

Topic:

Student Unions: Cornerstone Of Social And Institutional Change

1. Introduction

2. Student unions empowered them to achieve basic democratic rights

2.1 Muslim student federation (MSF) belonged to All-India Muslim League (AIML).

2.2 Baloch student organization formed to achieve rights for Balochi people.

2.3 Role of students in 1970s Bangladesh Liberation war.

2.4 All Pakistan Mutahida students organization in 1978 to address concerns of Muhajir ethnicity.

2.5 Widespread protest in leadership of Asoj Aurangzeb in Pakistan to lift up ban on student union.

2.6 Elections in American University regarding genocidal acts of Israel on Palestine.

2.7 Student unions protest in Bangladesh against Sheikh Hasina's authoritarian regime.

3. Students unions bring social and institutional change in the society.

4. Students unions - An influential way to produce indiscriminate political leaders

5. Conclusion

The world was surprised in the start of August of 2024 when Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled from her own country due to violent protest in Dhaka by students of Bangladesh on job quota reserved for families of those who fought liberation war during independence of Bangladesh. This powerful protest by students gave an end to 15-year long dictatorship rule of Sheikh Hasina that ended up in a horrific way. This recent example reflects the whole power of student unions that can influence the society in social, cultural, institutional, political, national and international levels. These unions have helped achieve basic democratic rights especially in colleges and universities. The world acknowledges resilience of students and admires and allows them to form unions and work in an organized, influential way to bring social and institutional change, initially at regional level then national and international level. The formation of Muslims Student Federation as a student wing of All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1937, rise of Baloch student organization to work for rights of Balochi people, role of students in 1970s Bangladesh liberation war emboldens the power of students of today regarding their influence. Rise of All Pakistan Muttahida Organization (APMSO) by Ahsan Hussain to fight for concerns of Muhajir community

It was ethnic and language based organization to address problems of muhajars suppressed by Sindhi and Punjabi. An influential protest by student Azeem Azeem to lift up ban on student unions in Pakistan which was imposed by Zia's regime is another example of resilience of students. The world explicitly knows about draconian genocidal acts of Israel on Palestine, despite being an international issue, students of American University (AU) held elections to vote and surprisingly, the students being themselves pro-Israel they voted against horrific genocidal actions of Israel and supported Palestine. Many examples in the history persuade us regarding influence of student union and their impacts on social and institutional grounds.

Firstly, rise of student organizations during independence played significant role against personal and political interest of leaders and they struggled for democratic interest during Pakistan movement. Formation of Muslim students federation (MSF) as a student wing of All India Muslim League (AIML) and democratic student federation (DSF) associated with communist party of Pakistan (CPP) the Muslim student federation served as a channel of communication between local people and Muslim League leadership promoting the rights and interest of public and preventing the chiefs and lords to influence on their personal

interest in the name of party politics. Their efforts promoted democracy that strengthened ~~the~~ muslim leadership to take pragmatic measures in Pakistan movement and helped attain separate muslim state that is formed in the name of religion and ^{now exist} without tyrannical rule of British or Hindu raj.

In addition to this, students have worked for basic rights and facilities of students in universities and colleges. An example is of Baluch student organization (BSO) which has worked for rights of balochi students and raised voices to provide facilities like clean water, books, transportation, promoting bochi baluchi literature and language, spreading balochi culture etc. Student leadership have always raised rightful needs of students at institutional level and unions rised against tyrannical action of university administration if the students lacked facilities for which they have been paying. These are active not only in campus problems but also promoting extra-curricular activities like events management, arrangement of tours and picnics, celebration days like independence day, new year, holi eve for hindus, milad day to increase awareness regarding our beloved Prophet's (PBUH) life, inter-university debates and writing competitions, raising funds for poor and needy.

inter and intra-university sports competition and many more activities, where major role of students unions can be observed

Furthermore, ~~either~~ be it language movement of 1952 or Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971, student unions were active and stood for their rights. These were major battles between students of university of Dhaka and government of Pakistan. They opposed utterly the decisions of Pakistani government in 1952 for Urdu as being official language of Pakistan as major part of Pakistan was from East Pakistan and they wanted Bengali to be given status of official language. Students movements, widespread protests ~~disturb~~ disturbed peace and stability across the state, several attempts were made to silent these movements forcefully but they ended up in violence across Dhaka, many students were wounded and killed in confrontation with the police, the news of ~~the~~ killing created chaos across the country and at the end, it compelled the government to recognize Bengali as national government language of Pakistan, the students won and this reflects power of student union at social and institutional level and even at national level to bring change and protect rights of masses.

Moreover, another influential union of students in history of Pakistan is All Pakistan Muttahida students organization (APMSO) formed by Altaf Hussain, is an ethnical based union to regain rights of muhajir community. As they felt deprived of facilities and rights practised by Sindhi and Punjabi people, this students union helped them bring forward their demands and represented their community on the table to negotiate for their democratic rights. They talked for their water concerns, healthcare facilities, infrastructure building, education, and various issues were addressed. This organization is notable for creating a political party known as Muttahida Qaumi movement (MQM). Students politics is not encouraged in Pakistan but the world admires it, as being helpful to recognize political leaders and it restrains the nation from being ruled by polarized government leaders only. It helps keep away extremism and polarization as student leaders who work for betterment move forward and gain noble powers and popularity and they have real leadership qualities that help them acknowledge power.

Recently, on 29 november, students of American university being pro-Israel held elections to vote against draconian actions of Israel conducting genocide against Palestine. Despite pro-Israeli, students voted against Israel and majority supported Palestine cause. This shows democratic elections of students that was recognized by American leaders also. The students protested against horrific genocide by Israel to be stopped and not only in Washington D-C but students united across many countries like England, Canada, France etc that gained widespread popularity across the world and persuaded western leaders to think of Israeli oppressive actions of violation of international law and killings of thousands of Palestinian women and children. Student unions once again showed their influence in social sphere. Another protest by students of PGC college Lahore against rape case of female student surprised the administration against their tyrannical behavior and compelled them to thoroughly investigate the case. The student unions have always fought for basic rights especially in their institutions and never allowed university administration to work only for their personal interest.

Already discussed in this essay is case of Sheikh Hasina, Prime minister of Bangladesh until August 2024. She enjoyed 15-year long dictatorship rule in Bangladesh where she subjugated opposition leaders, imprisoned them, practised extra-judicial killing of opposition leaders, widespread protest erupted across the country by students which was ^{being} conducted peacefully. The students against job quota for descendents of freedom fighters. Sheikh Hasina being a dictator underestimated power of students and she started taking coercive actions against students, deployed police on students, wounding and killing of students and then imposing curfew across the state enraged the students and the end result was resignation of Hasina and she fled from country for sake of her life. This reflects how students created history in the Bangladesh to bring change at national level. From the minor issues of colleges and universities to the major problems of nations, students have been in forefront as fighters and always raised their voices without a second thought because youth of today's innovative and scientific world is aware of what is happening in the world and how dictator leaders have always bowed down "have nots" and have took actions in favor of their own benefits.

Moving forward, five fingers are not equal in any way, various student unions worked in the history of Pakistan with their sole honesty and always uprooted democratic rights of their people be it on local, or national level. With the passage of time, some of the unions started working for political parties and ensured their interest to be protected and accomplished. This political game disrupted the society and ^{General} Zia's oppressive rule and dictator government imposed ban on student unions in 1984 which was then uplifted by Shaheed Mohtama Benazir Bhutto. Again supreme court banned student unions and an affidavit is signed by students while taking admissions to refrain from involving in any type of politics otherwise they will face expulsion. But, wrong actions by some of the students doesn't validate them to impose a complete ban on students unions. In an influential leadership under Asaj Aliangzeb, widespread protest was held on 29 November to uplift the ban on student unions and allow them to work for rights and help attain great leaders for the state from youth that is consistently working in this fragile country to attain their basic rights and facilities.

Uptill now, it has been explicitly observed how student unions have been influential on state level to bring social and institutional change. It can't be denied that power of student union can help attain revolutionary change in any society. On campus issues of clean water, washrooms, canteen's cleanliness and price issues, library facilities of books, problems of teachers favouritism that influence mental health of students, conduct of exams, cases of sexual harassment by teachers or other administrative employ or cases of paper leak like recent incident of MDCAT conducted by Dow university and leakage of paper one day before the exam and various other issues, students have always raised up against administration and protested for their basic facilities and ^{have} brought changes in social and institutional level. They have always been resilient in gaining what they own either it is an on-campus issue or state level issue.

Another important benefit of student union can be observed from past that leaders of the union are mostly from middle class or low income middle class families that have actually faced the real issues of the state and have gone through main problems of the state

and they are known to uproot level of issues. So, their leadership becomes influential because they have already faced real issues of the society and institution. The leadership stage of student union gives them an opportunity to rise on high levels through their excellent skills and it helps the whole nation to get excellent and honest leaders in the society. After the ban on student unions, Pakistan is left with nepotism in the government and no one from three majors i.e. PTI, PPP, PML-N actually understand the real problems of poor public. These polarized leaders only work for their political interest, seat and money and they have no concern with difficulties that nation is facing. Student unions can be platform where leaders arise and social and institutional issues can be addressed.

In a nutshell, student unions have been excellence in the history either we see before independence or after independence, they always proved with excellence. The power of muslim student federation (MSF) as a part of All India Muslim League (AIML) to help ^{ease} communication between local people and leaders of muslim league, the Baloch students organization and ~~the~~ Pakistan Mutahida students organization worked for their ethnic and

linguistic rights, the role of Bengali students in Dhaka university and during Bangladesh liberation war can't be denied to give Bengali the status of official language and independence of Bangladesh. Rise of students across the world as a union protest against deanonian genocide conducted by Israel on people of Palestine compelled leaders of international organization to take action against Israel. The influential protest by Asoj Aurangzeb against ban on student unions in Pakistan and after ban, a steady rise of extremist politicians in today's government clearly explains role of student unions in social and institutional level. From on campus basic facilities and rights to the social, institutional, national and international level student unions have always promoted democratic rights and restrains coercive actions of administration. Need of the hour is that Pakistan should lift up the ban on student unions and promote their leadership so that the nation gets real leaders that work for actual needs and rights of public and take certain actions that are actually needed in our country.