. Several persons had died and many were injured and arrested in the violence. When the agitating students killed one constable (on April 22, 1985), the constabulary revolted and stopped work. In an unexpected move, the constables in the funeral procession of the constable killed, attacked the journalists covering the incident. They also set fire to a building of a Gujarati daily. Many shops, houses, banks, vehicles and public offices were set aflame by the agitationists. The opportunist politicians clamouring for power not only instigated the agitationists but also demanded the resignation of the chief minister. Thus, what had started as an anti-reservation agitation by students soon

took the shape of Hindu-Muslim altercations, Harijan versus upper caste communal clashes and political bickering. The stir continued for two months till the government retreated and promised to review the reservation policy.

Similarly, we may take the case of the anti-reservation agitation by the youth in Madhya Pradesh in 1985. In this state, 23.0% seats were reserved for STs, 14.0% for the SCs, 25.0% for the backward classes, 5.0% for the defence personnel and ex-servicemen, 5.0% for the freedom fighters, 4.0% for the poor candidates and 3.0% for the candidates with a technical degree. Thus, since 77.0% seats were reserved for various groups, only 23.0% seats remained for other persons. When students agitated, the Chief Minister appealed to them to 'appreciate' the government's reservation policy of providing crutches to weaker sections of the society. The government did not take sufficient care to calm down the hostility simmering among the 'efficient' upper caste students. It only agreed to discuss the issue with the students on March 3, 1985, a day after the election. No wonder, the state remained traumatised by violent incidents between different sections of its populace for quite some time.

Assam Youth Agitation

The youth of Assam started agitation in 1983-84 on the issue of refugees from East Bengal and ultimately were joined by a majority of the population in the state. The people of Assam had always felt discriminated and neglected by the Centre. They had a feeling that the three big industries—tea, oil and timber—of the state, had not succeeded in forming an integral, enervating and sustaining part of the Assamese economy. They cited instances of internal colonisation and the syphoning off of local resources to stimulate economic development elsewhere in their arguments. This constituted a source for political distress. Then there were ethnic rivalries too between the Assamese and the non-Assamese, and between the tribals and non-tribals. The intensity of the ethnic strife could have been controlled and the process of homogenisation launched and speeded up, if the Centre had made the resources available for rapid economic development. But, Assam remained neglected. It was claimed that the total revenue generated in Assam amounted to Rs. 7,000 crore out of which only Rs. 500 crore (7.1%) was made available to Assam. So the people always remained economically backward. The decision of the central government to permit refugees from the neighbouring state to enter

Assam precipitated the situation and the youth revolted and, thus, began the AASU movement. The agitation culminated in the student community winning the Assembly elections in 1985 and forming the government. For the first time in the history of the country, the students became political rulers.

However, the state government continued to feel the pinch of being neglected by the central government. The youth felt so agitated that the ULFA came into existence. The ULFA activists not only challenged the state authority but sowed seeds of separation, silenced opposition at gun-point, extorted money and erected a parallel government in the state. Since the state government failed to suppress the insurgency of the ULFA youth, the Centre removed the state government from power and President's rule was established and Operation Bajrang was mounted on November 28, 1990 to suppress the ULFA movement and mop up the secessionists.

When the people in a region suffer economically, socially, culturally and politically because of the sudden pressure of lakhs of refugees from the neighbouring country and because of the policy of neglect of the central government, they have a right to protest against the political in-decisions of the ruling party. But one cannot tolerate blackmail of the whole nation on this issue. We all know that because of the AASU agitation in Assam and because of the strike in oil companies, the nation suffered a loss of crores of rupees. But the question remains—should the right of protest be denied to a region which wants to develop and achieve its goals and ideals?

In a democracy, where crores of rupees are spent on elections, the society has to bear some loss due to social protests. The people of the state cannot be branded as anti-nationalists only because they strongly protest on some issue. The Nagaland movement was not started by the youth but it was actively supported by the youth. One came across many road signs in Nagaland planted by the youth proclaiming national unity. "India is a bouquet; Nagaland one bright flower". However, insurgency and secessionism surely cannot be tolerated.

Anti-Mandal Youth Agitation

The agitation and self-immolation cases of the youth in 1990 could hardly be forgotten in recent years. The Janata government suddenly announced on 7th August, 1990 the acceptance of the Mandal Commission's recommendations of reserving 27.0% government jobs for Other Backward Classes candidates. With this politically-motivated

announcement, the government, in fact, showed a matchstick to the tinder box of accumulated social unrest and people's disenchantment with the existing political system. The agitation started in Delhi and soon spread to various states in Northern India. Some young students immolated themselves as a protest and many attempted self-immolation. Jolted by the scale and intensity of the agitation against the thoughtless acceptance of the Mandal Commission's scheme of caste-based reservation, the government came out with some proposals to *defuse the crisis. It announced that the reservations would be confined* to central government jobs and in public sector units. It would not be applicable to admissions in colleges and universities. States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and almost all states in South India accepted these reservation policies. The new Janata(S) government which came to power in December, 1990 had initially adopted a cautious approach to this policy. But, unfortunately, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh forced the Janata(S) Party to commit itself to implementing the Mandal Commission report in its three-day national convention held at Ballia in Uttar Pradesh between 30th January to 1st February, 1991. The youth already agitated on this issue were bound to react adversely to such commitments, but their frustration was somewhat suppressed by the new reservation policy of the Congress government announced in September-October, 1991.

Role of Youth in Other Agitations

The militants' agitation for Khalistan in Punjab and for an independent Kashmir in Jammu and Kashmir and the tribals' demand for a Jharkhand state in Bihar have also be explained in terms of the frustration of the youth in the concerned states.

In Punjab, the figures compiled by the Directorate of Employment point out that till December, 1984, as many as 59,360 persons were registered in the Employment Exchanges in Amritsar and 65,619 in Gurdaspur. Adding figures of other cities to the registered cases, one gets the *idea of the prevalent unemployment among the youth*. Large scale unemployment has surely helped in the growth of extremism. Even the political leaders have confessed that the problem of extremism in Punjab has its roots in the economic hardships faced by the youth. It was on this basis that at least two governors of Punjab insisted on focussing on the solution of unemployment problem of the youth in the state along with concentrating on the political solution of the problem.

In Kashmir also, the real power now rests with the young men. Many persons arrested by the police for getting training in Pakistan are young persons in the 18-25 age group. A lot of Kashmiris asking for Independence are angry youngmen, who have sworn vengeance. And there is no method in their madness.

The movement of the tribals of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Pargana areas of Bihar, popularly called the Jharkhand movement, for a separate state is half a century old. But this movement has recently entered a new phase with All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) organising a successful 72-hour economic blockade in the first week of February, 1991, by disrupting the movement of minerals from South Bihar. The Centre appears to be prepared to concede an autonomous council on the Gorkhaland pattern but the Jharkhandis are insisting on nothing less than a separate state for preserving their cultural heritage and distinct identity. The tribal youth believe that the Hinduisation (because of settlement of outside low caste Hindus in the interior areas) and the spread of Christianity have had a deleterious effect on their centuries old social cohesiveness. They think that the emerging cross-cultural milieu (because of the urbanization and industrialization processes) has only exposed them to assimilation.

The Chhotanagpur tribals have been resisting the inequitous system of dams, factories and exploitation of mineral wealth. The State Reorganisation Commission had dismissed the demand for Jharkhand as impractical and ill-founded but the Adivasi Mahasabha, the precursor of the Jharkhand party, used this slogan of separate state and captured all the tribal majority seats in the area in first elections. Since then, the movement has been gaining momentum, though the lack of proper leadership and a united organisation has been the main drawback of the movement. The AJSU formed a United Jharkhand Party (UJP) on the AASU pattern in Assam. The tribal youth, thus, now seem to be determined to prove their strength in Bihar, though it is doubtful that the agitation would gain in strength in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.

Taking all these agitations and frustrations of the youth in different states, it may be said that it appears that most Indian youths have become so frustrated and pessimistic that they believe that it would not be possible to improve the lot of the people in the country even after one or two decades with the current policies and programmes of the government. According to an all-India survey done of a sample of 2,100 youth in 38 towns across the country by the Operation Research

Group (ORG)—a multidisciplinary research organisation—in April, 1988, on youth perceptions, the youth voiced their concern at the dwindling job opportunities (*The Hindustan Times*, 15 May, 1988). More than 62.0% respondents said that the employment situation has worsened. About 52.2% were convinced that India was not set on the right track for progress and development. Another 36.7% felt that there would be no improvement in the lot of Indians even ten years hence. About 26.0% thought that the conditions would, in fact, worsen. The survey also revealed a mixed response to the government's new education policy. Less than 37.0% felt the policy was good or necessary for the country. In contrast, more than 27.0% asserted that the policy would be of little consequence. Thus, when the majority of the youth in the country are pessimistic not only about their own future and security but also about the country's economic future and social advancement, can youth agitations be contained?

Types of Youth Agitations

Youth agitations are not always violent or coercive. Many a time they use persuasive technique too. We may classify youth agitations into the following groups:

(1) *Persuasive Agitations*: In these agitations, the youth attempt to change the reactions of the power-holders by discussing their problems with them across a table and making them accept their viewpoint. These agitations range from the relatively trivial issues (postponing the examinations, extending the admission date) to significant issues (increasing the number of seats) to the serious issues (giving representation in academic bodies, associating students with decision making processes). Protest demonstrations, shouting of slogans, persuading the power holders to meet the representatives of the students/youth to try and understand their views and demands are some of the methods used in this kind of agitation. The anger and injustice expressed through this method not only serves to arouse and mobilise popular support of passive students/youth but also helps drain off discontent into 'harmless' emotional outlets.

(2) *Resistance Agitations*. The main object of this type of agitation is to keep the power-holders in their place. Many changes intended to be introduced by the authorities appear to be disturbing to students/youth who feel that either their precious years are being wasted or that legitimate opportunities are being denied to them or their careers are going to be adversely affected. For example, the decision of the

university to show reduced marks on revaluation of an answer book (if the candidate's marks are reduced, these reduced marks will be shown in his mark-sheet) has been resisted by the students through agitations which ultimately forced the Academic Council of the university to decide that marks will not be reduced on revaluation. Or say, the university decides to introduce semester scheme or internal assessment scheme or scheme of making 75 0% attendance compulsory. Resistance agitations express the dismay of the students at the direction in which the university is moving.

(3) *Revolutionary Agitations* These agitations aim at bringing sudden sweeping changes in the educational or the social system. For example, forcing the authorities to decide that no student will be declared as failed but will be promoted to higher class and given the opportunity to appear in the failed paper/subject till he clears it. Revolutionary leaders see basic change as possible only after the existing system is overthrown and a new system is sweepingly introduced. Instances of revolutionary agitation can be illustrated by the youth agitation in China in 1987, the AASU agitation in Assam in 1984 and Bodo agitation in Assam in 1989-91. The last agitation is characterised by a growing discontent, increasing disorder, an attempt to overthrow the government of moderates, decision-making by the extremists, a reign of terror and an attempt to smuggle weapons from abroad.

Youth Receptive to Agitations

Five types of youth who take to agitational activities have been identified:

(1) *Socially isolated* youth who feel alienated and cut off from the larger society

(2) *Personally maladjusted* youth who have failed to find a satisfying life role, for example, those who have not developed an adequate interest in studies, are unemployed or under-employed or unsuccessful. They join agitations because of an emotional need to fill the void in their lives

(3) *Unattached to family* youth who lack intimate ties with their families are encouraged to participate in agitations. Young persons with warm and satisfying family ties have no emotional need to join agitations.

(4) *Marginals* youth who are not fully accepted and integrated with their caste/religious/linguistic group feel uneasy, insecure and resentful

They find it difficult to resolve the discrepancy in self-image and public image which necessitates them to join agitations to get some recognition.

(5) *Mobile/migrants* migrants have little chance of getting integrated into the larger community. Joining agitations acts as refuge for them.

B.V. Shah (1968 : 57-63) conducted one study of university students some years back in Gujarat. He classified students on the basis of their social status into four groups to point out the type of students who are more indisciplined or in whom we find more unrest:

(1) *High status, high ability* These are the students who are eligible for admission in any course, who have full confidence in self, who can adjust to all situations and who take keen interest in studies. They remain confident of achieving goals because of their abilities, work hard, do not create any problems and remain away from strikes and demonstrations.

(2) *Low status, high ability.* These are the students who have high ability and are mature, who try to differentiate between right and wrong, work hard, aim at good percentages and grades, remain away from activities which harm them since they have to depend on themselves for getting jobs and promotions and do not participate in strikes and demonstrations. However, there are some youth in this group who in spite of their abilities fail to get recognition as they belong to poor class or to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes/Castes. These students participate in agitations because of their frustrations.

(3) *High status, low ability.* These are the students who can get admission in the desired course because of their influence. However, they cannot compete with good students of high academic standards because of their low ability and, therefore, develop new non-academic values and behaviour patterns. For example, they find nothing wrong in using unfair means, remaining absent from class, creating noise in the classroom, spending more time in college canteens, using pressure tactics on teachers, attempting to bribe examiners and participating in agitations and instigating others to indulge in such activities.

(4) *Low status, low ability* These are the students some of whom take interest in agitations but some keep themselves aloof from such activities. It depends on their peer group as well as their personal aspirations. Thus, more unrest is found among students of second and third categories.

It may, therefore, be concluded that three things are important in students' unrest and agitations: (i) students' family background, (ii) students' abilities, and (iii) educational system, that is, teachers' abilities, teaching techniques, and the content of courses (whether these courses are job-oriented or not). Lipset gives importance to one more factor, namely, the number of years a student has spent in college/university. The more the years spent, the more he participates in agitations.

Limitations of Youth Agitations

However, rational or irrational a youth agitation may be, it is limited by at least four considerations: (1) the number of persons participating, (2) the feelings of agitators, (3) the leadership, and (4) the external controls

If the number of persons who have joined the agitation is small, it may not last long, but if the number is large and adequate enough to attract the attention of the power-holders, it may get some stability and also arouse enthusiasm and dedication of the members.

Second, the feelings, resentments and prejudices of the agitating members also provide stimulus to agitation. If the members are volatile, they will express their hostility without much restraint, but if they are more passive, they will refrain from expressing their emotions and impulses. Young people in agitations can be vocal without guilt feelings. At the same time, they can also be less responsive and can respond unenthusiastically to a good leader/speaker. If a large number of members of the aggressive group share common feelings, the group is likely to edge forward, but if only a few members share common emotions, the group is likely to progress slowly.

The mores of the agitators equally affect their behaviour. Will the students shout slogans against the teachers? Will they destroy the university property? Will they bodily harm the vice-chancellor? Will they seek the help of anti-social elements? Will they use coercive methods in getting donations from the public? All this will be decided by the mores and the moral values of the agitators.

The function of the leader of the agitating group is not to paralyse the moral judgements of the agitating members but to neutralise and isolate their moral judgements. The youth leader also affects the intensity and the direction of agitation. Given a medley of frustrated, discontented and resentful young people, a skillful leader can convert them and direct their aggression at any 'enemy' whom they already

hate. Likewise, a leader can also divert the agitation by a strategic suggestion or command. Since most youth agitations are unstructured with no designated leaders, the leadership position is "up for grabs". Anyone may be able to become a leader by simply being active in giving suggestions in an authoritative manner.

Lastly, an agitation faces certain limitations because of the external controls. The vice-chancellor may call the police in the campus but only a few policemen may be sent. The agitators in such a situation will not face many constraints. But when the youth agitators in the city are surrounded by large number of policemen or policemen with lathis and guns in their hands, they may have to face defeat. Similarly, cold weather, rains, heat and unsympathetic onlookers near the place of agitation, may prevent the agitators from pursuing their efforts.

Causes of Youth Unrest and Agitations

The UGC Committee of 1960 pointed out the following reasons for student agitations: (1) economic causes, like reducing fees, increasing scholarship, (2) demanding changes in existing norms, pertaining to admissions, examinations, and teaching, (3) poor functioning of colleges/universities with non-purchase of chemicals and instruments for laboratories, or books and journals for libraries, (4) conflicting relations between students and teachers (teachers being accused of frequently cutting classes and remaining non-committed to teaching, (5) inadequate facilities in the campus, like inadequate hostels, poor food in hostels, lack of canteens and poor drinking water facilities, and (6) leaders being instigated by politicians.

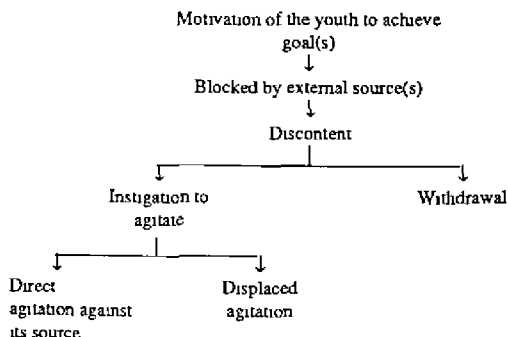
Joseph Dibona studied agitations in one university in Uttar Pradesh and gave three causes of student agitations: (1) *Economic* causes, which included a sense of insecurity for the future and gap between economic needs of the country and the educational system, that is, education being viewed as non-job-oriented, (2) *Socio-psychological* causes, which included defective educational system, gap between aspiration and achievement (getting 80.0% marks yet failing to get admission in college of one's interest), social distance between teacher and students, non-committed teachers, policy of status-quo, corruption and inefficiency, and large number of students in the class or inadequate number of sections in the department/college, and (3) *Political* causes, which included, political interference, and instigation by political leaders. All these factors indicate that the main cause of student unrest and agitations in particular and youth agitations in general lies in social system rather than the personality of the youth.

Theories on the Causes of Youth Agitations

Two kinds of theories may be suggested to explain youth agitations: psychological and sociological. The former emphasises on the personality of the individual and the latter on the society. The two important psychological theories are: (a) Discontent theory, and (b) Personal maladjustment theory, while the two important sociological theories are: (a) Relative deprivation theory, and (b) Resource mobilisation theory.

The *Discontent Theory* holds that agitations are rooted in discontent. Youth who have either no high aspirations or are contented and comfortable with what they have or what they are likely to have will have no interest in agitations. But, those angry youth who feel victimised by outrageous injustice, or those who feel even mildly annoyed with existing structures and opportunities will collectively act to pressurise the power-holders to bring some change (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 : Discontent Approach in Youth Agitations



It is probably true that without discontent amongst the youth, there will be no youth agitations. But discontent is an inadequate explanation. There is no convincing evidence of any close association between the level of grievance and discontent amongst the youth and its level of agitational activity. Young people may endure great discontent and refrain from agitating. Since Independence, youth in India have endured corruption, inequality, exploitation, political manipulations,

police brutality, bureaucratic callousness, religious fanaticism without serious social protest. In fact, all modern societies always have enough discontent to fuel many agitations and movements (Turner & Killian, 1972 : 271). Discontent may be a *necessary* condition but not a *sufficient* condition for youth agitations.

Personal Maladjustment Theory sees agitations as a refuge from personal failure. Agitators find their supporters among the unhappy, frustrated young persons whose lives lack meaning and fulfilment. Hoffer (1951) has also said that the kinds of people who are drawn to agitations and social movements are the bored, the misfits, the creative who cannot create, the guilty, the downwardly mobile, and those who are seriously dissatisfied with their lives. They add meaning and purpose to their empty lives through agitational activity. Horton (1984 : 500) has also said that it is plausible that young people who feel unfulfilled and maladjusted should be more attracted to agitational activities than those who are complacent and feel adjusted. Those who find their personal lives absorbing and fulfilling are less in need of something to give them feelings of personal worth and accomplishment, for they already have these. The agitation-supporters are mainly the frustrated misfits of society.

Even though, the misfit theory is plausible, it is not well substantiated. It is difficult to measure a person's sense of non-fulfilment. All student agitations in universities and colleges cannot be explained only in terms of personal failures of student leaders and activists. Youth agitations in different parts of the country on the occasion of implementing Mandal Commission's report in August, 1990 cannot be described in terms of young persons' personal maladjustment.

Relative Deprivation Theory was propounded by Stouffer in 1949. It can be properly explained by distinguishing between discontent, deprivation and relative deprivation. A group feels 'deprived' if it lacks a goal/object it regards as attractive or desirable, but it feels 'discontented' when it had been anticipating the pleasure to be achieved from this object and then cannot fulfil this expectation. Relative deprivation is the perception that one (as a group) is less well-off than others to whom it (the group) compared itself (David Myres, 1988 : 402 and 408). It, thus, talks of the gap between expectations and realizations. The group which wants little and has little feels less deprived than the one which has much but expects still more.

Relative deprivation is increasing throughout most of the underdeveloped world. Youth in India also feel that lack of opportunities, unemployment, reservations on caste basis, limitations on higher education, particularly technical and professional education, are not necessary and are avoidable. They long for better jobs, economic security, promotional opportunities, social mobility and all those things that many others enjoy. They hunger for these treasures but have little real understanding of what it takes to produce them. Even where the youth are beginning to get some of the things they covet, these satisfactions come with an unbearable slowness. A weakening of traditional controls accompanies this enormous inflation of desires. The existing social structures and the power elite have little hope of keeping up with the youth's expectations. Thus, when young people become most miserable, agitations seem most likely to occur. Davies (1962) and Geschwender (1968) have also maintained that the outbreak of agitations most often happens after a downturn has interrupted a period of improvement, creating an intolerable gap between rising expectations and falling realizations.

Relative Deprivation Theory is plausible but not proved. Feelings of deprivation in youth are easy to infer but difficult to measure and still more difficult to plot over a period of time. It may, therefore, be said that relative deprivation of youth, even when unmistakably severe, is only one of many factors in youth agitations.

Resource Mobilisation Theory stresses techniques rather than causes of (youth) agitations. It attributes importance to the effective use of resources in promoting agitations, since a successful agitation demands effective organisation and sage tactic. Resource mobilization theorists see (youth) leadership, organisation and tactics as major determinants of the success or failure of (youth) agitations (Oberschell, 1973 ; Wilson, 1973 ; Galanson, 1975 ; McCarthy, 1979 ; Walsh, 1981). These scholars concede that without grievances and discontent, there would be few agitations but add that mobilisation is needed to direct this discontent into an effective agitation.

The resources to be mobilised include: support of the masses, rules/laws that can provide leverage, organizations and officials that can be helpful, and target groups whom these benefits might attract. These are weighed against costs of agitational activity, opposition to be anticipated, other difficulties to be overcome, and tactics of operation to be developed.

As an example, the AASU agitation in Assam in 1984-85 occurred when the movement for giving more rights to states by the centre was gaining momentum and when people in different parts of the country challenged the wisdom of the central political leaders giving refuge to Muslims from Bangladesh. Similarly, the anti-reservation agitation by students in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh in August, 1990 started because of reserving 27.0% seats in central government jobs for Backward Castes and Classes occurred when a large number of people and various political parties criticised the government for this action and the youth got a sympathetic backing from the masses. The discontent was spread wide and the mobilization of resources was enough.

The Resource Mobilisation Theory does not explain all kinds of youth agitations. If we classify agitations as persuasive, revolutionary and resistance agitations, the resource mobilization theory does not fit into resistance agitations. These agitations succeed without organisation and tactics. Further, evidence for resource mobilization theory is largely descriptive and is challenged by scholars like Goldstone (1980).

It may be concluded that it is likely that discontent, personal maladjustment, relative deprivation, and resource mobilization are all involved in youth agitations but in undetermined proportions. Each theory is, thus, plausible but each lacks clear proof and evidence. So many variables are involved in youth agitations that possibly no one theory will ever be conclusively established.

Youth Leadership

The leadership profoundly affects the intensity and direction of youth agitations and movements. The important functions of a youth leader are: (1) establishing a responsive, trusting, attentive relationship with the members of his group. He senses their feelings and speaks their language, (2) building an emotional rapport with the members by an impassioned reminder of their problems and grievances. He stimulates them to direct activity from one objective to another, and (3) suggesting action to achieve goal(s). It could take the form of demonstrations, road blocks, *gheraos*, strikes or even boycott of classes. These functions could be successfully performed only by leaders who have certain qualities and background. Chanchal Sarkar's (1960) study of the office-holders and the king-makers of student unions in different universities has revealed that union leaders are mainly those: (1) who have money,

(2) who do not have high academic aspirations, (3) who have some political backing, (4) who are good orators, and (5) who are manipulators.

Robert Shaw's study of Osmania University student leaders in the early 1960s pointed out (Albatch, 1968 : 90-95) that: (1) their average family income is higher than the average income of Indian family; (2) two-thirds belong to upper-middle class and one-third to the upper class, (3) a very large number belong to upper castes and families of high social status, (4) one-third (34.0%) had spent less than three years in the university, one-third (33.0%) three to six years, one-tenth (11.0%) six to nine years, and one-fifth (22.0%) more than nine years; (5) three-fifth (57.0%) were below average in studies, one-fourth (23.0%) average and only one-fifth (20.0%) brilliant; (6) two-thirds had no political aspirations but one-third had some aspirations to enter politics and contest assembly elections, (7) a little less than three-fifths (56.0%) believed in ideology of some political party, one-tenth (11.0%) had an independent ideology and one-third (33.0%) did not believe in any political ideology, and (8) in one-fifth cases (20.0%), their family members or kin were active in politics but in four-fifth cases (80.0%), no member of their family had any political leanings. It may, thus, be held that student or youth leaders are generally those who are economically not handicapped, academically are average, politically are ambitious, and socially are not warped.

Youth Agitations and Police

The role of the police in youth agitations starts when the youth indulge in violence, destroy public property, *gherao* administrative officer(s), declare *bandh* and force shopkeepers to close market, sit on hunger strike, or block the road and stop movement of the traffic.

The traditional methods which are usually adopted by the police in such situations are: arresting the trouble-shooters, ordering onlookers to move on, using tear-gas and lathi-charge, bringing enough police and creating fear, isolating riot-area by throwing a police cordon around it, and diminishing the crowd by directing persons to go, thus, depriving the core (of agitated group) of its mass support. Generally the police succeeds in containing youth agitation by these methods. If it fails, it is only because of its own indecision and hesitation, or because it covertly sympathises with rioters, or because it is not able to arrest the real trouble-makers because of the political or bureaucratic interference.

What the police needs is: (i) to secure a preliminary tuning with agitators. On their arrival at the agitation-spot, they need not immediately threaten the agitators or start beating them. On the contrary, it should give a feeling that it is there only to maintain law and order and not to vindicate; (ii) to establish a rapport with the agitationists either by talking to the leader or the activist members; (iii) to break 'one-to-all' relationship, that is, relationship between the leader and the followers; and (iv) neither to use logic nor appeal to the intellect of the agitators but to appeal to their emotions.

All this can be made possible by either (a) manipulating the situation, or (b) manipulating the individuals (agitators). The manipulation could be positive or negative as shown in the following figure.

Figure 2: Handling agitational situation (manipulation) by police

<i>Type of Manipulation</i>	<i>Manipulation of situation</i>	<i>Manipulation of individuals' (agitators') intentions</i>
Positive	Inducement	Persuasion
Negative	Coercion	Activation of commitment

The police can adopt measures like this only if it believes in (a) neutrality, (b) loyalty, (c) moral duty, and (d) accountability. The decision of the decision-maker (police) in a decision-making situation depends upon: (i) degree of involvement of self in solving the problem, and (ii) perception of uncertainty to handle the situation (agitation) by following precedents (used earlier by other officers) or by using new approaches. Low degree of involvement of self (L.I.S.) and high perception of uncertainty (H.P.U.) lead to poor decision (P.D.) on the part of the decision-maker (police), while high involvement of self (H.I.S.) and low perception of uncertainty (L.P.U.) lead to correct or adequate decision (A.D.).

$$P.D = L.I.S. + H.P.U.$$

$$A.D = H.I.S. + L.P.U.$$

That police officer will have a low involvement of self in solving problem or containing an agitation who takes decisions not on the basis of his moral convictions or values but by external pressures, who depends on others for evaluating his decision, who feels satisfied with his own decision only if others feel satisfied, who considers agitation as a routine task and not as a challenge, who has low personal stake in

containing the agitation or solving the problem, and who avoids certain decisions for fear of their consequences.

The perception of uncertainty by the decision-maker (police officer) in the decision making situation may also be because of his lack of past experience, that is, he may not have met with such a situation earlier, or he may have been unable to get the right amount of information, that is, there may be too little information about the decision-making situation, or the situation itself may be poorly defined in terms of objectives, time and direction, or the police officer may lack the ability to evaluate situation as well as the decision-choices

Our ruling political elite, unfortunately, have never given proper attention to revamping the police system. What is needed more today is more professionalism in this field (P.D. Sharma · 1977) which is characterized by *decentralization* (a separation of administration of law-violence from administration of preserving order, as these two kinds of jobs are not similar), *autonomy* (preventing the undesirable intervention of political leaders and bureaucratic executives), *specialization* (having separate police for dealing with agitations, juvenile delinquency, communal riots, and so forth), *modernization* (equipping police with modern technology as well as developing modern ideology (correctional and protective rather than bossist), and *accountability* (to the public, to ideology, to law instead of to the politicians in power)

Controlling Youth Agitations

We have examined the prominent causes as well as scrutinised the important theories of youth agitations. Obviously, the forces producing unrest and agitations cannot be eliminated. How, then, might youth agitations be minimised? Do theory and research suggest ways to control agitations?

1 An average young man is individualistic, imaginative and competitive. He only wants guidance so that his enthusiasm and zest could be contained. Youngsters should be taught to vent their anger. If a person bottles up his rage, he has to find an outlet which may give him an opportunity to let off steam. In psychiatrist terminology, this means that one's accumulated aggressive energy, be it from frustrations or from the building up of instinctual impulses, needs a release. Parents have also to encourage their children's release of emotional tension in various kinds of activities

Some scholars have, however, rejected this catharsis hypothesis. Social psychologists like Geen and Quanty (1977) maintain that the catharsis view of the aggression and agitation has not been confirmed. Robert Arms and his associates report that Canadian and American spectators of football, wrestling, and hockey exhibit more hostility after viewing the event than before (Arms et al., 1979; Goldstein and Arms, 1971; Russel, 1981, 1983). In more direct laboratory tests of the catharsis hypothesis, Jack Hokanson and his colleagues (1961, 1962, 1966) found that when Florida State University students were allowed to counterattack someone who had provoked them, their arousal (as measured by their blood pressures) returned to normal quickly. This calming effect of retaliation seems to occur only in very specific circumstances—when the target is one's actual tormentor, not a substitute, and when the retaliation is justifiable and the target non-intimidating so that one does not afterward feel guilty or anxious. On the other hand, in other experiments, aggression has actually led to heightened aggression. It is, therefore, necessary to help the youth to bottle up their anger and aggressive urges. Instead of using agitations to express one's grievances, it is more essential to use non-agitational ways to express one's feelings and to inform others (particularly decision-makers and power-monopolizers) how their behaviour and their decisions adversely affect others. Perhaps stating that "when you take such decision, we feel irritated and angry and feel like taking to agitative methods" might communicate the youngsters' feelings in a way that leads the power elite to make amends rather than further escalate the aggression. Myres (1988 : 437) has also said that one can be assertive without being aggressive.

2. The adult world has to accept the fact that youth problems cannot be solved for them but with them. Therefore, cooperation of students/youths need to be sought by parents, teachers and administrators. Youth/students, parents, teachers, educational administrators, politicians and political parties should cooperate in understanding problems/grievances of the youth and giving them logical guidelines.

3. Efforts should be taken to remove minor irritants in students'/youths' day-to-day contacts with teachers and educational administrators. Each educational institution must have an efficient machinery to identify and settle student grievances. Such arrangements must not only start tackling problems after they flare up but must continuously strive to prevent incidents which lead to complications. Such bodies (students/teachers etc.) should be continuously in session.

The effective measures for the redressal of the grievances could be: (1) accessibility of senior functionaries, (2) ensuring action on grievance in shortest possible time or with a definite time-frame, (3) establishing monitoring system and getting regular reports from teachers and subordinate administrative staff, and (4) sudden check-up by vice-chancellor or dean or person-in-power.

4 All political parties have to agree on a common code of conduct regarding students' participation in politics. It will prepare them for shouldering responsibilities in future for national development. There is no point in exhorting students to keep away from politics and yet expect them to get enthusiastically involved in the process of building up our society.

5 The question of the extent and pattern of student participation in the process of educational administration will have to be decided at the earliest.

6. Definite rules should be framed regarding police intervention in educational institutions. We can think of instituting a special University Police Force.

We can also have specially trained police personnel for dealing with students in particular and youth in general. It is now high time that the vast youth power, which hitherto has been neglected and ignored, is harnessed for development, removing social injustice and achieving national collective goals. The need for creating a climate of hope, confidence and trust rather than coercion and confrontation has to be realised and this initiative has to be taken for mobilising the young.

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