



Student movement in Japan.

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Abstract

The student movement in Japan started as zengukaren which are raise against the undemocratic environment in campus, the increase in fees and Japan's government policy (US Japan security treaty in 1960), and national and international issues. Later, this movement turned in to SEALDS in 2013 which played a major role in the politics of Japan. This student movement prominently raised various issues of Japan such as anti-nuclear movement, nuclear energy, US presence in Okinawa, gender equality, environment etc.

Key Words-

Student movement, student politics, student activism, Japan, Zengakuren, ANPO, SEALDS,

The decade of 1960 and 1970 are the movement of student in the world. In this period, the student activism rises and diffusion in most of the country. The student activism of the time were two faces types: 1st faces- student activism consider with the university campus problem, such as rules regulation and dynamic. 2nd faces- Student movement concern to the political demonstration, protest, against government policy and working style, and also targeting the social discriminate in the society. It also raise voices against national and international issues (Barker, 2008).

In this paper I examine the development of the student movement in Japan since 1960, and also investigated the historical process of the student activism against the U.S Japan security treaty (ANPO). We also examine the issues of the student movement in Japan and how the student movement move from inside campus to outside campus in Japan.

We focus on the historically analysis of the student movement SEALDS in Japan, and illustrated that effective influenced of SEALDS movement on the student and social political movement in Japan. We can also try to find the reason for student movement in Japan. Is political reason behind the student activism in Japan or other reason

that such as economy factor. We can see the similarities and dissimilarities of the both movement (ANPO and SEALDS) in Japan.

So, Our main argument in this paper is that economic factor is also most important factor behind the student movement because in 1960s Japan's economy prosperity increased. Our second argument is that legacy of the first Japanese student movement carry by the SEALDS movement.

This study makes use of multiple research methods and sources. Our study will deductive reasoning, analytical and qualitative in nature. We will use primary resources such as government official websites, SEALDS official site, government report etc. Secondary resources such as books, journals articles, newspapers, and magazine for analysis the academic discourse of the student activism in Japan.

The 1960's anti ANPO struggle

In first time Japan student movement started from September 18th 1948 and its name was ZEN NIHON GAKUSA JICHIHAI SO RENGU (translated in English as "all Japan Federation of college student government) which is usually called as Zengakuren.

Before institutionalization, student political activity seems in early of the foundation of the higher education in Japan, and it had strong presence in the pre-war period. But after 2nd world war, allied forces ruled in Japan from 1945 to 1952 is called occupation period, and Japanese student movement started in a nationwide for bring democratizing campus life and university practices(Shimori,1963).

Shimori (1963), identifies that the development of the student movement in Japan are divided in to three part. First part is from 1945 to 1947. In this part, student movement started in campus and we are called "on campus movement" it means student activism begun in particular institution and confined to the one university where it was born. The second part of the student movement between 1948 and 1950. In this period student movement expended from one campus to other campus called "co campus protest". And third part of the student movement went to outside of campus. It means student protest activity occurs other public place with citizen, NGO or other social movement (Shimori.1963). It was called Extra campus movement. During first part of the student movement, student focused mostly on the voice raise against undemocratic environment and practices in the university. They demanded establishing the democratization of society and university to the authority(ibid).

In the occupation period, allied forces increases university fees , decentralization of the national university, and same time they remorse professor and university employee which belong to the CPJ from the university (Dower,1999).This kind of environment created the Zengakuren movement for stabilizing institution, developed student's inter campus relation on the undemocratic situation of the university life.

According to the shimori, third part of the student movement converted in to the political form and Zengakuren discuss the national policy as well as security policy in public place. This third phase of the student movement concern only the revision of US-Japan security treaty in 1960.

The structure of Zengakuren :-

Zengakuren has an umbrella character which was composed by the all national university and 70% private university. At the time of foundation, there are 300000 member in zengakuren organisation. Student got automatically membership when they enrolled at university. The structure of Zengakuren was hierarchy nature. Student representative and new student council elected through vote, and chairperson and vice chairperson was nominated by the student council. Tokyo University produces large number of activist in 1960-70 decade. Central committee of the Zengakuren has a right to decide of their goals and strategies, and they informed their goal to every university union and class. Guideline of the Zengakuren central executive were not essential for all groups but they appeal to all student group to discuss their issue and to give vote for them (Saruya,2012).

The character of the student movement was patriarchal. The participation of female member were very few. It was male dominance nature because all chairperson of Zengakuren was male is called usually chairman. JCP and student group fought for seat and it was very extensive impact on Zengakuren movement. However, Zengakuren was lower organisation for student activism and after some time those student will fight for higher organisation such as political party. It was means Zengakuren provided the platform for opportunity in political area through their student movement. So, finally student motivated for their protest (ibid).

Economic Causes of the student movement uprising:-

The student movement in Japan emerged because of economic reason. During rapid economic growth, Japanese society turned in to a consumption society. The reaction of the rapid growth had converted into student movement. Because these economic growth failed to fulfilled the huge number of graduate student at the growth time. Historically, farmers and small group of traders belong to the LDP when as student and labour organisation associated to the SPJ and JCP. However, during rapid growth and urbanisation, Japanese society far away from original nature and young people emerged as independent voter in cities. According to the 1969 survey, General union of the trader collisions with SPJ and above 40 years age group joined the socialist party but below the 40 years age group belong to as a free or independent voters in cities. Economic development pushed the migration from village to cities. In 1945, only 28% population lived in city but city population has dramatic changed during rapid economic development and it was touched 72% in 1970. The contribution of youth population was 42% in total migration. The age group of population between 15 to 34 were 47 % lived in Tokyo. At the same time, Japan was developing country where lack of consumer good and entertainment facility. The exchange rate of one dollar is equal to 36 yen and one average graduate Japanese student earned only 80 dollar, so they could not move to abroad. In 1960, the number of youth people increased in Tokyo and according to one survey, students revealed that they spent free time in three way. First was reading, second was sewing (among women) and third was drinking in home and watching theatre. So author say that student support to the movement because they do not have any entertainment source. During one protest against newly constructed American hospital and student said that he was protesting because this is a fun (Eiji, 2015).

During rapid growth the number of high school and university increased dramatically. In 1960, rate of high school matriculation was 57 % but in Tokyo it was more than 90%. The rate of college and matriculation growth increased from 10.3% to 37.8% in 1960 and 1975 respectively. It was miracles the 258 private university have opened during rapid growth period. The entrance exam of the university was highly competitive nature and student suffered different kind of problem due to the highly competitive entrance exam and environment. Such kind of situation promoted agitation in student against professors and university system and their environment. They motivated to move towards mass movement. Beside rapid economic growth did not provided adequate job for newly graduate student. Employment generation was very slow compare to the university who produces a lots of graduate. Only 43% of the graduate student got job and graduation was not guarantee for a good job in reputed company (ibid).

Student participation has decreased in civil society and some people analysed that social and political situation was unstable and violent due to the economic factor in 1970-70 decade. They also said that student of middle class move toward Zengukaren because the opportunity of job did not increased compare with the increasing graduate student. According to above explanation, the students turned into towards active student movement due to the rate of unemployment increased(sarkady,1970).

SEALDs Movement:-

SEALDs movement also known as SASPL (Student Against the Secret Protection Law). SASPL was established in Dec 2013. The founder member of the SASPL was three university student Okuda Aki, Ushida Yoshimasa and Honma Nobukazu (Slate, 2015). They were involved katei mae demonstrated against state's secrecy bill and they added youth in social movement and public political debates (ibid).

Secrecy bill implemented in December 2014 in Japan and due to this, student organisation weak gradually. However, the core member of the student association identified such kind of problem and they took step and changed the whole structure of student organisation. They redefined their movement and converted into the enlarge and multidimensional structure which was sufficient to achieved the goal and provide the big platform for struggle to established the more democratic environment in Japan (Slate,2015). So, on 3 may 2015 SEALDs (Student Emergency Action For Liberal Democracy) was formed as a new face of the group for student movement. The primary of the group were ex-SASPL based in Tokyo capital region and maximum member came from Christian university such as Sophia university or Hosei university, Meiji Gakuin university, and the international Christian university. But, maximum number of activist did not belong to the Christianity (Kingston, 2015). The core member of SEALDs expanded their movement from TOKYO to other places such as Okinawa, Tohku and Tokai in very short period. The core member of SEALDs are 400 people and large number of supporter came from different palaces participating regularly in the activity of demonstration such as conference, study group, street play along with core member (Slate,2015).

So we can see that at the present time, SEALDs work as a coordinating agent to connecting student for participating in demonstration, study group, talk and to promote the “new political culture (Aturashi seijibauka) or political awareness among the student and them also help to understand of the basic policy of government and their impact in student. They focus on the diversified issues such as reinterpretation of article 9 of the Japanese constitution, relocation of the futenma U.S military base to the village of Henoko, implication of the US Japan security treaty , and protest against us military presence in Okinawa region, And according the official site of SEALDs we can say that SEALDs Group interested in three main issues such as “constitutionalism” “social security” and “National Security”(http://www.sealds.com/section).

Next section We will compare the 1960s Zengakuren and SEALDs movement and then I will show that some similar point in both group which are relevant to the analysis of student movement’s effectiveness in political system.

SEALDs has identified the specific issues for movement and they gave some argument that Abe’s government does not respect the democratic principle based on Japanese constitution. SEALDs said also such kind of environment produces the insecure environment and endangered the expression of freedom of Japanese citizens. So, SEALDs raised voice against such kind of situation and ask to government for maintain the respect of the law and people’s right, and care of the marginal and weak citizen of Japan. SEALDs promotes the youth for participating the active politics and raised voiced against government’s undemocratic steps. They focus more on the government policy because government policy create the battle situation so they demand democratic process and democratic environment. Such kind of SEALDs struggle similar to the Zengakuren anti-ANPO movement.(SEALDs “Post on SEALDs Eng, Facebook page).

Both organisations’ directly focus on government policy and have same other quality. For instance both group has same internal character in term of ideology. Both group Zengakuren and SEALDs refused to affiliated to any political party and they permitted to participate their work without having any particular ideology. It means both organisation is open to all kind of people who want to save democracy in Japan (Kingston,2015).

Internal diversity collapsed Zengakoren as an organization but internal diversity increases more opportunity to SEALDs. Due to its unbiased character, SEALDs appealed to maximum old activist of Zengakoren, varieties of people, mother institution, anti nuclear activist, citizen who unhappy with the present political situation, student from ANPO association and christen group for joining to SEALDs. (Suvendriki, 2016).

Kingston(2015) says that SEALDs group divided into many sub-groups. Every sub-group has a particular bunch of people for exp. Old people who support 50s and 60s issues, middle group who belong to the below 40 age group and high school student . All sub group members support the work of SEALDs because they agree that present government (Abe’s government) pursuing military policy and reinterpretation of article 9 is anti-constitutional and objectionable (NPO corporation 2018).

SEALDs as an organisation turn into the liberal image and their messages motivated to students and activists through social media and youth culture. Beside, they made carefully design their manifesto for good image in public sphere as organization. For this, they have refused all violent activities, threatening actions which belong to negative image of the active student movement generally. They have rejected every kind of radicalism such as conservative ideology or progressive or extreme action as violent demonstration and hunger strike performed by Zengakoren movement. They do not want to give any chance to conservative government take action and threaten their works. They want more support of the people for their peaceful and interesting protest against un democratisation of governments step(kingston, 2015).

Beside the social media and social site, street demonstration as an influential role of the protest using by the SEALDs group. It make the visual identity of SEALDs. SEALDs group promote individuality, thinking ideas maintained the space to autonomous expression which create apposite environment of Japanese schooling system. Likewise, SEALDs also work to connect youth, people through giving open platform, where they can express on political ideas and views without any hesitation and fear. From this perspective, street protest is a medium to join the protesting while maintaining the hidden identity of protestors. (Slater, 2015).

Beside taking benefits of social media and demonstration on street or road, SEALDs have also used traditional media, interviews, press conference and events very carefully. They stress on politeness liberalism and educate people for maintaining good image in public sphere. They intentionally use international media because they want attention of others countries citizens and support from all world. For this they have created Facebook official page in English language (Kingston, 2015).

SEALDS opposed only those amendment of the constitution which does not follow the democratic process and public opinion. They do not opposed all revision of the Japanese Constitution bring by the government. They support the equal right for sexual minorities, which are adopted by Japanese society. They want to legal change for inclusion of the sexual minority in society. But they could not support any change in constitution which permits japan to go towards a hard power like military proactive behaviour, where all citizen still accept a pacific country (Slater, 2015).Therefore SEALDs criticized the every step of legislation which forcefully amendment of the constitution without any concern of the people or people's opinion(Muto,2016)

SEALDs closely attached to anti-nuclear movement. Maximum members of SEALDs and other youth of Japan which belong to anti-nuclear movement demonstrated after fukushima nuclear incident at march 2011 and they promote awareness about nuclear stroke among people and that is the reason anti nuclear components are very strong in japan. (Slater, 2015)

After triple disaster, a large number of citizen joined demonstration against nuclear energy. They gathered and demanded on the front of the parliament and PM office and its residence for the right to live in a nuclear free environment. (Oguma,2016)

The frequently protest against nuclear energy and participated in the peaceful political movement in the Japanese city. The anti-nuclear movement moved from capital area to other major cities and at the same time other organisations keep support with the anti-nuclear movement. For exm. Mother association, fisher and farmer unions and group of evacuated families. So, due to the participation of other group movement they have saved from violence and extreme activity(slater, 2015,)

Conclusion

Some critique said that the reason behind the popularity of the SEALDs is not idea but rather their female activists, who participate in music and dance as a fashion object which gathered people and media attention. (Andrew, 2016). But according to Okuda Aki, who was a founding member of SEALDs, said that these criticism are not relevant because the uses of social media, magazine and channels are the strategy of SEALDs group from beginning time. The participation of women there movement are not a fashion of object instead female activists represent half of our population and it is an ideal situation of democracy because every person have right to express their views. Female activists participate in anti-nuclear movement which produce the ideal social movement where patriarchal system and gender discrimination reduces. SEALDs's female members promote the free gender biased environment and they want to increase role of woman in decision making institution.(Uno,1993).

We can see that Zengakuren and SEALDs movement have similar goals like focus on government policies and diversification of the internal structure and members. However, scholars have only explained upon similarities but dis-similarities also present in both movements, whereas on the one hand, Zengakuren of the student movements image in public was stereotype negative but on the other hand, SEALDs image in public is positive. The SEALDs produces the new political culture where every person has right to express their views on anti-nuclear policy and government imposing law and regulation without any concern of public opinion. They reduces the gender discrimination and talk about gender equality but Zengakuren did not give any space to women in their administration. The SEALDs movement also used the modern communication medium for their expansion of their ideas and views. For instance- social media, street paly, dramas, music magazines, channels etc.

Kingston(2015), said that SEALDs utilised the campus freedom environment given by university administration to participate in the political debate or social problems instead of choosing other activities such as sports groups and other entertainment sources for their movement and awareness of their aim. Finally we can say that SEALDs have used successfully online and offline communication medium for expanding their movement and connecting to other movements and people. Their activism raise the voice not only anti-Nuke but other social issues also. And, compare to previous social movement as Zengakuren movement in 1970s decade movement so we get that SEALDs movement carry legacy of Zengakuren movement along with more democratic peacefully more effective nonviolence activity, using the modern technology and communication medium and expended from capital city to major city. The diversity of group and age groups of Japanese society include sexual minorities participate in their movement with positive image .

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