

# A Historical Role of Students in West Bengal's Socioeconomic Movements

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**Abstract - From 1947 until 1977, West Bengal's students were active participants in the state's social and economic developments. As a newly formed state, West Bengal was confronted with a slew of challenges, including political unrest, economic stagnation, migration issues, a food shortage, the Naxalite uprising, the Indo-Chinese, Indo-Pak, and Bangladesh Liberation War, as well as widespread unemployment. At this time, students in Bengal were drawn to the spontaneous public protests and joined such activities for the cause of nation building. Not only did the student movement flourish in the Modern Age, but it also appeared in bits and pieces throughout the ancient and medieval periods. It was first welcomed by the educated elite, but their skepticism quickly turned to disapproval, and they pushed for greater work prospects for Indians, as well as greater freedom of expression and organization. Students' involvement in West Bengal's popular movements was one of history's most extraordinary moments.**

**Keywords - Historical, Role, Students, West Bengal, Socioeconomic, Movements, etc**

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## INTRODUCTION

The culture of students is an integral part of the whole youth community. The young qualities' inspirations are quite influential in any student's life. On the one hand, the same individual is a teenager on the other – this is a strange time limit combination in the general existence of every student. Every successful student has been plunged into thinking about his future strategy, priorities and demands that are his main guides for achieving objectives across social and education environments during this Transformative Era. So, each student's desires and demands were the shared dream and necessity of the community of students as a whole. (1) As students sit, read and remain together, particularly in colleges and other educational institutions the features of popular thought, expectations and demands are inevitably overwhelmed by the flow of thinking, discussions and conversations, and build an atmosphere of common world before all students. This makes it possible to immediately create a unity and hierarchical framework. Thus, when the students' needs and demands are not met, they transform into unease and result in an unhappy atmosphere and turmoil.

## Students' Participation

The revolutionary importance of students in this historic event became evident with their engagement in the movement. Calcutta was the scene of a massive student uprising, complete with demonstrations, riots, and even a massacre. (2) Numerous school and

college students went on strike to protest the police response to the events on August 31. The students held a rally on September 1, 1959, in protest of this tragedy. The event was attended by a huge number of students from colleges and universities. Rally participants were delayed by police as they approached the Writers' Building, who deployed tear gas and even fired at them. Students were left in a state of panic as the police gave pursuit to peaceful protesters. Additional barriers made of student-made hand carts were erected to keep police vehicles away. After the evenings torrential rains, there was a little respite. However, as the rain stopped, the disturbances began to return. Battles were fought in the vicinity of the Subodh Mallick Squire. Students on the University Campus, College Street, replied to lathis and tear gas with stones and other projectiles as the disturbances spread.

## Indo-Pak War and the Students

After years of protests against Pakistan's rising prices, the Indo-Pak conflict erupted with a bang. Self-seeking bad elements attempted to incite riots in Calcutta and the surrounding areas when India was embroiled in a worldwide conflict. It was hard for political parties and students to carry out their plan to fight any more fare rises because of the circumstances. It was now the primary responsibility of the students' group to work diligently to maintain community peace. Students also started an antiwar campaign in tandem with it. (3) Both of them appeared to be extremely difficult assignments.

Students in West Bengal stepped forward to assist the Leftist student groups in their efforts to maintain religious tolerance despite the difficulties.

### Indo-Chinese War and the Students

In the context of the Indo-Chinese conflict, students in West Bengal sought to broaden their worldview by incorporating an international perspective. At this point in time, however, the student movements encountered a snag in their progress toward an anticipated goal. The Students Federation was deemed anti-national and an unlawful organization as a result of this shock ultra-nationalism in a frenzied attempt to overpower the progressive student movement. In the face of this ferocious ultra-nationalism, the student body stayed firm. (4)

### Student Movement during Colonial Period

The main component of student protests in the colonial era resides in the British rulers' imperialist education structure. The British did not begin colonial schooling to educate the young Indian students, but did so for the management of their Indian capitalist regime. The same impression was explained in Lord Bentinck's plan of 1835 and in the Macaulay Study in favor of their objectives. Under Bentinck's Resolution of 1835, English was made a platform for higher education. In his famous Minute, Macaulay said that the body of the citizens could not be taught. A training scheme that was counterproductive to Indian interests was instituted that permitted the British to rule the land.

In Bengal the first European idealistic educational scheme was introduced in India, and the Indian revolution for students was initiated in Bengal was extremely interesting. European intelligence and wisdom and scientific reasoning quickly drew young minds. The British rulers really intended the young wave of Indian English learners to be used as a tool in support of the British government and to remain alienated from the mass Indian people. Yet the outcome was different in history. The young generation, of modern schooling, has tried from its heart to dislike social superstitions and servitude in its nation with the ideas of science and analytical European education. (5) The elements of liberty, brotherhood and dignity of the French revolution inspired this modern intellectual section or party initially. The writings and works of the great philosopher and philosophers Mill, Bentham, Thomas Paine, Adam Smith and many others have inspired them. For example, it can be noted when books like Thomas Paine's Rights of Man, the Bentham Colonies of Calcutta reached from Europe, that these compositions were bought by the students of the then Hindu College at that time. In the first half of the 19th century, the students' movement focused on superstition and inequality. Despite this effect, the movement of students did not get to the right form, yet the flow of such an agitation extended across all countries. This latest student wave was inspired by the

young professor of the Hindu College Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and by the protests of Young Bengal. He was a professor on one hand, and a comrade on the other. The foundation of the Academic Association took place in the House of Derozio in 1828, after a fruitful dialogue. Derozio's students were the pioneers of this mission. (6)

### The Movement Of 1959

At the close of World War II, a wave of protests swept over Bengal. Many of these protest movements acquired an almost 'spontaneous' form since they were joined by a significant number of popular masses who had no party connections or discipline, making them appear to be almost 'spontaneous' in nature. There were several street fights between demonstrators and police officers and looting and destruction of public property and automobiles during these rallies, which were mainly concentrated in urban areas. Up until 1967, West Bengal's first phase of left-leaning politics was marked by a radical movement that is both organized and deeply active. As Charles Tilly put it, this type of agitational politics is "contentious politics" in another sense. 2006 Later, leftist politics were divided between those who advocated the use of legislative power to further the cause of revolution, and others who advocated a more revolutionary approach. (7)

Anti-government protests, which these demonstrations were part of, were repressed and counterattacked by police and the government in a number of occasions, and flagellations resulted in a number of fatalities. More than two decades have passed since the post-independence West Bengal left its imprint. The CPI and the left gathered audiences in common areas like as price rises, employment, public service (PDS) malfunctions, refugee issues, etc. Violence and death rates were substantially greater during these protests than they were prior to the country's independence, due to the large number of common groupings, including the urban poor and the middle classes. According to Tilly's theory, 'social revolution' first emerged in Europe in the 18th century. We can find a wide range of traits among these movements. (8)

### Tilly argues that social movements combine:

- A continuous public initiative to lobby target groups in a joint fashion: let us term it a program.
- Using variations between the modes of democratic action: establishment of the alliances and coalitions of particular interest, general gatherings, solemn processions, watches, marches, rallies, petitions, announcements on the public media and public media; and pamphlet-making;
- And the public coordinated performances (WUNC) by members on their own and/or their constituents of worthiness, unity,

numbers and commitment: name them WUNC shows.

At least three groups are often related by a campaign: a party of claimants, subjects of claims and a certain kind of public. The social repertoire of the campaign is based on the context-specific, normative social movements operating procedures, such as mass gatherings, solemn processions, waves, marches, alliances and coalitions for particular intent, protests, petitions and pamphlets. Tilly wrote of 'WUNC shows,' 'the WUNC word sounds unusual, but is quite well established.' Worthy social campaigns which include the sober attitude and attendance of priests and mothers with kids; solidarity signals are seen by matching signs, singing and chanting; numerical signatures broadcast by petitions and street signing; and the dedication is shown by brave poor weather, ostentatious support, and/or conspicuous involvement of the elderly and disabled people. WUNC is essential because it communicates critical strategic messaging to the goals and public of a social movement.

In this period of mass/social upheavals in western Bengal, the 1959 Food Revolution had its own special aspect. Tilly's emphasis on the campaign's 'liberal movement' characteristics would be the focus of our discussion. At the same time, it may be said to be 'rhizomatic,' developing its own mechanisms and functions without regard to vertical orientation. It was a continuation of a tradition that began with the post-1943 left-wing hunger upheavals and continued through Tebhaga's agitation during the latter years of the Raj and demonstrations around the repressive and inadequate public circulation system between 1956 and 1958. As the state-wide operation grew in scope, it eventually included rural regions as well. It lasted through the first part of the 1960s and peaked in 1966. The Food Movement had such a significant impact on the state's political structure that it had to be overhauled. It insured not just a slow decline in state support to the Congress, but was also one of the factors that led to the CPI's split. Western Bengal's CPI internal talks were influenced by the 1959 food revolution, according to Marcus Franda, an American political historian. In the CPI, he said that the 'left-wing' anti-Congress factions exploited the anti-Congress state government campaign to enslave the 'right-wing' factions, who sought tactical collaboration with Congress. (9)

### **The Immediate Effect and After**

A major influence on Bengal's political development was exerted by the 1959 food movement, particularly its violent "second phase," which spanned the period from August 31 to September 4, and which lasted from early 1960s through the 1967 elections. Civil society, media, and political parties used three main forms of evaluations following the tumultuous five days of war, counter-violence, and confusion. The first was an angered outburst towards the treatment of the incident by police/government. The second kind accuses the left-wing organizers for "lawless chaos," leading to loss

of life and property and for seeing in it the "complot of Communists." The second kind of revolution, the third form of government favored an intermediate review, though praising the food policies of the government and how the problem was treated, criticizing the representatives of the left for loss of influence over the situation. The left/opposition groups that started the PIFRC campaign inevitably were part of the first division, which squarely took care of "police atrocities" and "mass killings" by the B.C. Roy administration. There proceeded accusations and counter-allegations in the tense discussions of the Assembly from September 21 to 28 and again on 4 December. Both non-parliamentary conducts happened between the treasury and the opposition. They used slangs and offensive words (they were "expanded" from the trial), "names" and sometimes, sometimes, supposedly showed each other shoes and hurled them at each other.

Jyoti Basu, Subodh Banerjee, Jatin Chakrabarty, Chitto Basu and Golam Yazdani are among the many opponents present. After a torrent of criticism of the administration from Siddhartha Shankar Ray, Labnya Prabha Ghosh, Amarendra Nath Basu, Haridas Mitra, and others, the legislature talked and played volleyball. Jalianwalabag was linked to the British constitution's "barbarism" toward the food protestors. This motion of no confidence was defeated by the exclusion of competent delegates as a result of the opposition's involvement. Even in the Lok Sabha on September 4, opposition members cried out against the "brutal shootings" in Kolkata, Howrah, and elsewhere. Representatives included A. K. Gopalan, Tridib Chaudhuri, Renu Chakrabarty, Prabhat Kar, and Md. Elias Hiren Mukherjee criticised the State Government in a spirited discussion. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru met with the opposition in a high-profile meeting. (10) In addition to the criticism, there have been several reports of protests from members of civil society, notably eminent academics. As the vice chancellor of Jadypur University, Prasanta Kumar Bose College, Principal of Bangabasi College in Kolkata, a variety of faculty from Ballygunj, Jadavpur, Vidyanagar, Surendranath and City colleges is named. Members of several groups, such as Swadhinata, Ganadabi, New Age, and Dainik Basumati, slammed the administration in public. There have been several letters from citizens criticizing the government's handling of the problem. Mostly in second position was the federal government, led by the Democratic Party-controlled Congress. In letters to the editors, many individuals have accused the opposition/left of hooliganism in support of the food drive. The opposition was slammed by the administration in news releases and by members of the ruling party in both the Assembly and the House of Representatives. Leaders of the party include Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Prafulla Sen, Bijoy Singh Nahar, Bankim Kar, Ananda Gopal Mukhopadhyay, and others were in attendance during the discussions held in this Assembly.. Another thing to consider is that even while people



like Dr. Prafulla Ghosh (West Bengal's first "Prime Minister" since independence) didn't belong to or criticize the ruling party and sought to maintain a "equilibrated" position while doing so, he was really hostile to the food movement. In Parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has taken the lead role in opposing and condemning the demonstration. A number of newspapers, notably Ananda Bazar Patrika, slammed the movement's leaders for what they called "anarchic acts" between August 31 and September 4 of this year.

At the third point of view, ordinary people, civic society activists and the media have expressed themselves. The need for activity in food was appreciated in this segment but soon 'hooligans' used the 'anarchy' and spoilt it. For eg, the West Bengal Peace Coordinating Committee was established at the initiative of some influential people only after the violence of the movement's second phase. They included individuals including Kalidas Nag, Nihar Ranjan Ray, Amiya Sen and 15 others. In its first official announcement, the Commission noted the well-intentioned and coordinated food revolution in the interests of the public. However, hooliganism could not be tested. The Committee called for sober citizens and students to stand up for the lives and property of innocent individuals, independent of their political ideology. (11)

Many publications have shared the same opinion. This spirit was expressed in their publishers by the English dailies such as Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Statesman and Hindustan Standard. Also shared by the Bengali dailies such as Jugantar, Basumati etc. In its editorial of 5 September Basumati writes: '...the anti-social individuals involved in disruptive practices have, by their action, suppressed the nonviolent food movement... But it's for them (for the antisocial hooligan) that the campaign should be suppressed...' The government wanted to curb the food movement. So the third point of view, which showed considerable solidarity for the revolution, found the "anti-social" responsible for the "suppression" of the movement and blamed the founders for lacking influence over the direction of the movements. However, as we have argued, nearly all the "liberal revolutions" is characteristic of it. Social movements also partake in "disagreeable governance," as Tilly suggests, using destructive tactics to raise a theoretical argument or reform government policies. (12) He claims that acts such as marches, general strikes, riot, terrorism, civilian disobedience, and even anarchy or revolt are manifestations of such tactics. Their practices disrupt ordinary activities. Many of the tactics were used in the 1959 campaign.

### Student Movement in Post-Colonial Period and Its Changing Characteristics

In the period of post-independence, the outlook of the student protests shifted considerably. It is already understood and the protests have taken on an unsettling nature in many ways. The aims of the

numerous student movements and their battle in the various revolutionary banners are not only political, but also social, fiscal, humanistic and spiritual. Students from all nations have always been constructive in their country's progress. The rebuilding is under way like unrestricted waves and the current government; institutional, economic and cultural systems are shaking badly. The students participated in the protests regardless of race, color and faith. Western Bengal students' protests are no exception. Since the 1960s, the character of the West Bengal student protests has begun to shift. They eventually took on left and extreme politics, starting with nationalists. (13) A variety of local associations have largely established an informal nature outside of the mass student organizations.

Movement classification The West Bengal students' movement has been dealing with problems ranging from problems of schooling to socio-economic concerns at various times. While students sometimes take on subjects that concern only their own narrow interests, they also often take on causes that do not impact them directly. (2) Economic protest; (3) religious protests; (4) school protests; and (5) funny priests. Ross (1969) classifies student protests into five categories: (1) democratic protests. Sometimes these demonstrations are interlinked. Any causes can be seen in all sorts of demonstrations. The 'age divide' is a common cause in all forms of student movements according to several social sociologists and social psychologists. It is impossible for students to comply with standards in a transient and pluralistic society.

An enormous expansion of the higher education system in India after independence has had a major effect on India's student movement growth. A greater proportion of university graduates culminated in the 1960s in a rise in universities and attendance. As a result, large percentages of university graduates found a university-leaving simple or unemployment. This condition contrasted harshly with the public service promises or educational positions of past generations of students.(14) At the time, the UFC informed on the Student Movement in the different universities of India to the Union Government of India.

### CONCLUSION

The socioeconomic and political movements, student engagement in West Bengal's socio-economic movements may be summarized as being a product of history. It ushered in a new era in West Bengal's popular movements. The Indian people's awakening was sparked by the student movements. In the end, however, they fell prey to the various political parties' politics of manipulation and were left destitute. Student protests in India's post-independence era ended in 1977 with a thrashing of the political monolith, particularly in West Bengal, by students. In the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that the

student movement's energy was waning. Young people and students, including many pioneers, began trying to bring about a dramatic transformation in the country. Student terrorism was clearly motivated by a romanticized view of extreme movements.

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