

**Role of All India Students Federation
In Freedom Struggle (1936-1947)**

*A Dissertation
Presented to the
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Of the
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In Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
In
M.A HISTORY*



**L OVELY
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LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY
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I

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “ROLE OF ALL INDIA STUDENTS’ FEDERATION IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE (1936-1947)” submitted to the Department of History is a record of an original work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Harmeen and the result embodied in this dissertation have not been submitted to any university or institute in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation “**Role of All India Students’ federation In Freedom Struggle (1936-1947)**”embodies the work carried out by Miss ArhoniLotha herself under my supervision and that it is valuable of consideration for the award of the MA Degree.

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ABBREVIATION

AICSC:	All India College Students' Conference
AISF:	All India Students Federation
BIA:	British Indian Association
CHCM:	Central Hindu College Magazines
CPI:	Communist Party of India
CSP:	Congress Socialist Party
DPI:	Director of Public Instruction
INA:	Indian National Army
ICS:	Indian Civil Service
INC:	Indian National Congress
RC:	Reception Committee
UPUSF:	UP University Students' Federation
WC:	Working Committee

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development and contribution of the AISF in the freedom struggle. The AISF is working eternally to unite and lead the student towards their valued goals to expand its mass base. Their participation in any movement is a mixture of both emotional response and intellectual confidence. The AISF would prolong the struggle with discipline and competence and would encourage others that its stand was correct and methods proficient. AISF proved stimulants in the struggle for freedom. Once enlightened by the able leadership and dynamic ideologies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the systematic growth of AISF up to 1947.
2. To study the role played by AISF in Freedom Struggle
3. To analyze the various activities of AISF and their impact
4. To understand the various lacuna in the working of AISF.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:-

The AISF stands in the front line of this movement for the progressive sections of the students. To expand its mass base, the AISF is working eternally to unite and lead the student towards their valued goals. AISF believes that only the socialism can bring about the basic changes in the society preferred by the vast majority of our students- new system of education which will prepare the students for their creative role in society, jobs for all so that the vast manpower of the country is usually democratic, employed and political rights so that young may contributed to the building of a Socialist India. Students played an important role in the freedom struggle of India. Even in present scenario, students are playing important role in politics and social. They are the uprising leader of tomorrow. Through this study we want to examine and analyze the role of youth in making of our country.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Anil Rajimwale (1936-2004) in his book informs us about the emergence of AISF in India in a short summary. It is a short history about how AISF was formed and how they got separated.

Subas Chandra Hazary (1988) written that the study of youth politics in India involves a discussion of several dimensions. While youth may be a statistical category in terms of a particular age group, in reality it cannot be treated as a homogeneous group on account of the interplay of several socio-cultural variables. According to this book, youth in India get involve in political discussion for the development of a society. Though they are young and immature yet they play a vital role in socio-cultural changes in the society. They cannot be considered un-important for bringing changes in a nation.

Suneet Chopra (1978) had narrated that at the stroke of midnight, on 15th August 1947, two men who had shared the same student platform eleven years earlier, at the first conference of the All India Students' Federation in Lucknow, divided the country between themselves. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in his presidential address, had then spoken against communalism, and Jawaharlal Nehru, who had inaugurated the conference, showed himself to be a past master at the art of evasion, when in a debate as to whether students should be politically active in the national movement, he blithely

declared that taking part in the national movement was not politics but a “sacred duty”. This book gives us the detail about the political consciousness of the student movement in India. It provides us good knowledge about origin of the student movements in India and their role in class struggle, mass movement. It does also inform us the educational system in India.

Philip G. Altbach (1974) explained that for over a century, student unrest has been one of India’s most serious educational and political problems. Student agitation has caused state government to revise its language policies. Academic institution on all levels have been disrupted and occasionally closed because of student activism. It is the purpose of this chapter to place the Indian student movement in its historical context, and to focus some attention on current issues relating to student unrest can be discerned and their causes constructively dealt with. In this book, it gives us the information about the main features of student turbulence in India. Student has been played an important role in freedom struggle but in some way they are causing problems for the government to revise its language policies as well as educational institution are disrupted and occasionally closed because of student movement. This book also gives us knowledge about how student unrest in India can be discerned and plays Indian Student Movement in its historical context.

Philip G. Altbach and John Patrick Haithcox (1971) through their book it tell us about student involving in politics in Bombay. Student actively participated in the politics for the improvement of the nation. This book explain us how student actively took concern in politics for the betterment of a nation. It also discusses their philosophical approach towards politics.

Lloyd I. Rudolph et al. (1971) contended that the emergence of youth as a new political class a consequence of the creation and prolongation of youth as a distinctive life- stage with its attendant cultures and social arrangement. This has been made possible by the relatively rapid build- up of the educational system. And it has all been supported mainly by the requirements and rewards of industrial economics of literate, knowledgeable, and skilled labor forces working away from home and family, and also the aspiration that democratic citizens should be informed and responsible. This book provides us the information how youth emerge as a new political class in the society with the help of educational system in India. Youth are the future leader of a country so they should be well informed about their responsibility towards the citizen of a nation.

Philip G. Altbach(1966) stated that the segment of the student movement community which was started for political and social change has made a significant contributions to political development.

Philip G Altbach (1966) stated that for more than a century, student movements had an important place among the agents of the social change. In some nations, students have succeeded in toppling governments or in changing policies. In others, they have been instrumental in various kinds of cultural revivals. In new nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, Students are often instrumental in Political, Social and Cultural development. Students have provided inspired leadership to national liberation movement, Political parties, and on a more mundane level, labor organizations and cultural groups. From this book we can get knowledge about student involving in politics and how student plays an integral part in the development of social-cultural movement in a society. Student plays a vital role in national awakening of a nation.

M.Muni Reddy (1947) in his book made an earnest attempt has been made to trace the history of the student movement in India and the heroic role it played in Indian politics during the country's critical days. The growing importance of the student organization cannot be easily brushed aside either by the public or by the students. It's a philosophical book on student organization and ideology of the student movement in India. It gives an idea how Student Movement started in a very philosophical manner.

Anil Rajimwale (1920-1947) discussed that the contrary to general impression the student movement in India is not a phenomenon only of the 20th century; its beginnings go back to the 19th century. Even though the student population of a modern type was small due to the small number of educational institutions, it was already coming together to discuss and agitate for new ideas and for solutions of its own problems and those of the larger society. With the passing of time the attitude of the students acquired increasingly anti-British tendency. AISF emerge as an important organization played by the students in freedom struggle. This book discuss as about the emergence of student movement in India from 19th century onwards and tits nature of the student organization. It also deals how student organization helped the nation in getting freedom from British Rule.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study will be descriptive by its nature. Keeping in view the research evidences, objectives, hypothesis, and the investigator found it suitable to use descriptive survey method in the present study. Descriptive research is a type of research that is primarily concerned with describing the nature or conditions and degree in detail of the present situation and whenever possible, to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered. For the present study data will be collected from National Archives of India (New Delhi), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (New Delhi), Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab University Library, Desh Bhagat Yadgaar Library (Jalandhar). Contemporary members of All India Student Federation will be contacted for the primary information of the subject. After the collection material would be analyzed and interpretation would be made on the basis of facts given in primary and secondary sources. Our thesis will be descriptive as well as analytical and it will be a qualitative research.

CHAPTER 1

FIRST PHASE-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (1828-1936):

Around the world students have been one of the most energetic forces in promoting change. Youth in general, and the politically aware in particular, played an important part in the mass independent movements all over the country. In some nations, students succeeded in toppling governments or changing policies by providing inspired leadership to national liberation movements because students deal with ideas and intellectualized concepts in their academic work, they are better able to understand abstract ideological system than the persons who regularly work in concrete “non-intellectual” situations.¹ Its long tradition of western education in India has built up the students for revolting against the injustice or violence done by the imperialistic policy of the British. Students are considered as the future leaders of any country in the world so they hold an important place in the society. Students played an important part in the struggle for the social reforms and to acquire knowledge and step by step to create political alertness against the British rule. The student movement goes back to the pre-Independence era. Student movement in India is not an occurrence only of the 20th century, its beginning go back to the 19th century. The history of student activism

¹ Philip G. Altbach, “*student and politics*” in Seymour Martin Lipset(ed.), *student politics*, New York, 1967, p. 74.

in India has been a chequered one as part of the nationalist movement. It is often argued that the nature and content of the student activism have undergone a qualitative change since Independence.²In the 19th century, at its beginning, social reforms were the main problem related to it. This perception was one of the consequences of modern western education which made the educated youth conscious about the social-religious inequalities, discriminations and rigidities. India being a colonial country, its natural nationalism finds its full face in its youths. Moreover, the Student Movement is not only considered to be the threat but harmful to the interest of the rulers. With the spread of modern education a conscience about its own freedom among the Indians and enthusiasm of the students gradually brought the educated youth in contact with the modern events in various parts of the world. Students played an important role to acquire and impart knowledge about the cruel policy of the British rule in India. The early reactions of the educated youth were not always about political matters but also for social changes, to spread and share the newly acquired consciousness and to stand against the injustice and inequalities. All these reactions and Endeavour took on various forms. The spread of modern education and institutions was the main factor for the emergence of the student movement in India. A number of student and youth

² Philip G. Altbach, *Student Politics*, New York, 1986a, p. 17.

organizations emerged in the last century, each with a unique background and history.

In Greece, Italy, America, Germany all over the world when a new gospel was preached charged with the message of a new hope, it was the young who enthusiastically responded to the call.³ The most famous organization of youth, “Young Italy” conceived by Mazzini for the Italian unification became the source of inspiration for students throughout the world.

Coming to Asia, in Japan the first students’ strike occurred in 1870 in Keio University. Political lectures in schools and streets were common sights. Many students were arrested for participating in political activities. Japanese student movement had its impact on the Chinese students who swarmed Japan between 1900-1915. They were inspired by modern ideas and many joined the Nationalist Party. Radical ideas organization of France and Russia also motivated them towards revolutionary movements. Ultimately they brought down the Manchu dynasty.⁴ During the early 19th century in India, a modern consciousness gradually brought the educated youth in contact with the modern events in various parts of

³ Surendranath Bannerjee, *A Nation in making*, Calcutta, 1925, p. 181

⁴ S.K. Ghosh, *The Student Challenge Round the World*, Calcutta, 1969, p.81

the country and the world. But this new consciousness was not so much political as it was a reaction to the social disparities. This resulted in the emergence of various debating clubs, study circles, student and youth organisations for social reforms and to spread the newly acquired consciousness. Academic Association (1828), Youth Bengal Movement (1830), society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1838), Students' Literary and Scientific society (1848) were important organisations.⁵ Students are the key power for any progress in the economic and political development in the world. Student's movements have made a momentous contribution to the development of any nation which they organized themselves for the betterment of political or social action. Student organization is often added as an important element for formal education which receives in schools and colleges.

In the last part of the 19th century social character of students associations was changed to political. "British Indian Association" (1851), a political organization of landlords, was among the first grievances of students.⁶ In 1876, a Brahmo, Anand Mohan Bose organized the first "student Association".⁷ Young Brahmos represent a very important source of youths' nationalist activities. In 1875 Surendranath Bannerjee who had returned from England also became an important leader of this association. The young members of 'British Indian Association' also

⁵ Anil Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 7, 8

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.26.

broke away from it and joined around Surendranath Bannerjee. He began the political education of the students of Calcutta University through his lectures on Joseph Mazzini and 'Young Italy movement.' B.C. Pal an extremist leader, who was student at that time, wrote in his book *Memories of My Life and Times*, that students used to sing national songs-

Sing, O my clarionet:

Sing these words:

Everyone is free in this wide world,

Everyone is awake in the glory of science

India alone lieth asleep!

China and Burma and barbarous Japan,

Even they are independent,

they are superior,

India alone knoweth no waking! ⁸

Surendranath Bannerjee was imbued with the concept of united India derived from the inspiration of Mazzini and inspired the youth of Bengal. He also visited various places including Calcutta, Benaras, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Aligarh,

⁸ M.M. Ahluwalia, *Freedom struggle in India* (1858-1909), Delhi, 1965, p. 188.

Amritsar and Lahore.⁹ Simultaneously, Bannerjee established 'Indian Association' in July, 1876. Anand Mohan Bose was elected its secretary and soon focused the public spirit of the middle class and became the centre of the leading representatives of educated community of Bengal. Both the association took up the demand for raising the age limit for the ICS exam and organized various protests all over state in England and India.¹⁰

The student associations and their agitation over issues concerning academic equally among Indians and Englishmen were the precursor of the mighty organization that was to arise and the elemental uprising that were to follow. The extraordinary feature of this first activity of Indians is the close alliance between the new leadership and the student masses.

In 1859, the committee of the BIA addressed the Director of Public Instruction (DPI) on the increase of the fees in schools. The BIA also took the issue of the age and place of Indian Civil Service (ICS), in its memorial dated 1 December 1876 at Calcutta prayed for the maximum age for appearing the civil service. The Indian Association was founded in Bengal in 1876 at the initiative of SurendranathBannerjee and Anand Mohan Bose. In 1883 'Indian Association' held its first Indian National Conference which was attended by over 10,000 people.

⁹ SurendranathBannerjee, *opcit*, p. 39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Anand Mohan Bose said in his presiding speech: “it is the first stage towards a National parliament.”¹¹ These early associations were the nuclei out of which the structure of the Indian National Congress was formed and begins the new era of activity resistance by Indian students.

In 1885 after the formation of Indian National Congress (INC), students participated in congress activities were not only in India but in England also. The journal India was distributed in the universities of London. Arrangements were being made to assist the students to find quarters on arrival in London with a view to early enrolment on the congress lists.¹²

The INC also came out strongly against the official policy on the ICS exams and emphasized that the competitive exams being held in England shall be henceforth to be held simultaneously both in England and India. The INC appointed a committee in 1886 to consider the question of the ICS and its report was approved by the congress. The age of ICS exam was later raised to 23 by the government and it was accepted by INC. But still many protests on various other aspects of ICS were continued by the INC and many other organizations.

¹¹ C.F. Andrews and K. GirjaMookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India, 1832-1920*, Meerut, 1967, p. 67.

¹² Anil Rajimwale, *opcit*, p.37.

In the 20th century, Japan's victory over Russia (1904-1905) had greatly contributed to the awakening in Asia. It was during this time when Bengal was partitioned in 1905 to curb the nascent Bengali nationalism and in response to that 'Swadeshi and Boycott' movement was launched. Surendranath Bannerjee wrote 'students' enthusiasm was roused to a pitch such as I had never before witnessed, it was positively dangerous for a school boy or a college student to appear in a class or lecture room in clothes made of a foreign stuff.'¹³ With great enthusiasm, students began to participate in public meetings, processions, bonfire of clothes, picketing, lecturing and singing of patriotic songs and cautioned the government which was played by Bengali students. Mahatma Gandhi also wrote in *Hind Swaraj*, "The spirit generated in Bengal has spread in the north to the Punjab and in the south to Cape Comorin."¹⁴

As a result of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement, the congress session of 1906 was a victory for the extremism where Dadabhai Naoroji in his presidential address clearly spelled out of the goal of the congress as *Swaraj*.¹⁵ But the extremists, dissatisfied with the slow and halting programme of the Moderates, demanded the adoption of more vigorous methods for the attainment of *Swaraj* and gave the

¹³ Surendranath Bannerjee, *opcit.*, p.182.

¹⁴ M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Ahmedabad, 1962, p. 18.

¹⁵ Pardman Singh, J.S. Dhanki(ed.), *Buried Alive*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 3.

students a big opportunity to come on forefront. Ajit Singh declared “our difficulties will not be lessened until we have government of our own”¹⁶On the Calcutta resolution of self-government he, later on commented, “Australia made no position to get self-government nor did the Boers submit any memorial. America did not apply to England for favour. They only showed Englishmen that they were their equal, both in the art of peace and war.” He added, “you cannot expect king to have his royal palace to share your hovels, nor can you hope for a voluntary resignation of temporal power by the dominant race.”¹⁷An Anti-Circular Society was established in Calcutta in 1905 in protest against the notorious Carlyle circular which was named after the officiating chief secretary to the government of Bengal R. W. Carlyle. The society stopped students from attending the meetings of the National leaders and any activity associated with the swadeshi movement. For anti-circular society the use of students for political purposes was absolutely dissident discipline. The publication of the Carlyle created sensation and a sense of shock all over the country, which was heightened by the publication of Pedler’s letter. They organized a 5000 strong students’ meeting at college Square on 4 November 1905. Sachindraprasad Basu and Ramakanta Roy were its leaders.¹⁸

¹⁶ Home department, Political (Deposit), June 1907, File No. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Gautam Chattopadhyaya, “*Bengal’s Student Movement*” in challenge: A saga of India’s struggle For freedom, people’s publishing House (PPH), New Delhi 1984, p.515.

In Calcutta many meetings and processions was followed in defiance of the circular society. They undertook fund collection, campaign for swadeshi goods, for national educational institution and even sang national songs. The Bengal government formed two more circulars in November 1905 similar to the Carlyle circular. The Lyon circular was one of them who called upon the college and school authorities to discourage the students from attending political meetings and take part in procession. The citizens formed a National School at Rangpur in November 1905 in response to Carlyle circular.¹⁹

India students' organization was being discussed way back in 1906 in the columns of the Central Hindu College Magazines (CHCM) published by Anne Besant from Benaras in 1908.²⁰ It discussed the formation of an India level body of students on several occasions. A letter in the October 1908 issue of the CHC Magazine stated: "I have been reading with very keen interest the articles about 'All India Students Conference', the wire of which was pulled by us in the year 1906... and which now has been so ably and enthusiastically moved my friend MrSubhaRao in the issue of the month of July of our magazine."²¹ Another letter by JagdishwarNath in the same issue of the CHC Magazine stated that "idea of an all

¹⁹ V. Sankaran Nair, *Swadeshi Movement: The Beginning of student unrest in south India*, Mittal Publications, Delhi 1985, p.21.

²⁰ CHC Maganize; see issues of 1906-08.

²¹ CHC Maganize; October 1908, pp. 267-68; emphasis added.

India Students' conference, which has been promulgated by Mr. Subha Rao through your widely read journal, has created considerable interest and enthusiasm in the minds of student community.²²

But such organization could not be formed due to the outbreak of First World War. The idea of an all India organization of students was revived after the First World War. The war brought about a qualitative change in the situation of the world. The change in the situation led to a sharpening of the national freedom movement in whole over India. A meeting of college students was held in Nagpur on 2 November 1920 in the town hall to discuss the holding of the all India college students' conference and its preparations. It was supervised over by R.J. Gokhale. The name of L.G. Telang later appears as the general secretary of the AICSC. The meeting appointed a working committee for the purpose.²³ Another resolution on the formation of the working committee of different college representatives for fund collection and propaganda work was also passed.²⁴ It had become extremely important that the college students of India met and deliberated upon problems that faced them. It was only by mutual consent, help and sympathy that students could face and surmount the odds and difficulties.²⁵ The students were not bound to any such idea and they should attend the conference with an open mind on every

²² CHC Magazine; October 1908, pp.266-67.

²³ Bombay Chronicle, 5 November, 1920.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ The Collegian, No. 1, November 1920, p. 211.

question including non-cooperation movement. The students who had already decided to leave colleges and schools should have nothing to do with the conference. The decisions of the conference should be independent.²⁶ The first All India College Students' Conference (AICSC) opened in Badshah Theatre, Nagpur on 25 December 1920. At the conference, R.J. Gokhale, chairman of the RC said to the audience of 3000 that "Respond to the nations' call and understand clearly that the genesis of the present situation was to be found in political rather than economic problem."²⁷ In the conference resolution was made which was carried by an overwhelming majority. Some of these resolutions are:

1. On the demise of BalGangadharTilak expressing profound grief.
2. Calling for the national colleges affiliated to the national universities for the benefit of student noncooperators who might wish to continue their education.
3. Practicing swadeshi
4. Sympathy with the students of Punjab under martial law.²⁸ The news of Nagpur conference was a unique event of that time which spread like a wide fire and created a wave of enthusiasm among the students and youth of

²⁶ Bombay Chronicle, emph, added.

²⁷ Bombay Chronicle, 27 December, 1920.

²⁸ Indian Annual Register, 1921, vol 2, pp 247-50.

India. The AICSC played a crucial role in activating the student mass and in raising their consciousness.

Student movement was spread all over the country, but Calcutta was the main centre of student or youth activism. Calcutta became a commercial and political centre for the British Empire in India and hence played an important role in the growth of modern consciousness and activity among the educated youth. It also became an important educational centre and destined to emerge as a key point of student movement. For any case, the student movements have been instrumental in shaping social or political attitudes of the elite people of any country.

An analysis of the historical background projects that AISF from the very beginning of the century proved that they are the messengers of freedom struggle but could not give an organized confrontation due to the British government. However their activities definitely created a base for the future generation. Students have gained beneficial skilled in political method and ideology through their works in the movements.

CHAPTER 2

SECOND PHASE- FORMATION OF AISF (1936):

The growing consolidations institutionalizations were moving in the direction of fresh efforts for the formation of an all India student's federation at the beginning of the 1930s. But the effort to form a student federation failed, not due to the lack of interest among the students but due to the impediment put in the way by the government. During 1920s only a minority of the Indian student community was politically active and during this period that the movement established itself and gained both organizational experience and ideological sophistication. Organizations devoted to debating, drama, literature and other subjects blossomed at many colleges, often with the support of the college authorities. The 1930s brought an intensification of the political struggle in India and along with it a growth in the student movement. In 1931, the sind students were reluctant to convene a conference along with the congress session. But later they agreed on the condition that real efforts would be made to form an AISF. Among the organizers of the conference were: Tirith G. Sabhani, H.P. Mirchandani ,A.J.Mantora, H.G.Butani,B.T.Sabhani, H.R. wadwani, V.I. Jagliani and some others.²⁹

²⁹ Anil Rajimwale,*opcit.*, p. 278.

In the mid 1930s, Lucknow had become an important centre for political actions and were also a home to a large number of student organisations in UP. A body known as the UP University Students' Federation (UPUSF) was existence during that time. It was a federal body of official student union of different universities of the province. M.N.M Badiuddin, P.N. Bhargava and some others became active in this organization and transformed it from one associated with the official university circles, approved and even, on occasions, sponsored by them, into an active instrument of radical politics of youth.³⁰ According to Harvani, the students captured the rostrum and elected M. Badiuddin as the president of the meeting. It was decided to call a convention of students from all over India to form an AISF.³¹ The conference among universities students became a normal extra-curricular activity of the students which gave them an opportunity to deliberate on the numerous educational, academic and cultural questions. Students from British and Scottish universities used to visit and be invited to the difference Indian universities for debating contests. Lucknow University also invited the British Goodwill Mission debating team. On one hand of these visits to Lucknow, the VC DrParanipe was present in their reception. G.N. Gurtu, the president of the students' Union, which the students themselves could have done. Gurtu was later

³⁰ *Ibid.*, P.281.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

expelled from the university causing an agitation. Ultimately, the expulsion was withdrawn.³²

The purposes of convening the all India students' conference were to hinder the government shift to lead the students away from mass movement by forming a body overseen by the government itself. Thus these entire factors played an important role in the formation of AISF in convincing India-level conference of the students.

Pradesh Chandra writes that it was towards the close of 1935 that Badiuddin and P.N. Bhargava of UPSF issued letters to various provincial and local student organisations proposing formation of an all Indian student body. This proposal was accepted and it was agreed that the conference be held in August 1936.³³ The UP University Students' Federation holds a meeting at Lucknow on 23 January 1936 and under this meeting a resolution was made to resolved the oblige necessity of an all India student organization. The decision to hold the all India gathering accorded with that of the annual convention of the UPUSF under the chairmanship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, which had decided to invite delegates from all the degree colleges

³² M.Muni Reddy, *student Movement in India*, pub by K.S.R. acharya,"New Age" or "NayaZamana"office, Lucknow 1947,p.132-33.

³³ Prabodh Chandra, *Student Movement in India*, pub by AISF, Lahore, 1938, p.52.

and the universities of India.³⁴ On the meeting it was decided that the working committee shall be set up till the formation of the reception committee and before the election of its office bearers and the meeting also appointed for local committees for a number of convenors. The Swadeshi League of Lucknow also contributed a great part for the formation of AISF. According to Muni Reddy, it was these congress-minded students who captured the University Union and UPUSF and convened the all India student conference in Lucknow. Congress-oriented students were a considerable force in these two organisations.³⁵

P.N. Bhargava has recounted his version of developments leading to the formation of the AISF in a booklet titled First Conference of All India Students' Federation. He came in 1930 to Lucknow from the mofussil town of sitapur for further studies. Radical nationalism and Marxist socialism were rampant among the student community and it was not possible to remain free from this atmosphere.³⁶ Lucknow became the centre for political activities and for student's movement. The UPUSF was a kind of executive student union. A congress session was held in Lucknow in May 1936 and this session provided a platform for the student leaders from various parts of the state to meet and discuss the conference among them with the official leaders of congress party. There was no suggestion that the conference and

³⁴ The Pioneer, 25 February 1936.

³⁵ Munni Reddy, *opcit.*, p.133.

³⁶ Prem Narayan bhargava, *First Conference of All India Students' Federation*, Lucknow 1976, p.1.

formation of AISF was decided upon ahead of time in the CPI. After the congress session was over, the preparation for the conference began.

The conference was planned in Kanachi on 26 March 1931 under the president ship of PanditJawaharLal Nehru. But it could not happen due to numerous reasons. The foundation conference of the AISF was held at the Ganga Prasad Memorial Hall of Lucknow in August 1936. The preparations for the conference were being prepared with great energy of the youth and it was only the second occasion when the entire student gathering was being held. The conference opened in Lucknow on 12 August 1936. The subject committee was formed by the delegates meeting in the ChedilalDharmashala, Aminabad, in the morning of the 12th. It consisted of 5 representatives from each of the universities like KashiVidyapeeth and JamiaMilliaIslamia, Dehli, and from the intermediate Boards, and one each from provincial Students' Federation.³⁷ The subjects Committee met in the afternoon of 12 August and discussed the constitution, and aims and objects of the future organization. The R.C. in the meantime reduced the admission fees by half for the 13th.³⁸

³⁷ The Times of India, 14 August, 1936.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The conference of all India students' was held on the evening of 12 August 1936 in the Ganga Prasad Memorial Hall and it was inaugurated by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and presided over by M.A. Jinnah. It was attended by 936 delegates from 200 local and 11 provincial organizations. "There was no state or university which was not represented."³⁹ The conference received good wishes from Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Tej Bahadu Saprú, Srinivas Shastri and many prominent personalities. At that time it was the biggest gathering of students at all India level. Among the universities represented were those of Benaras, Allahabad, Aligarh, Agra, Lucknow, Nagpur, Lahore, Calcutta, Bombay, Assam and Ceylon.⁴⁰ P.N. Bhargava, convenor and chairman of the R.C, welcomed the delegates of the conference and it was inaugurated by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. While welcoming the delegates, P.N. Bhargava said that the conference was "to create a common consciousness among the students of the country, create an atmosphere of control and unity between them, focus their attention and concentrate their energy, without of course neglecting the traditional examinations of general progress. And this conference of ours will prove an undoubted success if it is able to generate in the student community a robust desire to harmonize the academic activities with

³⁹ Prem Narayan bhargava, *opcit.*, p.2.

⁴⁰ The Pioneer, 13 August, 1936.

the improvement of social order”.⁴¹ He also appealed that the student should do their furthest for the realization of an egalitarian society and adequate liberty to all.

“I would be failing in my duty if I did not avail of this opportunity to ask you to send fraternal greetings on behalf of this conference and the student community of India to the World Youth Congress and the bold front it is presenting on behalf of the students of world against war. Nothing can be more important to the Youths of the world than the cause of peace. Our generation must leave a warless world as heritage to 21st century.”⁴² Pt Nehru in his inaugural address dealt with both the national and the international problems. He exhorted the students to make them worthy to keep the torch of struggle for freedom alight. He advised them to be interested in the events outside India. The happenings in India were a reflection of the clash between the progressive and reactionary forces going on in the world.⁴³ Pt Nehru also said:

When you go out of the university you will find that you are not fit for anything in the world. After all, the fundamental problem before you and the humanity as a whole is the freedom of India, political, social and economic. Those who are students of history perhaps have read about

⁴¹ Anil Rajimwale, *Notes on History of AISF (1936-47)*, AISF Pub, New Delhi 1986, p. 31.

⁴² Prem Narayan bhargava, *opcit.*, p. 10.

⁴³ . S. Gopal(ed), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol.VII, New Dehli, 1975, p.335.

revolutions and changes. But have you ever sought to find the real reason behind the revolution and changes?⁴⁴

M.A. Jinnah also expresses his happiness at the reality that all students of different castes, communities and colleges had gathered in the conference with one goal. He also address that it was a non-communal, non-sectarian organization has brought together students of every colour, shade or opinion. He said:

We have got the congress, we have got the Hindu Mahasabha, we have got the All India Muslim League, Anjumans and various organisations. But I think you will agree with me that we have not got a common platform where better minds of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Sikhs can stand together and deliberate together and resolve and take decisions. But I am glad to see that you have got a substantial representation of the various communities in your conference. I wish that we, who are experienced, should follow your example.

This was the last occasion where Pt Nehru and Jinnah shared a platform.⁴⁵ The conference has passed a several resolutions and they have called upon the students to fight actively for independence and to participate in politics. The first general

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ansar common Harvani, *Before Freedom and After*, New Dehli, 1989 quoted by Anil Rajimwale ,*History of Student Movement in India*,p.31.

secretary of AISF was elected and Prem Narayan Bhargava was appointed as the general secretary. Among the resolution the most important were:

Resolution no. 1, the conference resolved that a permanent all India organization of students be formed with a view

- a) To encourage cultural and intellectual cooperation on equal terms between the students of various provinces and Indian states,
- b) To suggest improvements in the present educational systems,
- c) To safeguard the rights of the students' community, and
- d) To prepare the students for citizenship in order to take their due share in the struggle for complete national freedom by arousing their social, political and economic consciousness.⁴⁶

Resolution no. 2, the conference realizes the urgency of an all India students' organization and considers that immediate steps should be taken to prepare the grounds for such an organization. To this end it suggested that such an organization should be based on a non-sectarian and non-communal plan and should be a federal organization connecting all student unions in India including Indian states. It appoints a committee of a general secretary, five joint honorary secretaries, and one convenor from each of the provinces in Indian states along with two members with power to co-opt members to draft a constitution on the

⁴⁶ Prem Narayan bhargava, *opcit.*,p 26.

above lines after getting into touch with the students' organization all over India.⁴⁷

Resolution no. 17, this conference congratulates the Bombay metric students on their heroic stand which they made in pressing their demands before the authorities in the senate hall.⁴⁸

Resolution no. 22, where there is no organ of the students of India to give vent to their grievance, this conference of the students of all India resolves that all India Students' organ, The Student Tribune be started with the following aims and objectives:

- a) To agitate for reforms in the drab system of education.
- b) To seek to solve the question of unemployment.
- c) To help the organization of a powerful students movement in India.

“The all India students, conference resolves to recognize The Students' Tribune as the official organ of the All India Students' Federation and on the condition that the Punjab Students' Association offers to bear all the initial expenses.” “That the working committee of the All India Students' Federation be authorized to direct and control the policy of this paper.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.28-29.

Ramesh Sinha was incidentally among those on the editorial board of The Students' Tribune. Prem Narayan Bhargava was elected as the first general secretary of All India Students' Federation.⁵⁰ The conference elected a provisional working committee of the following members in addition to the general secretary:

Joint secretaries: M.N. Gandhi, Bombay

Roshan Lal, Lahore

Promodhsen, Calcutta

J.S. Pande, Nagpur

S. Krishna Swami, Benaras

Members:

Bengal: karti Chandra Das (convenor)

J. Sarkar, Nandlal Bose

Punjab: Prabodh Chandra (convenor)

Tilak Raj, Ram Lal

Bombay: S.N. Master (convenor)

GulabShroff, M.H. khanderia

⁵⁰ Prabodh Chandra, *opcit.*, p.52.

Central Provinces: G.D. Vaidya (convenor)

D.D. Paranjpe, J.E. Tanka

United provinces: kailashNathVerma (convenor)

L.C. Khanna, R.C. Sinha.(The pioneer, 15 August 1936)

The central Office of the AISF was at Lucknow, while an Information Bureau was in Aligarh.⁵¹

Congress had deeply influenced the student movement of the 1920s and had considerable role in the formation of All India College students' conference of 1920. By the late 1920s, the congress lost interest in student movement but on the other hand, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) did lot of work in organizing associations of students at different levels in the mid-30s. It appears from the circular that the work of the CPI among the students and youth in 1936 was ineffective and disorganized. Due to narrow, sectarian policies of early 1930s, it had managed to alienate good many students and youth. By mid-1930s, the party was seeking a change in its policies and was trying to evolve a broad unite front. It was also asking its cadres to work in the congress and the CSP.⁵² The special session of AISF was held at Lahore on 22

⁵¹ . *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid*

November, 1936, under the presidentship of Sarat Chandra Bose.⁵³ It mainly discussed and adopted the constitution of AISF. Sarat Chandra Bose called upon the students to obtain inspiration from Russia revolution. The conference was also addressed by Pt Govind Ballabh Pant.

Many student leaders of various levels in different student organisations were also active members of the various political parties specially congress. The political parties tried to influence and organize the students for their party and it also often stated that the main leaders of these parties bowed together to arranged on the formation of the AISF and its office-bearers. The formation of AISf was more as an independent initiative but with help and advice of the leaders of national movement and political parties. The formation of the AISF was a momentous event. It inspired future student movement in India.

It also covered a wide range of subjects like India Act of 1935 and called upon all the student bodies in India to take a determined initiative in eradicating illiteracy by organizing village schools during vacations.⁵⁴ A special session of the

⁵³ Circular No. 13 of the PB, CC, CPI dated 3 August 1936, section on student and youth cells.

⁵⁴ Prabodh Chandra, *opcit.*, p.56.

All India Students' Federation was held at Lahore on 22 November, 1936, under the presidentship of sarat Chandra Bose.⁵⁵ In his presidential address Bose said:

Might shall not overawe us

Riches shall not seduce us

Poverty shall not discourage us

It is you who can create, because courage to destroy all that is evil must necessarily precede the will and the imagination to build. It is again those who can lead, for leadership requires idealistic enthusiasm and reckless abandon, of which youth alone are capable. He said, I look at the youth of my country to evolve a movement, essentially political and economic but at the same time social and cultural. He ascertained that the youth are more potential than the old because they have greater fervour, greater imagination and greater determination. He wondered as how politics could be banned from schools and colleges when it admits no banishment?⁵⁶ On concluding his speech Bose said:

Youngmen and women, I call upon you to take a vow in your minds. I will not rest until the freedom of my country has been achieved. I will not rest until unemployment and poverty have become things of the past. I will not rest until the

⁵⁵ Prabodh Chandra, *opcit.*, p.56.27. M.M. Reddy, *opcit.*, p. 138.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

masses, the peasants and workers have come to their own.⁵⁷ It also decided to associate the All India Students' Federation into the affairs of Republican Spain. The achievement of this conference was the adoption of the Students Charter. It can be called the Magna Carta of the student movement.⁵⁸ In the first session; All India Students' Federation felt the necessity and desirability of starting some official organ. Prabodh Chandra (Punjab) took arduous task upon himself and the students' Tribune, made its first appearance in November, 1936.⁵⁹

Since the establishment of the AISF was active in support of national liberation, freedom and socialist movements all over the world. The Students' Tribune published materials regularly on world events. In its initial years the AISF presented a tremendous united force and inspiration to the whole of Indian Student and becoming a powerful segment of the national movement. . It was a creditable achievement for AISF as it was the first organization to discuss and debate openly about the requirement of qualitatively changed situation in the country and to give a call for people's War. With the rise of fresh education, a modern consciousness gradually brought the educated youth in contact with the modern events in various parts of the country and the world.

⁵⁷ . P.M joshi, *opcit.*,p. 34.

⁵⁸ Prabodh Chandra, *opcit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ P.M. Joshi, *opcit.*, p.37.

The third conference of the All India Students' federation was held in Madras in January, 1938. It was the first time when clash on the student front occurred. Till that time Communist Party could not materialize its plan of 'Young Communist League' and started working in the already existing All India Students' Federation. The communist group was considerably strong being fully under the control of the highly centralized and effective disciplined Communist Party. The Communist students were always compelled merely to echo the party line. This being the case there were no student workers but only party missions and wherever the party demanded they sacrificed the interests of the student movement to serve the interest of the party.⁶⁰ The Communist students were determined to compel the conference to pass a resolution eulogizing the Soviet Constitution. The non-Communist section of students felt that this was not a subject within the scope of the conference and it was none of their business to pass judgement either way on the Constitution which the people of a particular country had adopted for themselves.

All India Students' Federation spread rapidly to new areas reaching to the far-flung and remote schools in the villages. The Madras AISF conference witnessed some serious issues between the various political trends and views. It was a broad-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

based mass organization, and therefore the differences were natural. The events moved fast at national and international levels.

In the history of student movement, All India Students' Federation played an important role in freedom struggle. All India Students' Federation was formed in 1936 with the objectives:

- a. To fight for educational and economic demands,
- b. To prepare students for taking part in freedom struggle.

With the passage of time these student organisations came to be identified on communal lines. The formation of the AISF appears largely to be an effort of the student leaders themselves, whether politically allied or non-allied. Though student leaders and leading activists seek advice from their seniors and leaders in their respective parties, which was natural for their student age as well as for their respective allied, their collective efforts seems to be of non-party student nature.

CHAPTER 3

3rd phase - Split in AISF

The most marked division in All India Students' federation was however, its split into nationalist and pro-communist groups. By December 1940, the AISF got polarized basically into two groups- the core of one group was of the nationalist, consisting of several trends and second was communists, who were organizationally and politically clearer and more organized. The sixth conference of AISF was held on 25-26 December at Nagpur which turns out to be an important and crucial conference in AISF history and in the Indian student movement as a whole.

According to one of the version, a week before the conference of the AISF, M.L. Shah General Secretary of it was suspected to be continuously going against the majority decisions of the Working Committee (WC). Despite the fact that he had not informed several members about the meeting. The disciplinary action was taken because he committed "the organization to a particular policy without proper sanction from the working committee or the all India students' council..."⁶¹

Several of its members were arrested before the meeting, which went in his favour in the Benaras meeting of the WC. He was planning to defranchise about

⁶¹ Raman Bannerjee, *This is the AISF*, Bombay 1946, p.23.

250 of the 400 delegates from Bengal, Bombay, Madras and Punjab, recognize a group of students from Bengal as genuine delegates although many of them were not even members of the AISF, from UP whose delegation had come without any democratic elections.⁶² In the WC meeting M.L. Shah weighed the situation and put a motion of confidence in himself and it required 15 days of notice which was thoroughly unconditional move. But AnsarHarvani the president of the meeting overruled the objection. Majority of the WC decided to go ahead with the conference and simultaneously appointed 3- member subcommittee to hold consultations with M.L.Shah group. The latter had no more than 15 percent supporters among some 400 and the subcommittee offered them 9 out of 19 seats on the WC and general secretaryship to M.L. Shah and it also agreed to withdraw the complaint of irregularities in U.P and to recognize Shahs' friends as delegates from Bengal but it was turned down by the Shah group and therefore the proposal was put before the delegates session.⁶³

According to another version of it, the communist students had come to Nagpur with a strong-minded to split the organisation. Since Soviet Union had made peace with Hitler so the Indian communist had certainly to be antiwar and demanded overthrow of the British Government. Those dissenting from their view were characterized as reactionary and counter-revolutionary and those with the

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

congress were to be thrown out of the organization.⁶⁴ Although M.L. Shah was with the CSP there were already threats of non-confidence against him. He had firmly adhered to the policy of keeping student movement free of party politics and also tried to maintain the custom of close cooperation with the congress. During the mean while the issue of student strikes had risen and the communist passed the indiscriminate strikes in order to follow their antiwar policy. For conducting all the activities in a peaceful and disciplined manner M.L. Shah has issued a statement and the communist immediately pounced upon M.L. Shah by condemning his meeting with Gandhiji without consulting the WC and giving his assurance on behalf of the AISF. M.L. Shah received a letter from Gandhiji saying that no assurance was given to him by Shah.⁶⁵ The meeting of WC (Working Committee) was held on 23 December at Nagpur and from this the process of splitting began. Some irregularities were created by the communist in the Bengal delegation and was alleged that some of them were not even a member of BPSF. There were disputes going on the admission of these delegates and the communist left the meeting because of their minority in number. The communist issued delegates' tickets to their own men by using the authority of the secretary of the RC. Under the signature of the general secretary M.L. Shah the delegates' tickets were rejected by the Reception Committee and even M.L. Shah was not allowed to enter

⁶⁴ P.M. Joshi, *Story of Pre-Independence Youth Movement*, Bombay, 1972, p.58.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 59-60.

the hall by RC. The hall and conference was captured by minority and after M.L. Shah and other delegates were denied, he changed the venue of the conference to another hall. Thus from there occurred the Nagpur split.⁶⁶ The conference which was convened by the communist was attended by them only and the other conference was attended by those who belonged to congress, forward Bloc, Congress Socialist Party and the Tagorites.⁶⁷

The students were deeply hurt by these growth and many fresh student delegates who had gone to the conference with great anticipation suffered keen displeasure. Most of them were moved to declare publicly their sense of resentment and dissatisfaction at these ugly demonstrations of party fanaticism. The leaders of communist faction appeared to justify the split and even went to the extent that the split was a rather too strong and mis-leading term and called it as incidents. The editorial of the student journal viewed that the unity that had been built up in the past era could be carried forward only if there was a clear clarification on the ideas and aims of AISF. 'The unity could not be easily maintained any longer'. "It had to be reforged", failure to do that would force the organization to obey Gandhiji and paralyse it.⁶⁸ One of the major problems for the split emerges to be Gandhiji's individual satyagraha campaign of 1940 to be

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.60-61

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁶⁸ The Student, January 1941, p.5.

against the British rule in India. The leaders of the communist opposed it but while most of the non-communists support the satyagargha.

According to Gandhiji, The Student wanted the students to discard political strikes altogether and insisted on following his discipline. He commanded nothing short of complete break-up of the AISF as a mass organization.⁶⁹ The AISF led by Farooqui passed a separate resolution on “Mahatma Gandhi’s statement on students” harshly condemning his set on students’ strikes. The sign of political strikes by the students in the war period had invited savage retaliation from the government and in fact, it was carrying on a war against the students with the help of college and authorities and the Defence of India Rules.⁷⁰ Gandhi definitely holds to the opinion that there should be no political strikes unless the authorities concur to close the institutions or the students choose to give up their studies once for all. Education was students right and they fight for its expansion and enhancement and not for the charity from the rulers. Gandhi condemns on the students as completing inactivity and has charged the students with indiscipline which has hindered the national cause by flittering away our energy in ineffective and thoughtless demonstrations. The students shall do their best in the coming year to strengthen our discipline by launching and leading new strikes-battles to success.⁷¹ The AISF

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

would prolong the struggle with discipline and competence and would encourage others that its stand was correct and methods proficient. The feeling of mistrust and suspicion were being built up on both sides former to the conference. The Student at the same time took a stand against the split saying courageously forcing splits solved nothing. One should safeguard and strengthen the AISF which as a mass organization should be capable to put the students across politics activities. It charged the other group of walking out as the masses did not agreed with them and the majority of the delegates wanted to clear of the immature exploit.

At the inaugural address of Dr. K.M. Ashraf at the conference, confirmed that the student movement would protest on leaving the corrupt fundamentals behind. In 1920 Nagpur gave birth to the Movement and again had made history by converting quantity into quality and thus Dr. K.M. Ashraf showed to justify the split.

The journal The Student of the AISF reacted shockingly harshly to comments of Gandhiji's and in the process displayed a kind of shortsightedness and impatience failing to catch feelings. The journal belonged to the Farooqui group of AISF and stated that he had agitated Gandhiji informing him that Shah was no longer the General Secretary of the AISF.⁷² The journal complained that Gandhi's opinion on

⁷² The Student, February-March 1941, p.7.

communists and congressmen had probably stated only an exception and even objected that Gandhiji had not use the prefix 'ex' for the post of M.L. Shah who was no longer the General Secretary of a particular faction of AISF.

The student cited an Associated Press message from Allahabad dated February 28, 1941: "Over one hundred common visitors have sent their cards to Gandhi but he has refused to see anybody and however he agreed to meet the deputation of the UP Students' Federation of Gandhi group". Further the despatch said that this had caused dissatisfaction in the so called anti-communist group who were not granted any interview. The Gandhite students were thrilled over this association with Gandhi and congress.⁷³ According to the journal *The Student* that it was sorry that the AISF was left out of this award of the badge of Gandhism while other considered this badge as achievement. It was shame that it should have fallen to the lot of the Gandhism of that great man and to that have divided the most united of all the organizations of India- the AISF.

In reality the Nagpur split had only amounted to the termination of one group from the wider movement and has cast a spell of darkness and misery over the Indian student world. The difference in ideology had contributed in the splitting of the organization. The split in the AISF in 1940 greatly harmed the enormous united mass student movement all over the country and the students in general were

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

greatly disappointed. But, for the time being, the emergence of the AISF led to tremendous upsurge in the student community causing it to become a powerful segment of the national movement.

The narrow political and group organizational interest got the better of the broader educational and other interest of the students. The result of the increasing political- organizational conflict within the AISF before and during the conference at Nagpur Conference in 1940 led to a split in the AISF. Consequently, there emerged two organizations with the name of the AISF- one AISF was being led by M. Farooqui as the general secretary, consisting mainly of the communists, and other AISF was being led by M. L. Shah, consisting mainly of the non-communists, mostly the nationalists. But both the groups eventually adopted severe positions in the course of debates and organizational matters. That only harmed the organization and disturbed the atmosphere, leading ultimately to a split in the AISF. At this conference, the AISF had split into two organizations: the communist-led AISF by Farooqui and the non-communist AISF led by M.L. Shah. The event at Nagpur had two differently major versions about it.

CHAPTER 4

4th phase – ACTIVITIES/ GROWTH OF AISF

The last decade witnessed a remarkable development in the separatist and as well as nationalist movement. The All India Students' Federation showed expansion in several parts of the country. After the foundation of AISF, it has made incredible headway being blessed with unity and external support to the organization by the people. During the All India Students' conference at Calcutta in 1939, the AISF organization had supported the student grumbles intense anti-imperialist protest which turns out to be the crest of the mass movements at the Calcutta conference held on 1-2 January.⁷⁴ The power of the AISF was reflected in the All India Students' conference which was attended by more than 800 delegates from all the corners of Indian state which was held under the chairmanship of Dr. K.M. Ashraf . Even the provincial organisations which could not be affiliated in time sent their representatives from places like Punjab, etc.⁷⁵ After Lahore conference the movements had assumed a considerable role in the life of the students. There were unparalleled waves of strikes, demonstrations, mostly for academic demands, civil liberties, etc and were also various instances of political struggles and participation in the struggles of states' peoples for responsible government. Almost by this time

⁷⁴ P.M. Joshi, *opcit.*, p.42.

⁷⁵ National Front, 15 January, 1939.

every town with high school or college had a student union, at least in the British province.⁷⁶ The Second World War broke out on 3 September, 1939. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow immediately and without consulting anybody in India declared that India would give her full support to Great Britain and her allies. Nazi Fascist Germany launched a massive attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. This brought about a qualitative change in the nature of the Second World War. Struggle and war against fascism became the main task of the student and general movement. Though they had serious differences with others the communist also characterized the War as imperialist. The events of 1938, particularly the Munich betrayal were analysed in the AISF booklet on imperialism, *Students' Role in Anti-imperialist Struggle*, 1940, representing the stand mainly of the communist. The booklet pointed out that the Munich pact had strengthened imperialism and thrown the popular forces into disarray. A world front of fascism and imperialism had been established and India's anti-imperialist movement could not ignore this reality. Anti-imperialist front was a unity of workers, peasants and intermediate strata, which fought for the freedom along class lines, in which students had to contribute their quota.⁷⁷ Thus, the AISF and the communist students counterposed national movement to socialism, overemphasizing the latter at a time when active participation in the freedom struggle was called for. They did not oppose the

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Students' Role in anti-Imperialist Struggle*, Calcutta, 1940 (typed copy of AISF booklet).

freedom struggle but even they took part in it. Looking upon freedom as a by-product of socialism and aiming at achieving socialism first, put the AISF in a difficult position. A significant editorial in *The Student* in August' 41 issue, expresses an intermediate position of the AISF preparatory to the adoption of the line of 'people's war'.⁷⁸ After Soviet Union was attacked by Nazi German forces, the AISF called for all out help to the Soviet Union. The war against fascism could be made a people's war and it was the first time that the concept of people's war was proclaimed by the AISF. It was through the AISF that the CPI talked of a people's war for the first time. Significantly the AISF said that "Independence of India is the Main Task in our efforts to help the Soviet people."⁷⁹ The AISF made it clear that it would not be content with only moral support to the Soviet people. The AISF called for the whole war mobilization and demanded a change in the attitude of the congress and other organization towards the war. They also called upon students to take initiative without waiting for other organizations and parties.⁸⁰

The AISF demanded a change in the attitude of congress and other organisations towards war and make Indian participate in the world struggle for freedom. The two groups of the AISF held their respective conference at Patna one after the other. The conference of Farooqui group of AISF was held on 31

⁷⁸ *The Student*, August 1941, pp2-3

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁸⁰ *The Student*, Conference Number, February 1942, p.31

December was attended by 600 delegates and was presided over by Mian Iftikhar uddin, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. The conference adopted a resolution on unconditional support to the war efforts. It was through war mobilization and not the individual or mass satyagraha that firm pace on the road to the independence would be taken.⁸¹ The AISF renewed its offer to those who seceded at Nagpur. “We call upon the WC to suggest the concrete procedure to be adopted in assimilating these comrades into AISF.”⁸² The conference called upon all the provincial and district organisations to struggle for joint actions on specific issues preparatory to all round students’ unity and appealed to the “comrades in the Muslim and Hindu Students’ Federation to unite with the AISF.”⁸³ It also made it clear that it was already to hold organizational elections whenever necessary to build a united and democratic AISF.⁸⁴ The British government in India was trying to create problems for AISF and other organisations, which wanted actively, create anti-fascist struggles and the conference demanded formation of a national government. The AISF jumped into the countrywide mass anti-fascist movements and preparations to face fascist advance. A National Defence Conference of students was held in Delhi on 15 May 1942 to meet the challenge and decided to take up the work of defence in the

⁸¹ Anil Rajimwale, “A short History of AISF”-3, Youth Life, New Delhi, 21 November 1973, p. 2.

⁸² The Student, February 1942, p. 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

border areas, forming students' patriotic squads, fight for students' demands, etc.¹⁸⁵

AISF characterized the national defence conference as the "the tallest landmark in our six-year old movement". And it was for the first time that a general policy of such a serious nature on a nationwide scale was formulated, and that too without the guidance of nation's leaders"⁸⁶ During the war the condition of India economic were getting bad to worse resulting in great famine in many places. Famine broke out in 1943 and spread over Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, etc affecting no less than one-third of Indian's population.⁸⁷ The British government was in group with traders, black marketers and hoarders and all of them together created an artificial scarcity and taking advantage of it and exploiting the masses acutely. The AISF took up the challenge of the famine in a huge way and they volunteers manned the fair-price shops at many places. The WC of AISF appealed for efforts at the relief of the people and they also appealed the student organization to form united relief committees.

The AISF collected money and food on a big scale. So extensive was their activity that they could feed 15-20 thousand people within two weeks.⁸⁸ It organized a number of cultural programmes, both to raise funds and create awareness and they even opened shops to sell foodgrains at reasonable price. The

⁸⁵ The Student, May- June, 1942

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ The Student, Vol.III, No. 13, 22 December 1943.

⁸⁸ The Student, Vol.III, No. 10, October 1943, p.6.

AISF even opened several kitchens providing free food for those affected by famine and hunger. During famine, epidemics broke out on a wide scale and education fell into deep crises and by 1944 the whole education system disintegrated. So therefore AISF took up the responsibility of saving at least part of the education system and began collecting of funds to end this. In the 8th conference of AISF in 1944 which was held in Calcutta. The AISF reviewed the work of the previous three years which were full of achievements and it had been trying for a common patriotic platform of policy and activities for all the students. AISF was the first to put before the students the urgency of unity during the famine and epidemics days. Its relief work was appreciated by Dr. B.C. Roy and Sarojini Naidu. Prof. D.P. Mukherjee said “I detect a few rays of hope.... Friends, you work for relief would do any man’s heart good... you have popularized the idea of social equality, social justice between classes and communities, and thereby you have sought to improve the quality of our nationalism.”⁸⁹ It also appealed the student not to divide their ranks on the issues of characterizing the war but the urgent task of joining together for service of our people and achieving national government.⁹⁰

The last decade of 1945-1947 was one of the mass anti- British upsurges all over India in which students played a crucial role and these uprisings were often sparked off by militant students’ movement. Repeated and strong-minded general

⁸⁹ The Student, Vol.V, No.1, 22 January 1945.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

strikes, etc were hallmark of these upsurges from 1945 to early 1947. One of the huge united movements was the celebration of Independence Day on 26 January 1945. AISF and students' Congress jointly celebrated 'Release Political Prisoners' Day' and organized a general strike on the occasion.⁹¹ This movement was also the result of the persistent efforts at students' unity. Congress leaders were released in June 1945 and this was welcomed at mass meetings of various student organisations, and the WC of AISF passed the following resolution on 15 June 1945:

“This meeting of the WC of the AISF greets the members of the WC of the National Congress on their release and appeals to the congress and the League to take a united stand on the Wavell offer with a view to end the deadlock.”⁹²

During the national upsurge of that period united student struggles were becoming a powerful force. The cause of the Indian National Army (INA) was taken up by the various student and other organisations. INA trial once again brought the entire student federation one platform whereas election campaign made them enemies of each other leading to unforeseen outcome. A distinct feature of the INA release campaign that followed was the passionate participation of the student community.

⁹¹ Anil Rajimwale, *Notes on History of AISF (1936-47)*; AISF Publication, New Delhi, 1985, p.45.

⁹² The Student, 14 July 1945, p.1.

The INA symbolized a revolution against foreign rule and the entire people of the country, Subhas Chandra Bose was accepted as a national hero and the INA men were worshipped as a band of patriotic heroes fighting for the liberation of their motherland. In the meeting the WC of the AISF passed the following resolution on the release of the INA men. The WC of the AISF demands that the officers, men and women of the INA be set free immediately.

“The committee has always firmly believed that the policy of going over to the Japanese fascists could not be in the interests of the country. However, the committee does not question the motives that inspired these and further the committee is strongly of the opinion that the British government in India has no right to try these men because the British imperialist policy of denying power to the Indian people was in itself largely responsible for the formation of the INA.”⁹³

The period saw heightened student activities and the general consciousness and participation of youth and students kept on enlarging. A number of conventions and conferences of different student organisations discussing on various issues of Indian Independence were among those. AISF and All India Student congress were in the front of the activities.

⁹³ The Student, Vol, No. 15, 10 November 1945, p. 1.

The student agitation was not regional in character but acquired an all India dimension. The heroism among the students made a decisive impact on the freedom struggle and hastened the release campaign for the INA men. While demonstrating for the release of the INA men, unity on the same platform irrespective of communal and political affiliations showed their distinctive characteristic. It is true that the period of INA trial was of communal harmony but still there was essence of communalism in the atmosphere among the student organisations.

In the Ninth conference of AISF, The Students' Charter of fundamental Rights was adopted, after a long and most fruitful discussion. The charter pointed out that the foreign government had put imperialist stamp on education which offered nothing but a black future of unemployment. The sergeant scheme and the educational plans of the provincial governments were criticized and the fundamentals demands of the students in free India were outlined.⁹⁴

The Charter reflected the seriousness with which the organization regarded the duty of future nation-builders and the wide experience of educational problems gained by the AISF. The AISF sent the charter to the popular universities etc.

⁹⁴ The Student, Vol, VI, No. 2, 21 January 1946; Vol.VI, No.3, 18 February 1946.

The UP government accepts the principle of the charter and working its way to their as its resources permit.⁹⁵ There were several important activities dealing with world events as part of the anti-imperialist upsurge. The WC of All India Students Congress passed a resolution in September, 1945, calling for an Asian Anti-Colonial Students' Conference because Asian countries were very poorly represented in the World Students Conference held in Prague in August; 1946.⁹⁶ First World Youth Festival opened in Prague on 20 July, 1947 and continued upto 17 August, 1947. The participation came from all over the world: delegates from 71 countries with different ideological, political and religious background with the slogan: "The youth is contributing to the construction of peace by international cooperation and the renewal of its countries."⁹⁷ The Indian delegates consisting of Indian Students in Great Britain (FEDIND), AISF, All India Muslim Students' Federation and the friends of the Soviet Union participated. During the festival India got Independence on 15 August, 1947, and Indian independence was celebrated in the World Youth festival.

Students' organisations and students in general greeted the formation of popular government as the first Indian government with full power and the WC of

⁹⁵ The Student, Vol, VI, No. 6, 6 July 1946, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁶ P.M. Joshi, *opcit.*, p.85.

⁹⁷ Om prakash Paliwal, 'World Youth festivals', *Youth Review*, New Delhi, June 1985, P. 2, Qouted by Anil Rajimwale in History of Student Movement in India, p. 460.

the AISF believed that the retreat had been forced upon British imperialism as a result of the gigantic mass movement by the Indian people. AISF declared its full support to the government and its measures against princes and vested interest. It called upon the students to wage struggles for the democratic reconstruction of the country and opposed every act of repression and showed support for the people's struggle.⁹⁸

The last decade of the freedom struggle witnessed many ups and downs in the student movement. It was the period of people's war was declared by the communist party and its student wing AISF. Students got confused with the People's war and Quit India Movement. INA trail brought all the student federation on one platform but further developments in politics led to the communal massacre. Despite spurt of communalism all over and splitting of its organisation, AISF set a shining example of heroic action in the freedom struggle.

⁹⁸ The Student, 15 August 1947.

CONCLUSION

Student's movements have made a momentous contribution to the development of any nation which they organized themselves for the betterment of political or social action. Students have gained beneficial skilled in political method and ideology through their works in the movements. For any case, the student movements have been instrumental in shaping social or political attitudes of the elite people of any country. Students are the messengers and warrior of freedom struggle. Their participation in any movement is a mixture of both emotional response and intellectual confidence. A large number of student participated in the freedom movement at various stages. All over the world, student organization has been the key elements in great revolutions. The student communities have added glorious pages and chapters to India's history through their memorable struggles and contributions. In the brave battles for independence a splendid chapters were written the young blood of student martyrs.

Students became active in political struggle for the freedom of the country with beginning of 20th century. The formation of the AISF was a remarkable event. AISF was the first organizations which discussed and debated openly about the requirement of qualitatively changed situation in the country and to give a call for people's War. . All India Students' Federation was formed in 1936 with the

objectives to fight for educational and economic demands and to prepare students for taking part in freedom struggle. It is the only student organization in India under whose banner the students all over the country unite and it is a non-communal, non- sectarian organization that brings the students of every colour, shade or pinion together. The first general secretary of AISF was elected and Prem Narayan Bhargava was appointed as the general secretary and with the passage of time these student organisations came to be identified on communal lines. The formation of the AISF appears largely to be an effort of the student leaders themselves, whether politically allied or non-allied. Though student leaders and leading activists seek advice from their seniors and leaders in their respective parties, which was natural for their student age as well as for their respective allied, their collective efforts seems to be of non-party student nature.

All India Students' Federation spread rapidly to new areas reaching to the far-flung and remote schools in the villages. The Madras AISF conference witnessed some serious issues between the various political trends and views. It was a broad-based mass organization, and therefore the differences were natural. The events moved fast at national and international levels. The most marked division in All India Students' federation was however, its split into nationalist and pro-communist groups. By December 1940, the AISF got polarized basically into two groups- the core of one group was of the nationalist, consisting of several

trends and second was communists, who were organizationally and politically clearer and more organized. But both the groups eventually adopted severe positions in the course of debates and organizational matters.

The result of the increasing political- organizational conflict within the AISF before and during the conference at Nagpur Conference in 1940 led to a split in the AISF. Consequently, there emerged two organizations with the name of the AISF- one AISF was being led by M. Farooqui as the general secretary, consisting mainly of the communists, and other AISF was being led by M. L. Shah, consisting mainly of the non-communists, mostly the nationalists

The AISF would prolong the struggle with discipline and competence and would encourage others that its stand was correct and methods proficient. The feeling of mistrust and suspicion were being built up on both sides former to the conference. The Student at the same time took a stand against the split saying courageously forcing splits solved nothing. One should safeguard and strengthen the AISF which as a mass organization should be capable to put the students across politics activities. It charged the other group of walking out as the masses did not agreed with them and the majority of the delegates wanted to clear of the immature exploit. The period saw heightened student activities and the general consciousness and participation of youth and students kept on enlarging. A number of conventions and conferences of different student organisations discussing on

various issues of Indian Independence were among those. AISF and All India Student congress were in the front of the activities.

The student agitation was not regional in character but acquired an all India dimension. The heroism among the students made a decisive impact on the freedom struggle and hastened the release campaign for the INA men. While demonstrating for the release of the INA men, unity on the same platform irrespective of communal and political affiliations showed their distinctive characteristic. It is true that the period of INA trial was of communal harmony but still there was essence of communalism in the atmosphere among the student organisations.

The last decade of the freedom struggle witnessed many ups and downs in the student movement. It was the period of people's war was declared by the communist party and its student wing AISF. Students got confused with the People's war and Quit India Movement. INA trial brought all the student federation on one platform but further developments in politics led to the communal massacre. Despite spurt of communalism all over and splitting of its organisation, AISF set a shining example of heroic action in the freedom struggle.

AISF proved stimulants in the struggle for freedom. Once enlightened by the able leadership and dynamic ideologies, they ran the national movements and

brought changes in social and political of the Indian state. Of course during the last decade, they became tools in the hands of the political parties and at the same time the AISF was disorganized into groups but despite this, the AISF showed a great enthusiasm in the freedom struggle and took part in various movements in the upliftment of the society.

APPENDIX 1

All India Students' federation

Constitution of (As amended at the All India Students' Conference at Calcutta, 1939)

Article I

The objects of the All India Students' Federation are:

- i. To encourage cultural and intellectual cooperation on equal terms between the students of various provinces and Indian states and between the students of India and students in other parts of the world.
- ii. To study all the educational problems facing the country and to work for a sound educational system.
- iii. To safeguard the rights of the student community.
- iv. To prepare the students for citizenship in order to take their due share in the freedom struggle for complete national freedom, by arousing their political, social and economic consciousness.

Article II

Component parts

The All India Students' Federation shall comprise of

- i. Members enrolled under Article III.
- ii. Provincial Unions of students

- iii. All India Students' Council, (AISC)
- iv. The Annual Session of the federation, otherwise termed "All India Students' Conference",
- v. Working Committee, and may comprise of
 - a) Committees or Associations directly organized by the All India Students' Council or the Working Committee, and
 - b) Committees organized by any provincial Federation in accordance with the rules framed by it in that behalf and approved by the Working Committee.

Article III

Membership

- a) Any person, not below the age of 14 and not above the age of 30, studying in an institution having on its roll a minimum number of 25 students, unless otherwise authorized by the Working Committee, which imparts literary or vocational training, or who has ceased to be a student for not more than one year before, or any person preparing himself for any examination, conducted the university, government or any national institution, provided he or she appears for examination within two years after completing keeping terms, shall be called a bonafide student.

A bonafide student who subscribes to the aims and objects of the All India Students' federation will be eligible to become a member of a primary union of any provincial students' federation affiliated to the AISF.

There shall be a uniform membership fee of annas two per year.

- b) No student shall be allowed to become a member of more than one primary union at the same time.

- c) The year of membership will be reckoned from 1st January to 31st December.

APPENDIX 2

Drafting Committee to prepare the constitution of the AISF formed in Lucknow Conference (1936): M.N. Gandhi, S.S. Batliwala (Bombay), Prabodh Chandra (Lahore), vishwanath Dube, J.S. Pande (Nagpur) and P.N. Bhargava.

(Source: prem Narayan Bhargava, *First Conference of All India Students' Federation*, Lucknow 1976)

APPENDIX 3

Office-bearers of AISF

First (foundation) conference, 12-13 August 1936, Lucknow: general secretary, Prem Narayan Bhargava.

Second conference, opened 22 November 1936, Lahore: gen. secy. P.N. Bhargava.

Third, 1-3 January 1938, Madras: gen. secy., Ansar Harvani.

Fourth, 1-2 January 1939, Calcutta, gen. secy., M.L. Shah.

Fifth, 1-2 January 1940, Delhi, gen. secy., M.L. Shah.

Sixth, 25-26 December 1940, Nagpur, gen. secy., M. Farooqui (AISF Farooqui or communist group), gen. secy., M.L. Shah (Shah or nationalist group).

Seventh, 27-28 December 1941, Patna, gen. secy., M.L. Shah (AISF, nationalist group);

31 December 1941-1 January 1942, Patna, gen. secy., Perin Romesh Chandra (Communist group).

Eighth, 28-31 December 1944, Calcutta, gen. secy., Prasanta Sanyal in 1943, Satyapal Dang in 1944 (communist).

Ninth AISF session, opened 20 January 1946, Guntur, gen. secy., Satyapal Dang

Tenth AISF conference, opened 3 January 1947, Delhi, gen. secy., Annada Shankar Bhattacharya.

(Compiled from various sources)

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