

Cultures of Learning

Mapping the New Spaces of Critical
Pedagogy in India

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xi</i>
Introduction: In Search of Critical Pedagogy	1
SURESH BABU G.S AND ARUNIMA NAITHANI	
PART I	
Place of Learning in Critical Pedagogy	11
1 Recounting Critical Pedagogy and the Culture of Learning	13
SURESH BABU G.S	
PART II	
Vocation of Teaching: Reflection on the Pedagogic Journey	25
2 Teaching, Learning and Thinking in Contemporary Times: A Conversation with Avijit Pathak	27
NABANIPA BHATTACHARJEE AND SURESH BABU G.S	
3 A Gender Perspective as Critical Pedagogy: Reflections on a Research Course	53
GEETHA B. NAMBISSAN	
4 Why Critical Pedagogy matters in History Classrooms? Challenges of Undergraduate Teaching in Delhi University	75
LEVIN N.R.	

PART III

Transgressing Boundaries: Politics, Pedagogy, Ethics 89

- 5 “Casting” Mentors: Critical Pedagogy and Caste-Categories in Indian Higher Education 91
RATHEESH KUMAR

- 6 Alienation as Freedom: The Dalit Vagabonds 108
HARISH S. WANKHEDE

- 7 Dalit Assertions and Critical Pedagogy: Learning from Dalit Students’ Struggles in University 124
CHANDRAIAH GOPANI

PART IV

Tensions In and Out of Classroom: Adaption, Integration and Coercion 139

- 8 Storytelling for a Critical Literacy in Primary School 141
PRACHI KALRA

- 9 Technology in Education: Critical Reflections 153
JAGJIT KAUR

- 10 Decoding the Hijab Ban: Student Resistance and Pedagogical Possibilities in Contemporary India 166
HASEEB P.P.

PART V

Politics/Pedagogy: Students, Youth Mobilisation and Subaltern Resistance 185

- 11 Student: Politics or Pedagogy 187
PRAVEEN THALLAPELLI

- 12 Digital Activism: Political Mobilisation of Youth in Uttarakhand, North India 202
ARUNIMA NAITHANI AND DEVAM THAPA

13 Pedagogy of Critical Resistance: Learning from the Subaltern Protest SURESH BABU G.S	222
<i>Index</i>	236

11 Student

Politics or Pedagogy

Praveen Thallapelli

Proposition I: Student is Student of the Problem

Student is a universal category. The locus stand of the student is not universal, rather, it is rooted very much in the social location and the thinking process which is influenced by the culture and society. Therefore, we see people calling themselves “Student of Politics,” “Student of a Philosopher/thinker,” “Student of human society,” etc. I argue that student is student of the problem, both philosophically and anthropologically. The problem is always already present. It is in recognising that there is a problem; one becomes the student of the problem. The thinking process in society and schools of thoughts definitely has the advantage of making human beings as the student of the problem. The socio-political-cultural movements influence the person to become the student of the problem. Schools of thought relegated to the academic or university domain also provide the tools of thinking in understanding a problem and a thinker/philosopher. Universities influence the student in becoming the student of the problem. Here, this becoming of the student of the problem is not just an academic exercise. Rather, it is a political exercise—in engaging with a political problem, ideology, philosophy or a mere armchair academic exercise. The schools of thought in universities or academic world are deeply influenced by the nature of political that they adhere to and want to rejuvenate.

The problem of the student is decided independently and collectively. The independent and the collective decisions are interlinked and it is difficult to differentiate or separate the two. The problem[s] are many times personal. The personal is very much rooted in the social structure. Therefore, the problems are societal—where the social is determining the personal and posing a/ the problem to the personal. In Proposition II, we will go more into the social structure and consciousness of the problem.

Is the problem a self-given problem to the student? No. The problem exists much before the student is born or much before one becomes or aspires to be a student. For example, the problem of caste, gender, race, etc. The problem becomes a predicate in the life of the one who decides to become a student. I do not take the person attending school, college or university as a student—as they

are very much institutional and formal. Rather, I argue that the person who is engaging consistently with a question is the student. Those engaging with the question of caste or gender become the student of the problem of caste or gender.¹ It is important to note here that the question/“problem of caste” (Ambedkar, 1989a: 43) didn’t always already exist. It is the law giver, i.e., Brahmin/Manu who is enforcing caste into the human society (Phule, 1873).

In accepting the always already of a question or a problem, one is valuing or giving some kind of attribute to the person creating the problem. The always already is permanently absent in a problem, as the problem is a created and imposed one. However, the question is natural and inherent against the problem. It is the question which situates the problem, in a pre-given or a given context. The pre-given supersedes the student. The given is very much located and rooted in the context of the situatedness of the student. Those that pose the question and those that persistently engage with the question are finding problems. This finding of a problem is dependent on the consciousness of the student. In the political and social, the concerns form the root of finding the problem[s]. For example, Ambedkar was interested in engaging with caste. He finds that the question of caste is dependent on “imitation,”² “endogamy”³ and above all on the “ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt.”⁴

Though Ambedkar wrote the book *Pakistan or Pakistan of India*, he doesn’t consider himself to be a Student of Pakistan. In my reading, he considered himself to be a student of India—as he himself affirmed clearly that “they are First and lastly an Indian” (Ambedkar, Vol 17: 66). Here, Ambedkar converts or translates the religious consciousness of the Hindus, Muslims, Sindhis and Kanarese into “group consciousness.”⁵ This group consciousness is the foundation for the nation. Here, it is needless to recall that Ambedkar didn’t adhere to any of the religions or groups aforementioned. However, he considered himself to be a student of India as he was invested in the formulation of the “Indian Political” as Constitutional. So, who is the Student of Pakistan? In the 1940s, the Student of Pakistan is the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) that debated the question of Pakistan for 20–25 years, the Muslim League, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Iqbal and others interested to pursue the demand of Pakistan and those that want to reside and make Pakistan as their home and universe. Aligarh was considered as the “living symbol for the ideal of Muslim consolidation” (Lelyveld, 1978: 316). Ambedkar is the philosopher and leader who was interested in the conceptualisation of Indian nation/state in relation to minorities.⁶ Whereas, Jinnah, Iqbal and AMU were the primary participants who posed the question of Pakistan. The Student of Pakistan is both existing in AMU, Muslim league and the leaders of Muslim league in the form of an idea and also the citizens of Pakistan, when Pakistan as a nation exist geographically. Therefore, they become the students of Pakistan when Ambedkar is writing on his proposition of “Student of Pakistan,” the Student of Pakistan exists only in terms of ideas and thought and is yet to be born in the geographical and the anthropological sense.

When Ambedkar was not a Student of Pakistan, why did he bother to write about Pakistan? From the 1920s to 1947, the question of Pakistan was centric to “Indian Political.” As a Student of India, Ambedkar was invested in the questions concerning the “Indian Political.” As a Student of India, Ambedkar made his effort to understand the question of Pakistan and gave his propositions. Few might call that since Ambedkar took the task of understanding the demand and writing on Pakistan—he becomes a Student of Pakistan. One must see that since Ambedkar’s politics is contingent on what is political in India, he addressed the question of Pakistan.

Propositions, observers and observations form and give opinions that may or may not be an amicable solution to the problem or in fact their concerns are not intrinsically integrated to the problem. When the concerns are not intrinsically integrated, many times, the observer gets the questions to be very wrong. This has happened in the history of philosophical thinking and also in political practices. For example, (1) German idealism is one of the main reasons for the rise of Nazism in Germany. Thinkers like Fichte and Nietzsche were used selectively by the Nazis. Heidegger had two personalities: (1) Heidegger—the Philosopher and (2) Heidegger—The Nazi. Heidegger had given his open support to the Nazis

Sharply at 11 o’clock in the morning, Heidegger led a solemn procession of professors in academic robes into the great hall of the university, to the strains of Brahms’s Academic Overture. The hall was decorated with the usual academic banners, supplemented on this occasion by an array of Nazi flags, and filled with representatives of the regional government, city and church authorities, and an unusually large crowd of students. The new Nazi minister of education and culture came from Karlsruhe for the occasion. The archbishop of Freiburg, Heidegger’s benefactor since schooldays and a man seeking his own accommodation with the Nazis, was visibly present.

(Hans Sluga, 1993: 1–2)

On May 1, Labor Day, Heidegger had sent out the first signal of his determined support for the new government, by joining the Nazi party in a public ceremony.

(Hans Sluga, 1993: 03)

The professor told his audience that German academic youth was now engaged in a great awakening: It is determined to find discipline and education, to make itself ready and strong for a political and spiritual leadership conferred on it in behalf of coming generations. The question is whether or not we want to create a spiritual world. If we cannot do so, some kind of savagery or other will come over us and we will reach an end as a historical people.

(Hans Sluga, 1993: 03)

Heidegger, the philosopher, did not consider the difference between subject and object. He is considered to have explored and made the greatest revelations on philosophical notions of being in relation to time. His support to Nazism negates his philosophy of being.⁷ Hans Sluga's study on Heidegger argues that it was not just Heidegger, but there was a whole range of German philosophers who called themselves as philosophical radicals that have got the questions of the Nazism to be wrong, despite being brilliant/great philosophers. Adolf Hitler was preparing Germany for a racial purity which led to the holocaust that overlooked the erasure of the Jews from Germany. Philosophy is not a court subject that will sing praises to the king/ruler in the king's court. Philosophy is recognition of the highest order—that shall recognise the problem and dissent against anyone. Philosophy is recognition—recognition of the being. Heidegger and the philosophical radicals despite being great philosophers did not recognise the condition of Jews and stood with Nazism. They have used the term philosophical radicals but were not radicals against Nazism neither in thought nor in practice. Thus, they have negated their own philosophical thinking of being.

(2) On the question of caste, the public knowledge is that the debate on caste is between B.R. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi. So, considering the public opinion and the public knowledge about caste, people are divided. Until the 1990s, Ambedkar's thesis on caste, either the question or the problem of caste, wasn't considered and adhered to either in politics or in academia. The reason for this is that the bearer of the problem didn't exist independently or autonomously in politics or academia. In the 1990s, India saw an autonomous bearer of the problem of caste, as a result, the thesis of Ambedkar was made to accept by the people participating in the political process. After the 1990s, when the outcast started entering universities, the questions and problems of caste are understood along with the hypothesis and thesis of Ambedkar. (3) On the question of caste, everybody in politics, academia and NGOs have something to say. But, interestingly, they aren't interested to listen to the bearer of the problem and burden of caste. The actual bearer of caste is the Trivarnikas—as they are interested in practising and perpetuating caste. The Shudras and Ati-Shudras are the sufferers of caste. Being the sufferer of caste, they become the bearer of the problem of the caste. The best example is that of M.K. Gandhi who was not at all willing to understand Ambedkar's thesis on caste and self-representation. The reason why Gandhi doesn't bother to listen to Ambedkar is because Gandhi is not a sufferer of caste, as he hails from the privileged caste. Therefore, I argue that Gandhi is not a student of caste but a person who understood caste only to further complicate and expand the problem of caste. Here, Gandhi doesn't have to bear the burden but he forces the outcast to continue bearing the problem of caste.

Now, let us understand the question of Pakistan and the question of caste together.

On Pakistan

Ambedkar argues by adhering to jurisprudence. He presents all the arguments in a sequence like (a) the Muslim opinion, (b) Hindu opinion and (c) the Buddhist or those residing in Leh Ladakh region. In a way, Ambedkar doesn't take an exact position on Pakistan or the Partition of India (Ambedkar 1990). He presents all the arguments and invites the reader and the participants in the "India Political" to understand. However, he concludes that the "Student of Pakistan shall decide." Ambedkar leaves the scope and rationale of deciding to the "Student of Pakistan" because the bearer of the problem and the one who is interested in residing and making Pakistan as their home and the universe is the Student of Pakistan.

Ambedkar is a student of India and Student of Politics; therefore, he came up with his thesis on "Pakistan or the Partition of India."

On the Question of Caste

Ambedkar's life in politics and scholarship vouched for the self-representation and also for the annihilation of caste because he is the bearer, sufferer and student of caste. Ambedkar's undelivered speech, "Annihilation of Caste" Ambedkar, B.R. (1989b) definitely is the singular speech and essay that has a deep impact on those thinking against caste. In "Castes in India," Ambedkar is explaining how caste survives—with endogamy and imitation. In his 1916 paper, Ambedkar doesn't go into the genesis of the origin of the caste system. He comes to the genesis of the castes, in his future books "Who were the Shudras" (1948) and "Who were the Untouchables" (1948).

Ambedkar was invited to the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore by Santram. Ambedkar, as an engaged person, takes the invitation seriously and sends his speech written very much in advance to the committee of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal. The Mandal reads his speech and sends a reply to Ambedkar conveying that Ambedkar's speech is cancelled. Not at all surprised or puzzled, Ambedkar published his undelivered speech.

Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" was and is an address to the privileged castes. The task of annihilating caste rests with the privileged castes—as they practise caste. Ambedkar's aim of preparing the text annihilation of caste is not to make it an address to the suffering castes or in Phule's language for the Shudra and Ati-Shudra. The suffering caste's aim is to get out of the caste system and tell the practitioners of caste what is happening in caste. Ambedkar gives multiple kinds of solutions to annihilate caste. The ones who have to begin to practise the solutions of annihilating caste are all those in the caste order. Caste will not be annihilated only when one section of people wants to annihilate caste and another section of people want to practise caste. Annihilation of caste is a collective task of everyone in the society whether they are in the caste order or not.

How does Ambedkar use the word “Annihilation of caste”? The group that invites Ambedkar is called *Jat Pat Todak Mandal*. *Todak* in Hindi would mean destroy or destruction. However, Ambedkar doesn’t use the title destruction of caste. (Periyar has a book titled “Why Caste must be destroyed.”) Rather he uses a philosophical category called Annihilation. Ambedkar uses the philosophical category annihilation because he wants the being to become. So, when the being annihilates caste, the being is becoming to be a being. In the typical Heideggerian sense, for Ambedkar, annihilation comes to the human. In Heidegger, being comes to the man. The being is a being without caste. In the caste, there is no being—there is a Brahmin, baniya, Kshatriya, Shudra and Ati-Shudra. Caste seizes the Brahmin, Baniya, Kshatriya, Shudra and Ati-Shudra from becoming a being or human. The moment caste is annihilated there is no brahmin, Baniya, Kshatriya, Shudra and Ati-Shudra. After annihilation of caste, there is the (human) being. In the intellectual trajectory, Ambedkar already wrote his thesis on caste in the form of his graduate student essay called “Castes in India” in 1916. Ambedkar did not have to rewrite another or a new thesis on caste, as already Phule and Laxmi Narasu have written the theses on caste. Annihilation of caste by Ambedkar supplements Phule’s and Laxmi Narasu’s thesis on caste.

Balagopal (2011) in his writings on caste particularly in *Dalitha* and in the pages of Economic and Political Weekly resonated and adhered to the emancipatory goals of the anti-caste movement. Even on the question of categorisation, Balagopal didn’t bother to adhere to the custodians of the Dalit movement and university academics on the Dalit movement. He represented the problem as it is. The interesting fact is that Balagopal is not the bearer of the problem of caste. However, in his writings, speeches and life in general, he understood the problem as the problem in a historical and the political situation of his times that considered the Dalit or *Dalitha* as the subject. Whether he would have agreed or not; his consideration of Dalit or Dalitha as subject is because Balagopal himself became a student of caste or to put in other words, I consider Balagopal as a student of caste along with Ambedkar. This becoming of the student is situated in the understanding of the problem and not in the social or caste location of one’s birth.

On the question of Pakistan, Ambedkar leaves the decision to the “Student of Pakistan.” On the question of caste, Ambedkar as the bearer and sufferer takes the decision, for himself and for the outcast. Similarly, in understanding the problem in terms of the actuality and agreeing that the problem as the predicate of life, Balagopal becomes the student of caste and abides by and leaves the decision to the Dalit movement.

To sum up this proposition, the observations do not make the person a bearer or the student of the problem. The bearer and the abider become the student of the problem. Both Ambedkar and Balagopal in their pedagogies or writings on caste are adhering to a philosophical and political thesis. They

aren't limiting themselves to just understand the problem of caste in relation to pedagogy.

Proposition II:

- A) The problem of students is not singular or homogenous.
- B) The social location and consciousness of the student determine the problem[s] of the student.

As mentioned in the first proposition, the student is deciding on the problem (A) based on one's social location and (B) also determined by consciousness. First, let us delve into A and then B.

A) The problem of student is not a singular or homogeneous

Problems are multiple. Some experience the problems of caste, gender, poverty, religion, region, etc. both independently and together. The outcast experiences the problem of caste. Women and LGBTQ experience the problem of gender. Those that experience problems that are contingent on the historical and social conditions argue and speak of the "ontological wound(ing)" (West, 1999) and are invested in ontological revolution (Geetha, 2021: 236). Let us consider the question of caste. People of all genders, in the Indian context, are subjects and objects of caste, whether one is the sufferer or the privileged of caste. Outcaste men face and experience the problem of caste. Outcast women face the experiences of both caste and gender. The multiple problems of the human beings make them students of multiple problems. However, the problems of caste and gender are contingent and dependent on one condition, i.e., the condition of the caste which is dependent on caste contract. Modern Nation-States emerged with a "Contract"—i.e., Constitution and Declaration[s]. "Contract" is a reasoned and deliberated one. Reason gives space to Faith. But, the faith and allegiance to caste don't allow room for reason. There is no room for reason and one cannot argue or look or reason within caste. A contract devoid of reason is caste; and I call it a caste contract. Or to put in other words, unreasoned contract is a caste contract. The social is stagnant with caste despite the agreed political contract (constitution and declarations). The foundational values of the reason and deliberation have no meaning and space in the caste contract—as only the law giver is deciding the contract and imposing it on everyone.

Caste enforces the "ontological wounding" for the bearers of caste and makes them a permanent object of caste in the Indian context. Caste is contingent on "endogamy" (Ambedkar, 1989a: 8–10) which enforces the human being to not cross or alter the "sexual economy of caste" (Geetha, 2021: 167). Both women and men suffer from the problem of endogamy; at times, when they try to break endogamy and attempt to enter or practise exogamy, they are subject to violent killing/death by the adherents of endogamy. The

outcast also faces caste discrimination in all the spaces that they try to inhabit. The gatekeeping of the sexual economy and facing caste discrimination are both the problems of the outcast. The question of caste makes the bearer of caste the sufferer of the two problems which are interlinked. Here, the question that one has to think about is what becomes the major problem or what should be the first question to be addressed. Can one ignore one question and address the second question, when both the questions are interrelated? Ignoring one question would impact the solution of the second question. Here, the human being is burdened with what to address first. This burden is always already problematic that is not of the individual but of the society itself.

Let us take the gender/women's question: The women's movement has been largely accused of not addressing the caste question. The explanation given by the women's movement and the adherents of it is that the question of gender is too troubled with so many implications like the questions of patriarchy (Geetha, 2007) and sexual economy (Geetha, 2021: 167) that have primarily occupied their lives and the women's movement in itself. Therefore, they think that the question of caste can be kept at a halt or for a pause for the moment, when addressing and leading the questions of women's movement. One must note here that the exception to this is the 1990s women's movement of undivided Andhra Pradesh that engaged with the Dalit movement and also the radical left movement. In the above paragraph, endogamy and the sexual economy are discussed. Here one could ask, couldn't the women's movement be concerned about the question of caste? Though the question of caste is speaking of endogamy and the sexual economy of caste, why isn't the women's movement concerned about caste? This makes us go through the second concern of this proposition, i.e., B, which speaks of consciousness. The consciousness is embedded in both the social location and also what the person is aware of in terms of the political that determines and decides the problem of the human being.

B) The social location and consciousness of the student determine the problem[s] of the student

Taking forward the above argument, one is compelled to answer the gaps. It is imperative that the women's movement has to address the question of caste that is also determining the problem of the political for women. Here, one is conscious of the endogamy that determines the sexual economy of caste. From childhood to death, the question that affects women is the problem of gender in general and the problem of patriarchy in particular. The rationale of locating or identifying the general and particular are both contingent on the social consciousness of the person. Those women that had the privilege of being part of the 1990s women's movement of the undivided Andhra Pradesh are conscious of both caste and gender. The women who didn't become primary participants of the undivided Andhra Pradesh weren't exposed to the

internal dynamics of the nuances and structures that influence caste and gender in the same manner because the structures that determined their social consciousness didn't permit them to learn about how caste affects their lives. However, they are conscious of the role of gender and patriarchy in their lives. Here women are taken as a homogenous identity.

In a similar manner, the person who is subject to suffering of caste won't easily get into the nuances of the problems of the other that is not contingent on caste. Here, the social location determines the consciousness of the person, as a result, the person becomes a student of an issue.

Consciousness is not pre-given to the student, so is the problem and social location. Who prioritises the problem for the student? It is the social condition that is dependent on the living conditions and the possibilities available that determine the consciousness. This consciousness determines the problem of the student. The educated and advanced castes and classes do not find it necessary to indulge in the political activities that address the social and political problems. It is the one whose life is contingent on the problem that goes to the political activities. Those that think that addressing the problem is absolutely necessary, otherwise their social and living conditions won't change, become the students of the problem. For the anti-caste student organisations, caste is the problem or to put in other words, caste is the primary problem in the society. The membership and leadership of anti-caste student groups are largely from the suffering castes. The suffering and the lived experiences of caste give a consciousness that caste is the problem; therefore, the suffering caste people join the anti-caste groups in universities and society.

Proposition III: JNU Pedagogues under JNUTA Superseded Students' Political Thinking and Students Political Activism in Feb and March 2016

In February 2016, a group of students organised an event to mark their dissent against capital punishment. ABVP members tried to disrupt the event. A BJP M.P. from Delhi filed an FIR against the organisers and participants. The Delhi Police arrested then JNUSU president initially and two organisers later. Ironically, the students union president was not even a signatory to the event nor did he make his presence felt in any capacity. The Delhi Police rather than taking into account what happened into the issue, they arrested the students union president. As soon as the JNUSU president is arrested, the JNUTA takes over the charge of superseding the students movement and conducts two lecture series, one on nationalism—what the nation needs to know and the second on freedom. Both the lecture series did not address what the programme was organised for and what the student had to think. Rather the students' thinking was dictated by the JNUTA. The lecture series did not make any sense to the people of the nation and to my knowledge that lecture series is what the nation did not want to know. It is needless to remind

here that during 2016, BJP was in alliance with PDP in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The politics of PDP and BJP are contradictory. The JNUTA of 2016 undermined the students' capacity to think and act on its own. The problem and the capacity to understand the problem were not only determined but also governed by JNUTA. Here one might think, who is this student that is dependent on the teachers' association? The JNUTA undermined the ability of the student as a thinking person.

- 1 The ruling party is against freedom of expression.
- 2 The Delhi Police arrested students for organising an event that expressed its dissent to capital punishment.

Lecture series on nation and nationalism is actually a repetitive thing. Universities whose primary aim is to think and understand the phenomena should actually explain the phenomena of capital punishment and the event that was conducted against capital punishment and why was the event subject to FIR. JNUTA has not bothered to think through the issue. Had it thought about the issue, it would have bothered to think and lecture on (a) capital punishment, (b) how does the law make an exception for itself and make the law unequal to some and (c) what is the “jurisprudence of neglect” (Kumar, 2021)—in relation to the nation and its law? As the lecture series didn't address these questions, the two lecture series didn't make any sense of the nature of political—either existing or to be formed. Above all, it undermined “what is thinking” among the students in general and student politics in particular. The problem lies in the JNUTA's nature of thinking. JNUTA is basically composed of pedagogues in JNU. The pedagogues repeated some of their lectures and writings to the larger public. While one got an opportunity to once again listen to the ideas on nation and nationalism and freedom, it did not serve the purpose of thinking on the political. However, the JNUTA's role in 2016 discarded the students' thinking in either student politics or student in general. The question that arises here is what is the point of being a university teacher/professors association that didn't offer students to think on the actual issue. There is no compulsion to offer to think or propose to think on the problem. When one steps into the issue, it is expected that one is thinking about the issue and is letting those associated with the issue to think. Keeping aside the thinking part, the JNUTA lecture series was like a repetitive pedagogic exercise. This repetition undermined the pedagogy present in the politics and the performance in the political acts. The 2016 JNUTA did not become a student of the problem—without becoming a student of the problem it intervened and undermined the students capacity to think. When JNUTA doesn't become a student of the problem, what JNUTA organised and made everyone think and discuss becomes important. There is a pedagogy that evolved from the two lecture series. Did this pedagogy translate into politics is the question. When the state exercised the “repressive state apparatus,” in JNU, did the JNUTA organised lecture series translate into an

ideological apparatus is the question. It only invited sympathy to JNU's academic and political activism, but didn't influence the common thinking of the average citizen of the country. The problem also lies with then students union and then student organisations who subscribed to the JNUTA—as they did not give it a chance to themselves to think as a student in general and a student of the problem in particular and most importantly they did not make an effort to assist the student of the problem.

It is interesting to note that these pedagogues of JNU are completely aware of May 1968 students upsurge in Paris. From the students movement of May 68, many students have evolved as great philosophers and academics. The professors in Paris universities like that of Jean Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser and others have not interfered in the nature of students' thinking. Rather, they have contributed to Paris 68 with their lectures and writings. Except the natural and physical sciences, French philosophers associated with May 1968 are taught in every centre of social sciences at JNU. Despite teaching the philosophers and academics associated with May 1968, the JNU academics undermined the students ability to think through and superseded the students movement.

The superseding of the JNUTA-led pedagogues has not given any chance to any JNU student in the year 2016 to emerge as a philosopher, theorist or academic, for the events that unfolded in February and March 2016 in JNU and India. Most importantly, they did not assist the student of the problem.

Proposition IV: Osmania University Students and Professors Engage Politics and Pedagogy Equally

Osmania is the first university in India that was founded on the basis of education in a Swadesh language, by Mir Osman Ali Khan on 26 April 1917. The very formation of Osmania University (OU) was a political act, as it opposed the British model of education. The first struggle of OU students was against its founder. During the freedom struggle, in Nizam state, the Nizam banned singing Vande Mataram song. Around 300 OU students sang Vande Mataram song collectively and opposed the Nizam. The then Nizam ordered the cancellation of the admission of those students who sang Vande Mataram. He also ordered Andhra University and those in touch with OU to not admit the protesting students. Almost 300 students were rusticated. Nagpur University admitted those 300 students. The Nizam ruler wanted students to just engage with pedagogy and not indulge in politics. Rather, he was imposing a political order. Nagpur University admitting the protesting 300 students then was in fact political and providing pedagogy too. The decision of Nagpur University was against the Nizams and also it supported the nationalist movement.

The first Telangana movement was against the Nizam's and the students of Osmania played an active role in it. In the 1969 Telangana movement, some students of Osmania died in police firing. In the 1990s, the Telangana

movement was led by Maroju Veeranna—who gave a call to write village histories. Taking a cue from Maroju Veeranna, Kancha Ilaiah then teaching at OU wrote *Why I am not a Hindu* (1996). This book is a semi-autobiography of the author, village and the caste community. It studied the rituals practised and posed questions to the practices of caste and ideas of the nation. This book did not limit to an academic exercise, but gave way to a public debate on caste and Hindutva. Ilaiah as an author opened public debate on the practices of Hinduism and the Hindutva as a political ideology.

The years 2001–2014 were the last phase of the Telangana movement. A consensus generated that the demand for the Telangana movement is a political one and one has to address it politically. The professorial, educated class, writers, poets and cultural activists including the students movement decided to address and do the needful in terms of carrying out political activities, writing in newspapers, journal articles, books and cultural production like songs, folk songs, documentaries, short films and films. The professorial class of Osmania organised a seminar and brought a volume titled “*Telangana dimensions of Underdevelopment (Simhadri, 1997)*”—this book became a major reference point for the entire Telangana movement. Kancha Ilaiah is the only contributor to this volume; after 2009 or so, he started opposing the Telangana movement for statehood (Ilaiah, 2014). One of the contributors, M. Kondanadaram who taught Political Science at OU, went on to become the chairperson of the Telangana Joint Action Committee that monitors the movement including the political parties supporting the movement. The Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) was formed when the political parties thought that there was a dire need for a coordination committee. The person chosen to head the Joint Action Committee (JAC) was not a politician, but a professor of political science then. This explains that the professor was professing the political thought that he taught in the class and was chosen to exercise the political in the pedagogy (Kodandaram, 2022). Apart from this volume, the professorial class contributed with their writings, to the Telangana movement and the many questions that Telangana faced. One notable example among the professors of Osmania is the late Prof. Keshav Rao Jadhav—who was instrumental in organising many events for the Telangana movement. For his immense contribution, he is hailed as Mr Telangana.

In OU, every student organisation adhering to the anti-caste ideologies, left ideologies and Telangana ideology has supported and proactively participated in the Telangana movement. They either organised political activities by themselves or participated in all the calls given by the Joint Action Committee and many important protests like the million march, etc. OU students wrote pamphlets and books and wrote articles in Telugu newspapers and wrote and sung songs for the Telangana movement. If there was one university that the Bharata or Telangana Rashtra Samithi (that was in power from June 2014 to November 2023) leaders were bothered about or did not exercise their authority to interfere, it was the OU—as OU spearheaded and gave direction to the Telangana movement whenever the movement was in crisis and also critiqued

the BRS regime. Every week, every fortnight, there was one or the other major political activity or political programme happening in OU until the state was formed. OU was a walking encyclopaedia of the Telangana movement. The professorial class of OU would participate proactively in the student-led initiatives. This was a major boost for the students and students movement. The professorial class of OU never interfered in the students activities either in terms of thinking or in terms of practice.

The pedagogues of OU have stood in affirmation with the students movement in the Telangana movement for statehood. The OU and the Telangana professorial class did not undermine the ability of the students to think and do politics on their own. This makes OU as a university in motion and a university in constant engagement with the Telangana society, wherein the students and professorial class are both on the same page in theory and practice. There is no hierarchy in terms of political thinking and social determination of a problem among the OU students and professorial class.

Apart from the Telangana movement, OU students and professorial class have engaged deeply with all the social and political movements of the Telugu region including the radical left, for example, Gaddar, and the Dalit movement. The members of the 1990s and early 2000s Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee comprised professors from OU. OU professors and students contributed equally to all the struggles in Telangana because they have considered themselves to be students of the problem, in relation to Telangana. This makes OU to be considered as the university that gives equal space to politics and pedagogy.

Thought: Not to Conclude But to Begin

Student is determined by the nature of political that exists and the nature of political that is to be formed. This keeps the student in a transition. This transition between the two is for the student to come to a destination of the problem that is again embedded in the political. Therefore, I propose that the student is the student of the problem. The problem is political. The question and answer to the problem is contingent on [historically deeply invested in the] political. Therefore, the student is political and has to be with the political/politics.

One of the reasons why the May 1968 students movement of Paris produced great thinkers, professors and activists is because the professorial class and the students have given value to what is the problem and how one goes about the problem. Both the professorial class and the students worked in tandem and produced an amicable way in and out of the movement. Therefore, the Paris 1968 student movement has had the ability to generate a public consciousness in the country of France in general and Paris City in particular.

The celebrated professorial class of a few Indian universities like JNU and its students still lack the strengths of the 1968 Paris students movement

wherein the professors themselves had become the students of the problem and have responded to their times. Student is a “student of the problem.” The problem is a political one. The problem in pedagogy is determined by political. And, for pedagogy, there is no escape from the political— i.e. we have to begin to think again.

Politics supersedes philosophy and vice versa. Politics and political thinking germinate new philosophies and thought processes. This is not to suggest that politics is above philosophy or in a higher order than philosophy. Philosophy is always already present in politics. Philosophy has to strengthen the political. For philosophy to supersede politics, it has to take a political route. Philosophy cannot relegate itself to the philosophy classrooms to supersede politics. Philosophy and philosophers engage in philosophical discussions and explain the importance of the political in philosophy and philosophy in the political, to bring an effect into politics and political change. Student can be a student—but it is the political that determines the student. The choosing of the political is in itself a philosophy. The choice of the political is not to undermine the pedagogy, but to strengthen and enliven the pedagogy. Therefore, for student, it is politics or the political.

Notes

- 1 In the Indian context, caste laws govern and influence gender. Many concerned with the question of gender are not concerned with the question of caste. However, the questions of caste and gender are interrelated and cannot be separated.
- 2 B.R. Ambedkar. 1916. *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*. Available in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Volume 01.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 B.R. Ambedkar, 1945. What Gandhi and Congress have done to the Untouchables (page 410). Available in Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Volume 09. Education Department. Government of Maharashtra. 1991.
- 5 B.R. Ambedkar. Vol 17. Available in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Volume I. Education Department, Government of Maharashtra.
- 6 B.R. Ambedkar, 1947. *State and Minorities*. Available in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Volume I. Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1989.
- 7 Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Harper and Row. Also see Heidegger's *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translated, Introduction and Lexicon by Albert Hofstadter. Indiana University Press, 1982.

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Acronyms

- ABVP: Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (a right wing student organisation in India).
- JNU: Jawaharlal Nehru University, located in New Delhi, India.
- JNUSU: Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union.
- JNUTA: Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers Association.