EXPLORING STUDENT POLITICS

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PUBLISHED BY

MANASI BANERJEE

U5A/1 TARABAG,

P.O. RAJBATI, BURDWAN 713104,

WEST BENGAL, INDIA

1998

PRICE; Rs.250

ABOUT THE BOOK

Exploring Student Politics consists of four critical essays on student politics. These were originally published in various academic journals. They were later revised and published in book form. In the first article, ”Students & Politics: A Comparative perspective”, the author, after a comparative study of student movements in various countries, has tried to point out 1) the major characteristics of student movements and 2) the factors leading to student power movements.1) The major features of student movements are idealism, elitism, internationalism and political mindedness.2) Seven key factors lead to student movements. These are national liberation movements, government policy, the education system, generation gap, social background, unemployment, and alienation.
The second essay, “The Psychology of Student Protest: A Motivational Analysis” is a study of the key factors in student activism, which were distilled after a comparative analysis of student movements in various nations. The main motivating factors, which the author identified, were the desire for power, anti-establishment feelings and radical attitudes.

The third paper, “The Class character of the Student Movement: A Critique of Two Theories” is a study of two major theories of student movements. The New Left theory contends that college and university students are a part of the working class and ripe for leading the revolution against capitalism. The theoreticians positing the generation gap theory argue that students conceptualize class consciousness in terms of the generation gap. Rejecting both these approaches, I have argued that students cannot be regarded as a class, either in the Marxian or the Weberian sense. For both Marx and Weber, the term “class” has an economic connotation. For Marx, class is based on relation of a person to the means of production, i.e., whether he owns the means of production or not. For Weber, class position means market position. Students are not a class, though they belong to the middle class. Their consciousness is not based on class position. Rather it is based on knowledge.

The fourth and final article, entitled, “Student Politics in India: a Historical Profile” is a case study of the student movement in India employing the historical method. In this essay, I have attempted a chronological exposition of the main currents in Indian student movement from the days of the Young Bengal movement in the mid-19th century till mid-August, 1998-when the manuscript was sent to the press. I have divided the history of the student movement into three phases. In the proto-historical phase,
which coincided with the introduction of western education in India by the British colonial regime, the student movement was in an incipient stage. This formative period of the student movement lasted till 1905. It is in the *stage of the freedom struggle* (1905-1947) that the student movement was institutionalized. It played an important role in India’s freedom struggle. Many student martyrs, like Khudiram Bose, who are household names now, came from lower middle class families; their dominant ideology was patriotism. From 1947 onwards, the student movement entered a new phase which is continuing till this day. In *independent India*, there has been a phenomenal growth of the education system. Thanks to the policy of subsidized education, wards of small peasants, workers, etc. can also reap the benefits of education. The student movement has focussed on many issues ranging from opposing imperialism and combating authoritarian and corrupt rulers to issues that directly concern the student community, i.e, examinations and unemployment. The students took part in many progressive movements like the Naxalbari movement and the movement against Ms. Indira Gandhi’s authoritarian policies in the seventies. But, from the eighties, reactionary movements like the Assam movement, the anti-Mandal Commission movement, etc. took place. To conclude, while the student movement has had an overall progressive essence, casteism, communal and secessionist tendencies, which may be described as “a counter current in the youth movement”, are also present.

This book has been graced with a ‘Foreword ‘by noted educationist and researcher on student activism, Prof. Anil Baran Ray.
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Preface

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Student Politics in India: A Historical Profile

TECHNICAL DETAILS ABOUT THE BOOK

Technical details about the book are given below in

1) Name of book: Exploring Student Politics

2) Author: Anirban Banerjee

3a) Name & address of Publisher: Manasi Banerjee, U5A/1 Tarabag, P.O. Rajbati, Burdwan 713104, West Bengal, India

3b) Name & address of copyright holder: Archi Banerjee, U5A/1 Tarabag, P.O. Rajbati, Burdwan 713104, West Bengal, India

4) Name & address of Printer: Anirban Banerjee U5A/1 Tarabag, P.O. Rajbati, Burdwan 713104, West Bengal, India

5) Name & address of distributors:

1) Nabani Book Stall, 72 B.C. Road, Burdwan 713101

2) Balaka Prakashan, 18/A Nabin Kundu Lane (Durga Bari), Calcutta 700009

6) Cover & jacket designer: Manasi Banerjee
7) **Size:** 21.5cm X 13 cm

8) **Number of pages:** i-v, i-iii, 1-156.

9) **Printing:** Hand composed letter press.

   a) **Types used for printing the book:** 10.5 point Universal, List Roman and Times types.

   b) **Paper used for printing the book:** Demy white.

   c) **Press:**

      i) Sreelekha Art Press, Borehat, Burdwan 713102.

      ii) The Saraswati Press, 14, Chandi Bari Street, Calcutta 700006.

   d) **Type of binding:** Board binding with laminated jacket.

   e) **Name & address of binder:** Sri Radhanath Dutta, Annapurna Binding Works, 5E Dinabandhu Chakraborty Lane, Calcutta 700006.

   f) **Cover & jacket design:** Flags of different colours on a sky blue background.

   g) **Cover & jacket printed at:** The Saraswati Press, 14, Chandi Bari Street, Calcutta 700006.

10) **Date of publication:** 15th November, 1998.

11) **Place of publication:** Burdwan.

12) **Price:** Rs. 250.

**REVIEWS OF THE BOOK**

*Exploring Student Politics* has been reviewed in a number of journals, including trade journals like *Indian Book Chronicle* and social science journals like *Socialist Perspective*. Details are given below.


INDEX

The book has been indexed in Book Review Index. Details are given below.


This book was also cited in CSA Sociological Abstracts (Accession Number200518354)

AVAILABILITY

The book is presently out of print. But copies may be found in National Library, Kolkata, Delhi Public Library, Delhi, Asiatic Society Library, Mumbai and Connemara Public Library, Madras, apart from leading university libraries in West Bengal.