



Global youth movements of the seventies of twentieth century

In the seventies of the last century there was widespread youth unrest throughout the world. Young people were not happy with the education system, society, political system and what not. This unrest was targeted against authoritarianism, capitalism, racism, war, nuclear arsenal, etc. It was to promote civil and political rights, environmentalism, feminism, liberalization and socialism. For more details one can visit https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests_of_1968

Youth unrest in India

In our country the number of educated unemployed was increasing. Many universities were closed. Energy of youth was being wasted in anti-Hindi, anti-English like destructive movements. A song from film Balak (1969) summarizes the situation :

सुन ले बापू ये पैगाम

काला धन काला व्यापार, रिश्त का है गरम बाजार

तेरे अनशन सत्याग्रह के बदल गए असली बर्ताव
एक नई विद्या उपजी है जिसको कहते हैं घेराव

प्रान्त प्रान्त से टकराता है, भाषा पर भाषा की लात
मैं पंजाबी तू बंगाली, कौन करे भारत की बात

राम राज की तेरी कल्पना उड़ी हवा में बन के कपुर
बच्चों ने पढ लिखना छोड़ा, तोड़ फोड़ में हैं मगरूर

What was Tarun Shanti Sena (TSS)?

It was a politically nonpartisan group of youths with a revolutionary zeal which was not interested in power. It was in favor of "Power to the people" to bring about a social system free from exploitation and inequality. It wanted to bring about a Cultural Revolution in India. Please see the booklet "भारतीय सांस्कृतिक क्रांति" for more information.

Although started by the Gandhian - Sarvodaya institution, TSS was not associated with any philosophy or personality. It was open to all types of revolutionary ideas from everywhere that can help build just and humane society. Though global youth movements of the seventies had influenced it upto some extent. "We shall overcome" was our favorite song.

How did Tarun Shanti Sena start?

Shanti Sena Mandal used to organize work-cum-study camps for teenagers as Kishor Shanti Dal. Around 1000 teenagers participated in 17 camps during 1962-67. Kishor Shanti Dal had centers in 14 States.

In 1967 Bihar faced severe famine. Jayprakash Narayan (JP) launched a massive famine relief work to deal with the situation. He made an appeal to college and university students to join in this effort. Shanti Sena Mandal organized a summer camp of youths rather than teenagers in Bihar this time in which 70 students from all over the country participated. Their contribution in famine relief showed that given the opportunity they can do constructive work instead of destructive activities. Thus Kishor Shanti Dal got upgraded to Tarun Shanti Sena focussing more on youths rather than teenagers.

The First National Conference of Tarun Shanti Sena was held at Mumbai on 17-18 May 1969 where delegates from all over the country gathered together to discuss its goals, values and programs. Two new values Social Equality and Economic Justice were added to the existing four – Democracy, Secularism, National Integration and World Peace. (See the Charter of Tarun Shanti Sena).

Organization

TSS was not a registered organization. Anybody in the age group of 14-22 years can become its members by pledging faith in the values of TSS. It was a loose organization without hierarchy of designations. During the national conference policies were decided through group discussions by the delegates. The delegates also used to appoint a Working Group and a Convenor to coordinate the activities of TSS. Similarly, local, district and State level units had Convenors.

In mid-1972 the Shanti Sena Mandal handed over the affairs of TSS to its members.

TSS had no funds and bank account. Its activities were supported by its members, Shanti Sena Mandal and other like minded organizations. Its headquarters was based at Sadhana Kendra, Rajghat, Varanasi.

Most of its members were recruited through national, state or local camps and visits to colleges. Weakened, local and state level work-cum-study camps were organized regularly. In 1973 it had around 2000 members and 280 centers.

Activities

Depending on the local situations, members used to take part in different movements like: Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand, land distribution in Bihar, anti corruption programs, promoting communal harmony, revolution in education, relief work in natural and man-made calamities, promoting national integration in Arunachal Pradesh through Citizens School and Medical Services.

Though it used to promote national integration to fight regionalism, communalism, provincialism, linguism, and chauvinism it was not nationalistic in a narrow sense. Its slogan was Jai Jagat! Instead of Jai Hind!

TSS volunteers went to Cyprus for peacekeeping work. Its members collected funds for Pakistan to deal with natural calamities but supported the Bangladesh freedom movement against it. During Bangladesh's war of independence around 10 million refugees came to India. TSS organized its annual camp on the border of Bangladesh and looked after 3-4 lakh refugees. Medical students and other volunteers of TSS provided health and hygiene services in cholera stricken populations during heavy monsoon near the conflict zone.

In 1972-73 there was severe drought in many provinces. On the initiative of TSS, in the summer of 1973 the Home Ministry decided to organize 1000 camps of 100 youth each in association with organizations like TSS, Rashtra Seva Dal, Antar Bharati and National Service Scheme to do relief work in drought affected areas. TSS members conducted some of these camps in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. This helped increase membership of the TSS manifold. The TSS national conference following these camps in October 1973 was attended by more than 400 delegates. Participation in anti-corruption movements in Gujarat (Navnirman) and Bihar further increased the membership.

Be The Change

As we know Tarun Shanti Sena was welded to values like democracy, national integration, world peace, secularism, social equality & economic justice.

It was expected from the members that they would put these values into their daily lives.

In addition to these values the bounding element among the members was friendship. National camps of TSS strengthen friendships among boys and girls coming from different states, language and cultural backgrounds.

Social Equality

Several members have changed their names to remove caste identity from it. Intercaste marriages without dowry were more common among TSS members. More than 70 members selected life partners from a different State to promote national integration. Some of the male partners migrated to their in-law's States.

Secularism

Many members did peacekeeping during communal riots putting their lives at stake. During riots in Varanasi, they entered the narrow lanes to prevent a major clash between Hindus and Muslims where the Central Reserve Police refused to enter. They did succeed in preventing it. They were active in mitigating and relief work during Ahmedabad and Bhiwandi riots.

Democracy

In 1975, when we opposed the emergency in which fundamental rights of the citizens were curtailed, a large number of Tarun Shanti Sainiks were arrested under MISA for 18-24 months.

Revolution in Education

One of programs of TSS was to bring about changes in present education system which was outdated and was not fulfilling the aspirations of the youths. Many TSS members burnt their degrees. More than 50 members left their studies half way and chose the path of active learning.

Medico Friend Circle

While most of the members of TSS were not satisfied with the present education system, medicos among them shown little interest in the revolution in education program. This led to creation of the Medico Friend Circle to bring the medicos face to face with the problems of medical education and health system in the deprived sections of society.

The Charter of Tarun Shanti Sena

**Adopted at
the First National Conference of Tarun Shanti Sena
held at Mumbai on 17-18 May 1969**

We, young men and women of India, assembled at this First National Conference of the Youth Peace Corps feel that mankind is facing a crisis today the kind of which it had never witnessed in the course of its long history. Science and technology have turned the world into a small nest of human birds and have provided him with the means of fulfilling all his needs. Yet we see the strange paradox of dire poverty in the midst of plenty. At a time when man can reach the moon he finds himself incapable of reaching the heart of his neighbour. In Spite of unprecedented developments in the field of medical sciences man is suffering from disease. Though psychology and sociology have made considerable progress men suffer from mental illness and social maladjustment.

We, the youth of India are no longer prepared to be silent and helpless witnesses to this paradox. We know that it is the privilege of the young to protest against this situation, to revolt against the system which have produced this paradox and to act for a revolution.

We believe that there are only two ways of bringing about a revolution: the violent and the non-violent. We firmly refuse to be taken in by the slogans of violent revolution. Violent revolutions, though seemingly swift in nature, have ultimately let down the very ideals for which they were staged. They strengthen the forces of organised violence but not the hands of the weak and the down-trodden. They do succeed in bringing about a change but at the same time they tend to end up in a situation which defeats the very end for which the change was brought about.

Non-violent revolution is, therefore, the only alternative. Although mankind has had some experience of the power of non-violence in the great and noble experiments of men like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, the latter has yet to prove its efficacy in the various fields of life. Proving the efficacy of non-violence is the greatest challenge of the day. We, the youth of India, are keen to accept this challenge and in doing so we accept the challenge of revolutionising the very concept of revolution.

We believe that the youth have not only a right but an obligation to strive for a revolution. As a first step towards it, we chalk out the following programme:

(a) Believing that the individual and the society are inter-dependent and inseparable, we shall begin with striving for a revolution in our personal lives. We shall not submit to the tyranny of age nor shall we consider to be inalienably opposed to it. We shall let the wisdom and experience of age combine with the vision and vigour of youth.

We reject and shall fight everything that separates man from man—the caste system, regionalism, communalism, provincialism, linguism, and chauvinism. We shall not indulge in corrupt practices nor shall we tolerate corruption when practiced by others.

Those of us who are students shall not condescend to malpractices during examinations and shall organise themselves against all such malpractices of fellow students. We shall convince them that not merely passing examinations but training of the body and the mind and the building of our character is the most fundamental objective of education.

(b) We shall strive for changing the state of affairs in India, for breaking the bonds of injustice and inequality and for building bridges between the desperate elements of our society.

We shall change the system of education which today is divorced from life. In science it lags behind the times and fails to give the scientific outlook to life. In humanities it mass produces characters which are lacking in depth and dignity. The administration of education is unsatisfactory from top to bottom. We want active and responsible

participation of students in administration. We do not want to create ourselves in the image of the old. We want to build a new and better world. We may make mistakes but shall not shirk responsibilities. Only we do not want to be blamed for all the mistakes of the old.

We shall strive to bring about a non-violent revolution in the economic and social fields. It is these fields which are of fundamental importance for ushering in the better world of tomorrow. We desire to make it clear that our objectives are economic equality and social justice. Our methods of revolution shall be in tune with our objectives. We shall strive for land for the landless, work for the workless, power for the powerless, and home for the homeless.

We shall oppose the efforts of political parties to exploit us. Yet we do not want to escape from politics, but we do not want to be partisans. Indeed, we shall try our best to influence politics.

We demand that the age of suffrage be reduced to eighteen. That will give a sense of responsibility to us and shall enable us to take our struggles from the streets to the parliament house.

We express our deep sympathy with the youth of the world who are fighting against colonialism. We would like to warn them, however, that violent efforts are likely to defeat their purpose. We lend moral support to all struggles against all colonialism: both of the West and of the East.

We are thrilled to learn of the growing spirit of revolt among the youth of the world against tyranny, hypocrisy, deceit, narrow ideologies, militarism and war. We consider ourselves to be a part of this world movement to combine freedom with equality. By working for a non-violent revolution in India. We hope to contribute our mite to the cause of world peace. We reaffirm our faith in National Integration, Secularism, Social Equality and Economic Justice, Democracy and World Peace.