

EXPLORING THE CONTOURS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES: A STUDY OF
DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dissertation

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DECLARATION OF THE SCHOLAR

This is to certify that the M.Phil. Dissertation being submitted by me on the topic entitled **‘Exploring the Contours of Academic Freedom in Indian Universities: A Study of Doctoral Research in Social Sciences Department’** has been completed under the guidance of **Dr. Neeru Snehi**. It is declared that the present study has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship or Fellowship to this or any other University.

Srishti Bhatia

CERTIFICATE OF THE SUPERVISOR

This is to certify that the dissertation/thesis entitled '**Exploring the Contours of Academic Freedom in Indian Universities: A Study of Doctoral Research in Social Sciences Department**' is the work undertaken by **Ms. Srishti Bhatia** under my supervision and guidance as part of her M.Phil degree in this Institute. To the best of my knowledge, this is the original work conducted by him/her and the dissertation/thesis may be sent for evaluation.

Dr. Neeru Snehi

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	4
List of Figures	7
Chapter One	10
Introduction: Contextualising the Research	10
1.1 Introduction.....	10
1.2 Literature Review:	11
1.3 Gaps in academic freedom literature	14
1.4 Research Objectives and Questions	15
1.5 Research Methodology	16
1.6 Data Collection:	17
1.7 Sampling	18
1.8 Theoretical Framework	20
1.9 Conceptualising Public Reasoning's Importance in Indian Universities	21
1.10 Roadmap	25
Chapter Two	26
What does Academic Freedom imply?	26
2.1 Defining Academic Freedom:.....	26
2.2 Historical Precedents:	27
2.3 Academic Freedom and University:.....	32
2.4 Academic freedom and Institutional Autonomy:.....	34
2.5 University Autonomy in India:	36
2.5 Academic Freedom for Faculty and Scholars: Perspectives from the Interview Conducted.....	38
2.6 Perspective of Faculty Members and Students on Academic Freedom:	39
2.6 Students/Scholars Perception:.....	41
Chapter Three	43
Academic Freedom and its Effect on Research	43
3.1 Introduction and Relevance:	43
3.2 Brief landscape of Indian Universities and Commissions on Higher Education:.....	48
3.3 Growing Restrictions on Academic Freedom:.....	51
3.4 Restrictions on Freedom to Research and Study:	54
Chapter 4	58
Summary and Conclusion	58
4.1 Findings of the Survey Conducted:	62
4.2 Limitations of the Study:.....	67

4.2 Recommendations and Scope: 67

REFERENCES..... 69

Annexure 1 DENIAL OF PERMISSION/DISRUPTION OF SEMINARS/MEETINGS/EVENTS ON
CAMPUS 81

Annexure 2 Restrictions on Academic Exchange..... 85

Table 1 Overview of the Interview Sample.....	19
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List of Figures

Figure 1 Student Enrolment by Levels (MHRD, 2018-2019).	48
Figure 2 Graph on India's Academic freedom index (V-DEM).	51
Figure 3 Academic Freedom Index and Variables (V-DEM).	52
Figure 4 Graph On Practice of Self-Censorship (Source: Compiled by the researcher).....	62
Figure 5 Graph on official policy document on Academic freedom (Source: Compiled by the researcher)	63
Figure 6 Graph on Academic Freedom (Source: Compiled by the researcher)	63
Figure 7 Graph on whether academic freedom has changed at institutional level (Source: Compiled by the researcher).....	64
Figure 8 Graph on Cancellation of Seminars/Talks/Movies in the institution (Source: Compiled by the researcher)	64
Figure 9 Graph on Individual Academic Freedom for Research (Source: Compiled by the researcher)	65
Figure 10 Graph on the importance of institutional autonomy (Source: Compiled by the researcher)	65
Figure 11 Pie-chart on Decline of Institutional Autonomy over past years (Source: Compiled by the researcher).....	66

List of Abbreviations

NEP	new National Education Policy
DNEP	Draft National Education Policy
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
DU	University of Delhi
HoD	Head of Department
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Abstract

The study aims to explore stakeholders' perception of academic freedom in Indian Higher Education institutes. The study's importance was based on both theoretical and practical considerations. Theoretical considerations stemmed from a scarcity of research on student academic freedom, while practical considerations were linked to infringements on student academic freedom identified by local and international non-governmental organizations in the Indian higher education institutes. The study have two major questions: one, what does academic freedom imply? In this context, the study investigated scholars' and faculty members' perceptions of academic freedom and scholars' academic freedom criteria especially in this context. Second, what is effect of academic freedom on research or knowledge production? To study this, various official documents on higher education, academic freedom reports were investigated. A brief survey was also conducted for scholars to understand the threats to academic freedom per say. The universities selected for this study was Jawaharlal Nehru University and University of Delhi. A qualitative method was adopted for this research study, where 20 in-depth and semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted. Due to covid pandemic, where the fieldwork was the limitation, an online survey was conducted in order to conceptualise the scholars' perception on academic freedom and the challenges. Based on literature, interview data, and survey data. The study suggested several recommendations regarding having an effective official policy for the stakeholders in the universities.

Chapter One

Introduction: Contextualising the Research

1.1 Introduction

Academic freedom is a complex concept with no universal definition. Many people make claims about academic freedom without explaining what they mean or comprehending the implications. According to Philip Altbach, “while it appears to be a simple concept, and in essence it is academic freedom is also difficult to define” (Altbach P G 2016, p. 239). Academic freedom varies depending on the social and political context, and because there is no universal definition, an individual's understanding or how he or she defines it may appear to be a social construction based on one's understanding. On the conceptions of academic freedom, there have been ongoing discussions and dialogues. Academic freedom has different meanings in different countries. Academic freedom is the right of individual academics and students to teach, study, and conduct information and research without unreasonable constraints imposed by the statute, the state, institutional restrictions or regulations, or public pressure (Ignatieff M and Roch S 2018). This is well echoed by Einstein's quote: “By academic freedom, I mean the right to seek truth and to publish and teach what one believes to be true” (Ignatieff M and Roch S 2018).

Academic freedom is broadly defined as the freedom of academics to conduct study as well as the freedom of teachers and students to discuss and debate scholarly ideas without fear of sanction, censure, or unconstitutional intervention (Bhargava 1999). It allows students and faculty to research and study any topics they want, and to reach whichever conclusions they draw from their finding (Nelson C 2010). Within the academic institution, academic freedom entails the right to free inquiry. When universities are founded on intellectual freedom, individuals are able to think freely and critically. It also expands the possibilities for debate and disagreement in the university setting. Academic freedom includes the freedom to visualize, cultivate a critical sense of thought, and challenge current processes in universities. The pursuit of knowledge and freedom of speech, both of which are essential to human liberty, play a critical role in the advancement of society.

We are seeing troubling trends these days, including assaults on academic freedom and threats to it. Academic freedom is constantly being threatened by oppressive institutions or governments around the world. Recent attacks on academic freedom have also been observed

in India(Sundar N 2018).It has included everything from restrictions on academic and extracurricular activities to physical attacks on students. In response to Bhargava's statement and observations on academic freedom, illiberal cultures posed a more severe threat to academic freedom in India. As he describes in his article, the late historian Mushirul Hasan was persecuted by radical Muslims for a seemingly harmless remark about Rushdie's Satanic Verses being banned(Bhargava 1999).The question is, what is the current state of academic freedom? Attacks on academic freedom have increased, perhaps as a result of a rise in social intolerance. There have been a slew of recent cases of the government interfering with academic freedom. This is exemplified by the omission of many relevant books from university syllabi solely on non-academic grounds. State intervention has increased, with vital pedagogical activities being sacrificed in the name of the government's national interest. The ongoing persecution of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), according to the current government, one of the country's premier academic institutions, exemplifies this (Tierney W and Sabharwal N S 2016).

In this study, the researcher will examine the meaning and perspective of academic freedom in the university space. The aim of this research is to learn about the viewpoints of faculty and scholars at a research university in Delhi, India. The aim of this study is to figure out how academic freedom affects knowledge growth. Academic freedom is critical for the development of new ideas and information. As a result, understanding the socio-political factors influencing academic freedom in India in the twenty-first century is critical.

The researcher investigated this study using Habermas' framework of the Public Sphere. Taking inspiration from his work, the researcher has positioned university as a public sphere where people engage in debates and arguments in the pursuit of truth.

1.2 Literature Review:

A critical step in the progression of any academic research is a review of the literature. Anderson (Anderson G and Nancy Arsenault 1998)states in his book, a good research is focused on all of the prior experience, reasoning, and research, which is why a review of the literature is an important step in the research process(Anderson G and Nancy Arsenault 1998,

p.97). The researcher used online libraries to find books, journals, articles, reports, commissions, and journalistic articles in order to gain a better understanding and clarity on the subject of academic freedom. The following research questions were considered while searching the online domain for credible and legitimate resources.

1. How does one define academic freedom?
2. What is the idea of university?
3. What is the importance of academic in universities?

Butler seeks an answer to the following question in order to understand the relevance of academic freedom in the current social and cultural context. ‘Why academic freedom is essential to the university, and why the university is essential to people's cultural and social lives all over the world?’(Butler 2017). In her article, Butler argues that universities are mainly 'social institutions,' and therefore they are obligated by teaching and academic research to promote and practice the principles of freedom and justice. However, Butler also concludes her arguments by giving instances from the current global scenarios which highlight the consequence of practising the above-mentioned argument. One such instance examined by the authorities the case of scholars and public workers in Turkey, where nearly 400 faculty members and 5000 public workers congregated to sign a peace petition (named ‘Academics for Peace’) to call for an end to the military operation in the volatile Kurdish region. Because of participating in the signing of the petition, most participants were penalised by the state, having their work censored, travel privileges denied, and ultimately being laid off from responsibilities in their respective universities. The author by examining such instances points out that scholars and faculties enrolled in universities are not only within the protection provided by academic freedom to formulate opinion that are critical of the government, but are also, within in the reach of their democratic right to exercise the right to free expression and dissent, which in this case has been denied and stripped off by the state(Butler 2017).

You have to map a university to its beginnings in order to grasp the theory. It can be found in John Henry Newman. He defended liberal learning for students in his two-part book. He discussed the nature of the students' education. He also said the pursuit of truth is part of the path which shapes an individual's personality. In the circle of knowledge, his book is a powerful defence of liberal education (Newman J and Turner F M 1996).

One of the other books which was referred to get the conceptual understanding was 'The Idea of University'(Bhattacharya D 2019)draws upon the essential of why universities are in crisis everywhere. This book describes the historic developments of the university from medieval Europe to recent debates about the existence of neo-liberal universities. The book discusses the neoliberal transformation of universities in India, as well as the issue of university sustainability in the neoliberal age(Bhattacharya D 2019). The book is further divided into four parts from history, to understanding the contexts, politics of university. Adding to this, another volume by the same thinker is (Bhattacharyaa D 2019)which focuses upon the critical pedagogy and engagements of different disciplines in the university. The book further explores the important and necessary questions related to the political future of the of the university. The book does not simple see university in the context of just simply existing in a liberal democracy but rather it views and explore the engagement of the university space within everyday practices (Bhattacharyaa D 2019).

In addition, the notion of academic freedom in university spaces must be discussed. Understand that the growth and development of each community depends on knowledge production, which can only take place by pursuing the knowledge that leads to the expression of truth. The growth of any higher educational institution depends on the freedom of the university. This growth will only be possible if publications, research, findings and pedagogical practices that may be state-critical, and some may people find that controversial and confusing. This growth will only happen if universities spaces are not hampered by the internal as well as the external forces, argued by (Dohal 2015) and similar arguments have been given by(Sundar N 2018), (Altbach 2001) and many others.

The theoretical and the philosophical understanding of the concept of academic freedom can been seen in the writings of many scholars(Fuchs 1963);(Dworkin 1996);(Fischer L 1977);(Nelson C 2010);(Shils E 2008). These scholars have discussed about various models of academic freedom. Further, the models are gentleman scientist model, the liberty model and the professional model. Shils adopts the liberty mode and from this perspective he argues on emphasising the individual rights over the collective faculty rights while discussing the idea of academic freedom. Shils encourages the discussion of controversial debates and ideas and give importance to the political freedom of the individuals. Similarly, the differentiation between general theory of academic freedom and special theory of academic freedom is discussed by (Searle J R 1971)

Theoretical studies on academic freedom indicate that, while academic freedom is essential, it is not enough. While freedom is often portrayed as an absolute and fundamental principle, there is considerable debate about it between academics on their interpretations and understandings of the definition of academic freedom.

1.3 Gaps in academic freedom literature

Despite the fact that there have been several research on faculty perceptions of academic freedom, the literature on academic freedom is still dominated by theoretical and historical-legal studies. Furthermore, academic research on students' experiences and interpretations are scarce to the study done on academic freedom.

(Margesson R J 2008), for example, has in comparison to faculty academic freedom, argued no attention has been given to students' academic rights in the United States (Esmat 2016, p.29). He highlighted the importance of conceiving of academic freedom that is student-centric and empowers students (Margesson R J 2008, p. 178). Reframing has been advocated by (Macfarlane B 2011) from a capability standpoint of student's academic freedom.

In the academic freedom literature, the study of conceptual understanding of academic freedom, attitudes, and policies in western countries mostly, other than the United States has been ignored. Academic freedom in developing countries in general, and India in particular, has been the subject of just a few studies. While some new studies have begun to look at the state of academic freedom in Indian higher education context when it comes to academic freedom (Bhatia 2016; Chattopadhyay S 2020; Nayar M 2020; Prakash V 2011; Sundar N 2018; Tierney W and Sabharwal N S 2016).

There is a need for further research into the conceptual understanding, and institutional dimensions of academic freedom in India. Furthermore, studies on faculty and student perceptions of academic freedom in Indian universities are significant because perceptions, meanings, and interpretations are all important in Indian context especially, when we refer and understand about concepts with western origins like academic freedom in different contexts.

This research examines student and faculty perceptions of academic freedom in an effort to fill the aforementioned gaps in the literature on academic freedom. Examining student academic freedom perceptions fills a void in the literature on perceptions and interpretations in general, and student academic freedom perceptions and interpretations in particular.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

The initial question that I had in the beginning was how much freedom do we have to express ideas inside and outside the university as student? While pondering about this question, it led the researcher to explore the idea of academic freedom and to understand that the growth of any university depends on the democratic discourses and freedom of inquiry. However, the idea of academic freedom in the current scenario is a complex and a contested one. These contestations happen within a specific-socio political context. This makes the whole process overly complicated, and thus a study that looked at the macro-level understanding of academic freedom in Indian public universities seemed important.

Therefore, using the themes of democratic public sphere, this study aims at

1. Understanding the concept of academic freedom
2. Exploring practices of academic freedom at universities
3. Exploring the factors affecting academic freedom in higher education institutions in Delhi

To get the deeper understanding of the concept academic freedom, I will trace the available secondary theoretical literature on academic freedom in higher education. The practices of academic freedom which takes place in the Indian public universities will be illuminated by looking at the current universities' environment and the faculty and student involved. This dissertation also looks at the socio-political context within which the practices of academic freedom are taking place. Whereas the factors affecting academic freedom will be demonstrated by considering the institutional structure of autonomy and contextual understanding of the present establishment in the country.

To investigate the above concept and practices and to act as a starting point for analysing relevant literature, documents and forming interview and survey questions, the following research questions were framed:

1. What does academic freedom imply?
2. What is the impact of academic freedom on knowledge production /research in Indian public universities in Delhi?

These questions served as a tool to work out an appropriate methodology for gathering descriptive data, as well as explore the right theoretical insights. To answer the above questions, I have looked at the current reports on academic freedom, journalistic articles to analyse the current events related to academic freedom, as well as interviewed faculty members and students of the universities. Moreover, how these questions shaped the research design and what was the methodology for data collection and analysis will be discussed in the later section.

1.5 Research Methodology

What is methodology? There is not one answer to this question. Moreover, there is no universal definition to the term methodology, as it differs in every context. One can simply understand the term methodology by comprehending the methods or ways we use to approach any problem and look for answers. The method we choose is the result of our problems, research purpose, research interests and our preconceptions. In social sciences, the term methodology means how the research is conducted.

Given the nature of research objectives and questions, the methodological paradigm selected for this research study is qualitative. The three stages of qualitative research have been noted by (Lofland J et al. 1984) which are: gathering, focusing, and analysing. The process of collection and assembling refers to gathering, focusing refers to the interrogation of data, and analysing refers to developing and presenting an analysis of data (Lofland J et al. 1984). Additionally, Kirk and Miller talked about another stage to this process (Kirk J and Miller M 1986). Kirk and Miller added four stages to qualitative research, and they are: invention (research design), discovery (data collection), interpretation and explanation (Kirk J and Miller M 1986).

It is necessary for the researcher to consider personal, theoretical, and epistemological issues before starting the research (Denzin N K and Lincoln Y S 1994). This process only comes into action when researcher examines the position of 'self' (Denzin N K and Lincoln Y S 1994). The researcher moves forward with the underlying presumptions that the choices and understanding of the field are shaped by researcher's subjectivities and positions. Thus, researcher becomes more cautious of his or her gaze by 'locating the self', and this also lets the readers be cautious of any biases that could come in because of the researcher's background or location.

The researcher would describe having the unique position vis a vis the field i.e. JNU and DU, Delhi. Since the researcher have studied in both the universities and have lived in Delhi for many years, the researcher have a sense of being an insider to the field, but as the researcher has also studied in other universities for higher education, it makes him or her as an outsider as well. The researcher's status from an institute which is outside of JNU and DU gave him or her an outsider's perspectives to understand the selected issues of the study.

The next phases are exploring the underlying theoretical paradigms and the related epistemological positions about academic freedom as well as the idea of the university. Denzin and Lincoln describe epistemological positions as the specific strategies of inquiry the researcher choses. The researcher is using Habermas's concept of 'public sphere' as the primary theoretical framework.

1.6 Data Collection:

To obtain a better understanding of the principle of academic freedom and the activities of academic investigations in universities, multiple data sources are used. The researcher spoke with professors and scholars to learn about their opinions and understanding on academic freedom. The interview for this research was semi-structured. This helped the researcher to better understand how participants made sense of their own experiences, as well as their perceptions and opinions of academic freedom in universities. Semi- structured interviews helped the researcher to ensure a greater scope of subjectivity for the respondents, and keep their voices and experiences as primary, which ensuring that the conversation did not stray too far from the research topic. The questions in the schedule were kept broad, that provided the respondents with lines along which the conversation flowed.

Further, in this background an online survey was also conducted in order to understand what factors affect the academic freedom when it comes to intra mural as well as extra mural activities.

Due to Covid pandemic there were limitations of travel, time and access, the researcher could only conduct telephonic interviews and online survey as the method of data collection. In the lieu of this, one had to resort to online access of reports, documents, and journalistic articles. The researcher choses the Jawaharlal Nehru University and University of Delhi, as the field

of study.¹ The researcher has chosen JNU and DU because both universities are leading universities in the nation.² These universities are leading universities when it comes to study social sciences in India. Moreover, JNU and DU have been in contestation on political front in terms of students' movement, teachers' association protests since past few years. Further, The Universities like JNU and DU provide quality education to students from all over the country, students here come from diverse section of the society. However, Delhi was taken as the overall field to study these universities for the research because firstly, these universities are situated in Delhi and secondly, political impact is immediately felt in the capital. further Following that, a few notable papers and reports were examined. In qualitative research, document analysis is a technique for gathering data. "The umbrella word to refer to a broad variety of written, visual, multimedia, and physical content applicable to the analysis at hand," explains the term document"(Merriam S B and Tisdell E J 2015, p.139).In order to establish analytical expertise and provide findings for the information gathered from the interviews, this research used document analysis and report analysis. Documents such as JNU Act, DU Act, NEP 2020(MHRD 2020),and other few reports/documents are selected for the study in order to understand the governance framework of the selected universities and also to understand the wholistic picture of higher education in India.

1.7 Sampling

The process of selecting a suitable sample for the analysis was the next step. "Purposive sampling is a non-probability method of sampling," Bryman describes(Bryman A 2008, p. 415), that is primarily based on the assumption that the investigator wants to "discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select sample from which the most can be learned"(Merriam S B and Tisdell E J 2015, p.77).Purposive sampling, as described by(Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2002)Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, is used to create a sample that is satisfactory to the researcher. "Researchers handpick the cases to be included in the study based on their judgment of their typicality," they write(Cohen et al. 2002, p.103).

¹According to National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2020 report, JNU emerged as the second best university and DU bagged the eleventh position in the India Rankings,2020.

²Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has emerged as the best university for arts and humanities in India, as per the QS World Rankings 2021 report. Following JNU, the University of Delhi (DU) have scored second position.

Purposive sampling, according to (Bryman A 2008), explores a strategic way to sample cases or participants in order to ensure that those sampled are important to the study goals and questions (Bryman A 2008, p.415). In light of this, a purposive sampling technique was used in this research in order to investigate participants' subjective experiences. Faculty and students (Scholars) from the selected universities were chosen. They were related to both universities' social sciences departments. Faculty and students from the social sciences department were chosen to gain a more in-depth understanding of different perspectives on academic freedom and to recognise potential contestations or threats to academic freedom.

In order to gain insight into doctoral studies, PhD candidates were chosen to provide their perspectives and experiences on academic freedom and its effect on knowledge creation and research.

Table 1 Overview of the Interview Sample

Respondents	Number
Faculty members	10
Students	10
Total	20

The next process is a challenging and exciting state of qualitative research process. Data analysis is crucial part of qualitative research. According to (Spencer L, Ritchie J, and O'Connor W 2003) O'Connor it requires "systematic searching and diligent detection" (Spencer L et al. 2003). The descriptions and themes will be observed and represented in the qualitative narratives. The interviews were conducted mostly in English language. There were total of 20 respondents. The information gathered during the interviews was transcribed into written text. The researcher then revisited all the details given by the participants in order to get a general understanding of it. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to establish themes for further study. The meaning of the data was interpreted in depth in the end stages, using the theoretical framework described earlier.

For the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data gathered through records, the current research used qualitative content analysis. The aim of data classification in content analysis is to "enable the search for trends and themes within a specific setting or through cases" (Knafl K A 1991, p.384). For analysing document content and exploring for emerging themes, qualitative content analysis is useful (Bryman A 2008).

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical structure is the basis of a research study, and it outlines out the various steps that can be taken in the investigation. This section discusses the study's theoretical context, including a brief discussion of the “idea of university” and the “public sphere” theory in relation to university space.

The phrase idea of university goes back in time to modern university history, to the reforms of Wilhem von Humboldt in Prussia. The ‘Humboldtian’ University that is University of Berlin, founded in 1810, became the model of the modern European universities. It was the framework of Humboldtian university which has shaped modern research universities, for instance, especially leading universities of the USA in today's time.

The idea of a university for the pursuit of knowledge and seeking of truth has been discussed by many thinkers and philosophers over time. Works, discussions and arguments of thinkers and philosophers like(Habermas J 1962; Jasper K 1959; Newman J and Turner F M 1996; Oaks T 1994)and, among many others have contributed to many layers of the idea of a university.

Among the multiple ideas and interpretations, one such discussed by Karl Jaspers in his book, “The Idea of University”, university is defined as a space where one finds freedom to pursue truth and knowledge through authentic thinking and dialogue that is undeterred by any external influence(Jasper K 1959). Further in his essay, “The Idea of a University” by Michael Oakeshott, states that university is a place where individuals are engaged in some sort of mental or cognitive activity and that activity is called “pursuit of learning”(Oaks T 1994). Therefore, university can be defined as a space where learning takes place, this learning is further extended and preserved. This extension of learning is taking place through research and the constant exchange of ideas in the university space. Universities are always revising, re-interpreting the ‘truth’. Universities are always in progress trying to pursue to further push back the boundaries of knowledge. Universities are present in communities, cities, and nations and, also at a global level. Universities are places that transmits knowledge and create knowledge (Marginson S 2012). Universities play a central role when it comes to the creation as well as exchange of new knowledge to the civil society(Kerr C 2001). Hence, for proper dissemination of ideas and knowledge universities can only function in the framework of democracy.

While discussing of the idea of university, one need to consider that in the liberal tradition of thinking reason has a crucial place and it is important to understand why Habermas is important to address the problems of Education? “Through instruction and study, the university is immediately linked with functions of the economic process,” writes Habermas in his essay "The University in a Democracy- Democratisation of University" (Habermas, 1971). He also takes on the university's three most important roles. To begin, universities must produce graduates who possess able qualities and attitudes such as competence and allegiance, which are essential for objectively implementing professional knowledge and skills. Secondly, the university's purpose is to translate, transmit, and develop the society's cultural practices. Thirdly, universities must be capable of instilling political awareness in students in order to effect systemic changes in society. As a result, university is more than just about producing and delivering knowledge to meet societal needs; rather it is also about producing and transferring knowledge to meet societal wants.

For normative reflection, Habermas tried to merge theological theory and social sciences. According to Habermas, adequate criticism necessitates a constant and thorough collaboration between philosophy and social science (Habermas J 2017). Habermas’s approach to social interpersonal relationships can be seen in terms of Meta ethical theory. Habermas uses justification and interpretative argument to justify any issue in the intellectual, legal, or contextual domain.

1.9 Conceptualising Public Reasoning's Importance in Indian Universities

Interestingly, one of the most problematic perspectives is that universities should maintain their apolitical nature. Protests and campaigns in the learning environment are often used to politicize the institution. The political climate, on the other hand, disrupts intellectual and academic exchange. These practices damage the nation by delaying the transformation of graduates into employable individuals. This is a highly bureaucratic view of university, in which academics are seen as indifferent to democratic values. Universities aim, on the other hand, is to prepare students for eligible job opportunities. This has occasionally resulted in the suspension of student unions at universities. However, decapitating the university system's democratic spirit and culture, destroying public reason-rationality, and thereby disempowering students and teachers by actively excluding them from having academic

exchange have become the leading philosophy, resulting in the harming of the university system at large.

The common perception of universities as merely institutions for producing employable graduates must be challenged. Any liberal university must be linked to society through a critical view of society and the preparation of students to rationalize the change process in an environment that allows for free debate. The university system should foster critical thought for a better society. As a result, the most important body in a university should be the student, who will eventually graduate as a well-informed individual with leadership skills and qualities.

Thus, by looking at the above definitions on the idea of university, the researcher is considering university as a 'public sphere' for the progress of this study. The concept of Public Sphere needs to be explored for a university space based on sufficient deliberations. Public sphere is a form of communication. The public sphere is not a single, uniform space of individuals, but rather a dynamic network of multiple, varying group which is formed by essential contact between people or groups. The term "public sphere"(Habermas J 1962)applies to the public at large as well as a romanticized version of the meaning originating from the premise of "communicative rationality"(Habermas J 1962). An instinctive, unbiased, rational exchange of arguments is posited in the public domain, where only the influence of stronger explanation persists.

The theory of public sphere is adopted from Habermas's notion of 'public sphere' and 'communicative rationality'(Habermas J 1962). The German word "Offentlichkeit" is important here while discussing about the public sphere. This German word has been translated by many translators and scholars as "public" or "public sphere". However, the translation of the word as "public sphere" has been commonly adopted by many scholars. The notion of public sphere originates in the writing and discussions of Jurgen Habermas. His idea of public sphere is space or forum where citizens can voice their concerns. He identifies two public spheres, the literary and the political. The literary form of public sphere identifies with the basic qualities and ethical issues of the human condition. The political public sphere is a space where citizen are confer with "*guaranteed rights of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions-about matters of general interest*"(Habermas, Lennox, and Lennox 1974). Habermas's in his early work 'the Structural

Transformation of the public Sphere' examines social conditions under which arguments of private persons take place and later becomes the basis of some political action. This examination of social conditions is crucial for the democratic theory(Calhoun C 1992). Habermas's inquiry is into normative ideals which focuses upon the bourgeois political life of seventeenth through mid- twentieth century through the realities of history, aims to find something of continuing 'normative importance'(Calhoun C 1992). Kant occupies a central space in 'the Structural Transformation of the public Sphere', as Kant quotes

"If we attend the course of conversation in mixed companies consisting not merely of scholars and subtle reasoners but also of businesspeople or women, we notice that besides storytelling and jesting they have another entertainment, namely arguing"(Kant, 1956).

A public sphere in a democratic ethos is depended upon both quality discourse and the number of individuals participating in it. Habermas's argued that in seventeen and eighteenth century that the requirement of the bourgeois public sphere constituted rational critical argument, he further elaborated that it is the merits of the arguments which mattered and not the identities of individuals who argued and participated. On the other hand, the early bourgeois public sphere was constituted of a narrow composition of mainly educated, propertied men whose discourse was exclusive. The transformation of the public sphere which is described by Habermas results in the continual expansion of the public sphere. This means that the public sphere becomes inclusive of more participants which is the requirement of the democracy at large(Calhoun C 1992).

The public sphere is beyond the nation- state and exists as the interconnected set of institutions, networks and activities which are sustained in independent civil society(Pusser et al. 2012). The forums can be found in coffee houses, salons, clubs, dining establishments, in theatres and in universities. It basically includes all the places where people get together, meet, and talked or debated and public sphere also includes civil organisations that talked and discussed about nation-state, national culture and focussed on changing common behaviours and opinions(Pusser et al. 2012). The existence of public sphere plays a crucial part in the democratic society because sometimes public sphere can be both critical of State as well as supportive of the State's policies and projects. In addition to this, the most important characteristic of public sphere is the public use of reason in rational-critical debate. Habermas's provides four conditions for the existence of public sphere and they are, firstly

the formation of the public opinion. Secondly, all citizens have access to the public sphere, making it more inclusive in nature. Thirdly, in a public sphere conferences take place in an unrestricted fashion and lastly, debates in a public sphere go beyond general rules of governing which is driven by rationality.

Habermas's concept of public sphere has some resonance in the contemporary times (Calhoun C 1992). In the background of the notion of Habermas's public sphere, research universities serve to some degree as a public sphere. It provides an independent civil space for political debates and critical ideas to occur. This interactive process, as Habermas discussed is happening through a communicative system. In the university spaces, this process of interaction is occurring through research, conferences, seminars, etc. University in its role as a public sphere offers an essential site of analysis, critique and knowledge production related to issues of social organisation. Moreover, Habermas's concept of "communicative rationality" works well in the university setting. Universities' inherent characteristic is for the capacity for dialogue and the "productive power of discursive disputes that carry the promissory note of generating surprising arguments" (Bhattacharya D 2019). The idea on which modern public university will survive is the 'liberal autonomous' idea of public sphere. This idea of public sphere will shape the university into the 'community of investigators' (Bhattacharya D 2019). The principle of dialogue plays a very crucial role for the university to continue. The exchange of dialogues will help further in the disseminating the exchange of knowledge to pursue the truth or scientific knowledge.

Lincoln in his article, critiques Habermas conception of public sphere stating that it may promote only particular voice and marginalise others. For instance, in university space it might marginalise the voices of students from different regions. The voices of students from rural areas who might not express and articulate might get lost in a rational public sphere discourse. Discourse might get dominated by the elite intellectuals coming from the powerful social groups (Dahlberg 2005). Albeit this view, Lincoln also argues that public sphere as a conception does accommodate negative and positive form of power in communication. It acts a powerful tool to talk about issues which are considered to be contentious. As a result, Habermas's input to information dissemination and development through public sphere conception is significant. Numerous different voices in university spaces are valued for their dissent, debates, and scholarly exchange.

In this research, using the theoretical framework of Habermas's public sphere, and its adaption to the field of education, the researcher looked at the university of JNU and DU as a landscape of public sphere and communicative rationality. Referring to the conditions provided by Habermas for a public sphere, researcher believes that a University works well as a public sphere as all the conditions are mostly met. Faculty, scholars, and students in a university participates in the debates, conferences, research, and constant dialogues in a democratic manner which leads to the search of new knowledge. They are liberal-autonomous participants of the public sphere who are depended in turn on the existence of a university as an 'autonomous, freely reasoning entity' (Gérard V 1982). University is one of the few places that promote 'critical inquiry, public freedom, and common deliberation,' which also results in a democratic ethos and politics (Giroux 2010). University keeps the democratic ethos alive by educating young minds by providing them with knowledge, passion, critical thinking, and civic capacities which are necessary to address the existing problems in the society on a national as well as global level. However, this has been challenged by the existence of antidemocratic ideologies, rigid disciplinary boundaries that are uncomfortable with academic freedom(Giroux 2010). Academic practices are also in accordance with the rationale of academic freedom, which is founded on the instrumental value, ethical principles, and the culture of a free or non-free society. The three-part discussion of the theoretical framework suggests developing an interview guide, analysing results, and presenting the findings.

1.10 Roadmap

This dissertation is spread over four chapters. The chapter 1 introduces the topic, hypothesis, research questions, theoretical themes guiding the research and the methodology. The next chapter, Chapter 2 examines the question of What is Academic Freedom? It looks at different definitions and theories of academic freedom. This chapter forms the overall context for the analysis of data in the next two chapters. The third chapter looks at the effect of academic freedom on knowledge production and the socio-political context of existence of academic freedom in 21st century in Indian universities. The final chapter brings together the conclusions of the study.

Chapter Two

What does Academic Freedom imply?

2.1 Defining Academic Freedom:

Throughout history, the term or definition of academic freedom has grown. Many medieval Asian, European, American, Latin American, and African universities laid the groundwork for academic freedom. Over time, universities have evolved into self-governing entities capable of organizing their own departments, managing admissions, and developing academic requirements. However, universities or certain members of universities were censored in the 18th and 19th centuries. As European nation-states grew stronger, censorship tensions surfaced. The autonomy of universities has been questioned. Tensions between the state and the university arose as professors were subject to governmental authority and were likely to be allowed to teach only what was acceptable to the state in charge. The threat of what to teach is still present in many countries. However, in the past, many states have advocated for academic freedom.

Academic freedom is a simple concept, but it has been difficult to pinned down. Academic freedom has existed in a variety of forms and meanings, making it difficult to describe. As previously mentioned, academic freedom has meant the professor's freedom to teach in his or her field of learning without governmental intervention, as well as the implicit freedom of scholars to research and learn (Altbach 2001). With the establishment of Humboldt University, a research-oriented university, the term has been further developed and established. The idea originated in nineteenth-century Germany. The notion of "Lehrfreiheit and Lerfreiheit" - the right to teach and learn - was enshrined in the philosophy. These concepts went on to become the guiding principles for many nations. German universities expanded the principle of academic freedom in the nineteenth century, resulting in the formulation of a modern definition of academic freedom. Academic research has become a priority. Professors were granted full autonomy in both the classroom and the laboratory to conduct research and express themselves. These mentioned ideas of academic freedom gave special protection to the professors within the classroom and the parameters of the field of expert knowledge of the professors (Altbach 2001).

Universities have always been a place where people can seek information and reality. Scholars are present in university spaces to pursue truth, as well as to articulate and convey it to students, who are learning to pursue truth for themselves. With the establishment of German universities, this concept became dominant. The free flow of ideas and the exchange of ideas, especially in the age of science, aided in the growth of knowledge as well as the development of individuals. This idea drew a large number of eminent young scholars from around the world, especially from the United States, who flocked to German universities in large numbers. This resulted in a broadening of their country's principle of academic freedom as well.

2.2 Historical Precedents:

However, Professor Friedrich Paulsen of the University of Berlin, on the other hand, in his book *The German Universities and University Study* published in 1902, systematically formulated the idea of academic. Professor Paulsen made the distinction between qualification and disqualification (Paulsen and Friedrich 1906, p. 228-231). He discussed about professors of philosophy, theology, political and social science. He went on to say that a philosophy professor must be completely open, while a theology professor “must assume a positive relationship to religion and the church in general,” and a political science and social science professor in a state institution should do the same with “the people and the state.” (Fuchs 1963). Furthermore, a professor “who can see absolutely no justification in the state and in law, who, as a theoretical anarchist, rejects the necessity of a state and legal order... may try to prove his theory with as many good arguments as he can, but he has no call to teach political science at a state institution...” (Fuchs 1963). Professors of political science, for example, are not loyal to the “principles of social democracy” of the state. Allowing such ideas to be taught would imply that “the authorities treated professorial lectures as harmless and insignificant. ... So long as the state takes the universities seriously, such a form of political science as has been described will be impossible in its institutions of learning” (Paulsen and Friedrich 1906, p. 233-38, 243-54). Professor Paulsen considers “political partisanship” on the part of the faculty member to be a disqualifying factor. Professors were seen as “representatives of science” who should not participate in politics but rather focus on the state and law at German universities, which contributed to the belief that professors were “representatives of science” who should not engage in politics but rather reflect on the state and law. This culminated in the German concept of academic freedom,

which is primarily internal to higher education institutions and does not extend to academic members' external activities(Paulsen and Friedrich 1906).

Nonetheless, at the end of the nineteenth century, the definition of academic freedom was broadened. The prevalent idea of academic freedom in American colleges and universities, as well as in other parts of the world, in the early years resisted the constraints that existed in 19th century Germany. The world rather accepted the another statement which was expressed by Professor Paulsen in his text that “a people”, who establish and maintain a University,

“As such, they cannot have a vested interest in the perpetuation of false beliefs. Its ability to survive is dependent in large part on its ability to do what is required based on accurate knowledge of current circumstances. As a result, the people and the state...cannot have any desire to obstruct an objective quest for facts in the fields of politics and social science, either by forbidding or favoring certain views”(Fuchs 1963).

Following that, a society can only become strong if there is an honest expression of strong disapproval as well as state acceptance in higher education institutions. These expressions may take place in public or in private. Furthermore, a professor's responsibilities to the state and law cannot be reduced, as this would prevent him or her from actively participating in politics. Regardless of whether he is specialized in his academic skills or not, a professor cannot be prevented from checking his views, verifying evidence, or broadening his/her views on world affairs. Faculty staff in any academic field of study, speaking or writing as an individual, must be free from institutional censorship or discipline in research and publishing, as well as in the classroom when addressing his or her topic. Professors were considered valuable social critics, and they were accorded special protections of speech and writing on all topics.

However, while some Americans within and outside the academic professions adhere to the general principles of academic freedom, some Americans within and outside the academic professions took positions that some particular restrictions on freedom should be imposed in times of special urgency. For example, during World War I, many adherents of academic freedom supported restrictions on anti-war professors or those who hampered the war effort. This meant that academic freedom did not essentially broaden to protect expression on broader political or social issues; additionally, it was not regarded as a violation of academic freedom that socialists, communists, or other dissenters were not eligible for academic

appointments. During the 1950s Cold War-era anti-communist hysteria in the United States, academic freedom was challenged by governmental authorities seeking to rid the universities of alleged Communists. State regulations forced several professors to resign from their positions in some cases, such as at public universities in California and New York. Others were investigated and "exposed" as leftist professors, resulting in firings or forced resignations. Some universities defended their faculty members in the name of academic freedom, while others caved to outside pressure and fired professors. While only a few faculty members were fired during this time, academic freedom was destroyed in an atmosphere of repression, and many academics were afraid of external pressures (Altbach 2001).

Further, the present conception of American academic freedom took time to evolve. It has sprung from many full-blown educational policies that arose in colleges and universities, from the struggle over repeated assault for freedom or tenure. These assaults were mostly committed by the institutional governing boards or the administration, mainly administrative officers. The pressure was mainly about religious conformity which has led to the hostility to faculty members, later involving objections to the political and economic views of the faculty members. Due to the dismissals of the academic personnel, American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was formed in 1915 by the group of prominent faculty personnel from the leading institutions in America. This professional organisation of professors from leading institutions had its noteworthy announcement in the 1915 Declaration on Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (Fuchs 1963). This association worked with various other institutions in the country over the issues of dismissals of faculty members at institutions. There has been collaboration with the Association of American Colleges (AAC) to develop various basic principles of academic freedom and tenure. Moreover, taking the idea of academic freedom forward, AAUP also linked the concept to special protection of expression outside the university. Professors were given special protection outside the academic institutions. They were given protection on their academic speeches and writings outside the academic institutions. Furthermore, John Dewey's influence is very important in this Declaration on Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. He was a member of the committee that established the AAUP and also promoted the idea that professors have a responsibility and a public commitment while maintaining their freedom (Altbach 2007). Dewey argued against the libertarian viewpoint, describing it as an

"infantile state of social knowledge" in which a person cannot be emancipated by being left alone. Dewey and Akeel Bilgrami observe that those seeking freedom or liberty from external impediment can often conceal complacency of thought on the part of those seeking them.³

Dewey also rejects the notion of responsibility for those who seek liberty, instead blaming outside forces for impeding their free enterprise. Dewey argues on the basis of 'moral integrity' rather than responsibility; he essentially believed that there is no reciprocal obligation to the freedom created by the removal of restrictions on teaching and research. For Dewey moral integrity is implied as: 'honesty, impartiality and generous breadth of intent in search and communication'(Dewey J 1927). Dewey's proposed argument is critical for the concept of public intellectual because if research is done in the interest of public interests, academic freedom is extended to the public sphere, where it remains a protected right.

Consequently, because of the 1918 university progressive movement, a much more general concept of academic freedom came to be extended to all Latin American universities. This term was used to the point that government authorities were not allowed to access university campuses without the approval of the educational institutions (Altbach 2001).As a result, the concept of "autonomous" Latin American university emerged on the academic space platform at this time. This became a political and public development within the realm of academic freedom. As a result, various foundations of academic freedom, specifically US notions of academic freedom, emerged: a philosophy of intellectual freedom originating in ancient Greece; the concept of autonomy for communities of scholars originating in European universities; and the 'freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the federal constitution as elaborated by the courts'(Fuchs 1963).

Moving on to the definition of academic freedom, the confusion over a proper definition persists in modern times. Within the academic community, the broader "New Concept" concept has gained general acceptance. Academic freedom has been defined differently in various countries. Some countries have chosen the narrow Humboldtian definition of academic freedom, whereas in other parts of the world, the broad definition of the new world concept predominates both outside and within the academic space. In today's world, there is no universally accepted definition of academic freedom. Different countries have adopted various definitions of academic freedom.

³ For a more recent critique of this condition, consult Jon Elster (2015) 'Obscurantism and Academic Freedom', in Bilgrami and Cole (eds.) *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom*, Chichester: Columbia University Press.

However, when we examine the concept of academic freedom, we often come across the concerns of obligations related to special rights and freedom of academic institutions and academic faculty. There have been cases where few have argued that universities should not take distinct or open political stands, as institutions in political movements or debate. It is claimed that institutions have responsibility to remain out of direct political conflicts and stay neutral in order to provide a best objective analysis. We can such situation to be pertinent in the developing countries. For instances, in late 60s and 80s, we saw professors and students actively being part of leftist movements in Latin America. They participated in the struggles against military dictatorship. This has often resulted into discontents by regime on the university. Even in India, historically speaking during 60s and 70s, the three major universities that are Banaras Hind University, Aligarh Muslim University and Allahabad University have been the major centres of student unrest and agitation (Nayar M 2020). There have been popular student movement in the time of emergency period in India as well, one such movement began with the student protesting against hostel fee hike in Gujarat colleges and universities and which turned into a move by Jayprakash Narayan call for total revolution that is, '*sampoornakranti*'. In such countries students and professors have been put behind bars. Such instances have led to the distinction between the concept institutional neutrality and right of the academic professors or students to speak out or write on political and social issues publicly (Ashby E 1974). In addition to this, there have been many unresolved debates in the realm of academic freedom as to whether institution should remain neutral or what should be an appropriate role of the university in social and political sphere?

2.3 Academic Freedom and University:

Universities are crucial as they are embedded in the society. They have been spaces of knowledge creation and exchange. University is an institution of higher learning which is believed to be at par with excellence. A university should supposed to be excellent in three things namely, teaching, learning, discovery, and dialogue(Prakash V 2011). When we think about modern universities, the foundation of these universities must be academic freedom. Academic freedom is critical in enabling an individual in the university for him/her to become an informed individual. As argued by Joan Wallach Scott, academic freedom is clearly identified with the universities(Ignatieff M and Roch S 2018, p. 11). It is applied to institutions of scholarly research and teaching; and those who are associated with it. It is concerned with the university's roles in research and teaching. Furthermore, it applies to the university's external relations with the state(Ignatieff M and Roch S 2018, p. 11).

Academic freedom is both “right and an obligation”, as observed by Butler(Butler 2017). Butler further argues that academic freedom implies a right for inquiry and expression in an institution but these institutions which provide environment for academic inquiry and expressions need to be preserved by the those who are exercising this academic freedom as well. Hence, there is an obligation to preserve the institution as a space where freedom of exchange, freedom of inquiry, critical thinking and freedom of expression can and does take place without any intervention, infringements, and censorship.

When it comes to funding the institutions, academic freedom works differently. For academic institutions which are regulated or funded by the state, then academic freedom has a specific meaning attached to it and works differently. The state's funding is crucial for the promotion and development of higher education. It is important for academic institutions' development which are providing higher education. The state's funding is a commitment towards higher education and those institutions which facilitate academic freedom for research and discovery of knowledge. The State's funding provides a possibility of research in the institution into new directions. Therefore, state must realise that funding and regulation should work only towards the preservation of such institutions of higher learning and research. Academic freedom thus hold a special meaning when it comes new research, critical thought, any inquiry for future research without any control. There are few international resolutions which about state's role and obligation towards preserving institutions of higher learning which works on the notion of academic freedom. These ideas exists because state have a

responsibility towards their public to provide higher education. For instance, in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, it is mentioned that all states have a certain obligation to provide public with higher education (Presidents A F 2005).

The State is obligated to provide higher education to the public because higher education is considered as public good. Higher education which is based upon the notion and principles of academic freedom should be provided by the state as it will result in an informed society, informed public. It is for the betterment and development of the society that higher education based on the principles of academic freedom should be provided. Because of this, a public will get informed, public will be able to understand and analyse or evaluate the issues existing for common concerns and also, form judgements on the basis informed understanding of the world. An informed public will result in a transformation of society for the betterment and for this freedom is required, which is the part of academic freedom. And the state and various other administrative and institutional powers are obliged to preserve, protect and support that freedom.

Further, when we discuss about academic freedom which is the ground for critical thought and exchange in the university, about this, UNESCO conference also mentioned about the two principles governing university life (Presidents A F 2005). The two principles which were mentioned in the UNESCO conference were: *'tolerance of divergent opinion'* and *'freedom from political interference'* (Butler 2017). As discussed in earlier sections, university is a place where exchange of diverge opinion and ideas occur which leads to pursuit of knowledge. In addition to this and above principles as well university and as well the state must tolerate these diverge opinions. Further, stakeholders of university such as faculty, students and administration must be free from any political infringement and interference in the university space. University should be free from political interference as they conduct research, designate research topics, develop curricula and conduct pedagogy. If administration do comply with the state interference, they administration is also considered as the instrument of the state which is hindering the academic freedom in the university. This is resulting in the undermining of the academic freedom as well as universities' obligation towards preserving that freedom of thought and expression. These international principles are enunciated as an injunction which clears that why academic freedom is central to the university.

Lastly, as universities are important part of the social fabric, as they are ‘social institutions’ which are central to the social, political, and cultural life of the public around the world. On that account as social institutions, they are under obligation ‘to promote, through teaching and research, the principles of freedom on an international level’(Butler 2017). Therefore, the last UNESCO principle implies that universities ought to promote research and teaching which gives understanding of the principles of freedom for a better understanding of the democratic values in the society. This further means that university must support, promote and articulate the democratic principles within the society at national as well as international level both. When universities diverge from the state restrictions and suppress and resist the restrictions from the outside, they are also supported by other universities in the world in solidarity. However, the consequence of this view has been seen lately in contemporary times. There are many recent examples, for instance in India, many of the talks, conferences are targeted by protests and bans in the name of national security. This kind of cancellation and disruption has affected academic exchange. For instance, in University of Delhi, Ramjas College, a seminar was cancelled in February 2017 by the one of the student wings of national party in the country, where females were testified to violence and threat(Wire T 2017). Such attacks have resulted in clamping down the academic freedom and administration of the university doesn’t preserve academic freedom in the name of neutrality(Sundar N 2018)

2.4 Academic freedom and Institutional Autonomy:

The right of a higher education institution to set its own goals and degree requirements is known as institutional autonomy. It gives the university the authority to choose faculty and students, as well as to plan curriculum material (Standler R B 2000).The institutional autonomy proposes the following principles:

1. Freedom to select students and staff
2. Freedom to design and set curriculum
3. Freedom to allocate funds among different categories of expenditure(Kelly 1966)

Institutional autonomy and academic freedom, according to (Kelly 1966), are two distinct concepts. Academic independence is concerned with faculty members and scholars, while institutional autonomy is concerned with the university. University autonomy is about the right of the university to determine its organisational and administrative structures, manage its budget according to its priority, hiring its students and other staff members, deciding its

curriculum and form of its pedagogy and research(Ignatieff M and Roch S 2018). Furthermore, other scholars have also supported this view and pointed out that academic freedom is to individuals and institutional autonomy is to institutions and their employers (Tight, 1988).In addition to this, UNESCO has defined institutional autonomy as,“*a degree of self-governance, necessary for effective decision making by institutes of higher education regarding their academic work standards, management, and related activities*”(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 1). Despite the fact that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are inextricably related, institutional autonomy is an essential but not necessary precondition for academic freedom(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 2). It also means that University autonomy may not necessarily always guarantee academic freedom. This happens because university autonomy depends on faculty getting involved with the governance of the institution, university leadership and so on. Academic autonomy being a general concept, is not limited to only designing academic curriculum, it goes beyond to self-governance to institutional units, faculty members, academic staff ideally resulting in self-governance at all levels in the institution. At the department level, autonomy would be considered as freedom to design and execute the curriculum, freedom to design its own pedagogical practices, freedom to do design and conduct its own academic research. Autonomy to students means to have freedom to develop skills, flexibility of classes, flexibility with deciding the courses and so on. Whereas academic freedom generally means the right of academic members, staff to decide what to teach, what and how to determine research questions, the research methods, and to publish the results of that research. However, will the development of modern universities and the recent onset of market competition is regarded as the regulation by government which is hampering academic freedom in many universities in various countries.

Further it has also been observed that granting autonomy to the universities is not a straight process, nor it is just a simply set of policies which will be resulting in successful higher learning(Dahiya B S 2001).The issue with granting autonomy is not simply about what kind of freedom higher education institutions would receive from the government, but rather about what kind of freedom the state is willing to grant(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 2). In this process of granting autonomy to the institutions of higher learning, many provisions are involved which must be adopted by the government. They are for instance, legal reforms, personal regulations and restructuring of public funding mechanisms(ADB 2012).Moreover, it is crucial to understand that if a university had the autonomy without any market pressure or government regulations and also, government’s full support from public funding then the

knowledge production of a university have been determined by the engagement of faculty in their academic engagements and the way academic freedom is being exercised to reach these goals.

Academic freedom is highly associated with university autonomy. As mentioned before, it cannot be simply dissociated with the university autonomy. There are quite few challenges to pursue academic freedom in the university which is a place of multi layers governance systems. Academic freedom sometimes is challenged by the university governance structure. We need to understand that university as an institution of higher learning is complex organisation with various and multiple level of functioning of governance structures. These structures have various channels of interaction within and outside environment. Here, the power of the faculty and the degree of involvement of the faculty in these structures of university governance have remained ambiguous and vague(Chattopadhyay S 2020). There are various conventions and report declarations which have observed and stated that it is important to enhance institutional autonomy so that universities can reinvent themselves and produce new knowledge based upon social context and challenges in the society. Lastly, institutional autonomy can be seen at various levels and areas, for instance academics, recruitment, financial and organisational levels where we can also observe the involvement of public authorities or regulatory bodies as well(Nokkala T et al. 2011). We can also observe through various conventions and reports that there is limited institutional autonomy in Asian Countries. Nonetheless, there has been a push towards institutional autonomy across the board which will result in universities re-inventing themselves and also, innovation in the knowledge production.

2.5 University Autonomy in India:

This section will be not talking about autonomy in India in detail. The section will briefly discuss about the conception of autonomy existing in Indian universities.

Institutional autonomy is not static. The level autonomy varies differently according to the different countries. In India, the concept of autonomy has been a long debated one. It has debated for almost past four decades. In India, university autonomy is neither a ‘legal concept’ nor a ‘constitutional concept’. Different committees and commissions set up by Government of India have looked at autonomy from time to time. The Gajendragadkar Committee Report (1971) states that, “It is an ethical concept and an academic concept. This concept does not question how in a democratic society like our legislatures are ultimately

sovereign and, have a right to discuss and determine the question of policy relating to education, including higher education. The concept of university autonomy, however, means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-academic”(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 4).

Indian Universities are places of diversity, and by looking at this, there is a need to relook at the concept of autonomy, which incorporates the diversity of the universities. Faculty and institutional autonomy are both included in the Draft National Education Policy (DNEP) (Mittal et al. 2020, p. 5). DNEP (MHRD 2019)also envisions institutional and administrative autonomy, which will allow organizations to create and plan creative curricula, launch and operate new and novel programs, and establish career management systems. Moreover, for designing and developing an innovative as well imaginative curriculum and pedagogy, DNEP looks at institutional autonomy as a prerequisite(MHRD 2019).

Moreover, one need to re-examine the existing systems of governance and regulation in the universities. The government has provided Indian universities unequal funding allocations. Central universities receive a limited amount of funding, while state universities are underfunded(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 5). Furthermore, current structures of governance and control in universities must be re-examined. The system of control and command does not promote accountability and the institutions are constantly under governmental pressures. Therefore, this results in decisions which are made based on non-academic considerations. For instance, we can observe with the appointment of vice-chancellor. The intervention begins with at the highest-level appointment in the university. Further, University courts and Academic Councils lacks positive attitude and the dynamic quality because they are generally large in nature. Moreover, there should be complete transparency in the working of the governing bodies of the university(Kumar Joshi 2011). In addition to this, for ensuring better administrative efficiency and accountability University acts in different should be reviewed regularly.

We have observed that higher education in India is highly centralised and that institutions have been allocated limited autonomy. The granting of institutional autonomy here does not matter whether the institution is private or public. In the sense of Indian universities, the current affiliation structure is in charge of controlling admissions, developing curricula, and administering examinations for educational institutions. This is especially true with college systems in India. The regulation happens under the general guidelines of University Grants

Commission (UGC). Ved Prakash argues that for an institution to have both autonomy and accountability, governance structures should be making decisions with consensus. He also further elaborates about institutional autonomy in India under three sections and those are: Academic autonomy, Administrative Autonomy and Financial Autonomy(Prakash V 2011).

The concept of institutional autonomy has been recapitulated by many committees and recommendations in India. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan(MHRD 2013) is a recent committee that has proposed various guidelines and legislations for state universities to act as an autonomous body(Mittal et al. 2020, p. 10). It is important to recognize the need to create an enabling environment for higher education institutions so that they excel and innovate with global standards and to do this, autonomy plays a crucial role. It is important to promote autonomy for institutions to excel. In an overall context, academia and leaders need to understand the importance of autonomy for the institution which has to be taken by universities where faculty and students both can excel and produce knowledge.

2.5 Academic Freedom for Faculty and Scholars: Perspectives from the Interview Conducted

The meaning of academic freedom different based upon the context and is perceived differently by different groups of people in the university such as faculty members and scholars of academic community. Academic freedom for faculty members is defined as rights in educational and academic contexts, which includes rights in teaching and carrying out research both within and outside the classroom. Faculty must have the freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, conduct research and publish research. The findings from the interview conducted for this study show the understanding and perception of faculty members on academic freedom in relation to teaching, learning, and conducting research in the university. The meanings or concepts proposed by the faculty on academic freedom are similar to those presented by other scholars such as (DeGeorge R 2003) and (Berdahl 1990).

Whereas views of scholars on academic freedom are considered to be more similar with scholars as Shils (Shils E 1997) and De George (DeGeorge R 2003). The findings of the interview taken indicate that for scholars, academic freedom is freedom to learn, exchange ideas, conduct research and express their views regarding the subject within and outside classroom without any internal or external inference or regulation.

The interviews have mostly stated that academic freedom was the right of both faculty members and scholars engage in academic exchange. The findings from the interviews of

both faculty members and scholars have indicated that there is not much different between the definition or the understanding of academic freedom. It has been observed from the interviews that faculty want freedom to teach, publish research, design curriculum; whereas scholars focused on freedom to research, dissent, express their views and exchange of ideas in the university.

Based on the findings of the interviews, it has been determined that academic freedom is not specified in university policy papers and faculty have vague idea as to whether any policy on academic freedom exists officially or not in the university. It suggests that the principle of academic freedom is not adequately established in the institution's policy. The research indicates that there is ambiguity around the concept of academic freedom whether is a legal right or a constitutional principle. Most of the faculty members while conducting interview have stated that academic freedom is the part of freedom of expression and thought, whereas few of students defined it a legal right. However, the observation was that academic freedom is highly linked with freedom of thought and expression and that is why exchange of ideas and the freedom of dissent comes into play in the university spaces. Hence, the idea of university as a public sphere becomes important where faculty as well as scholars both can enjoy the freedom of dissent, freedom to exchange ideas, freedom take part in the academic activities and proceedings. The faculty members have stated that it's an absolute right. Moreover, it's a subset of freedom of expression and thought. However, they further have stated the importance of institutional autonomy with academic freedom. The results shown states that academic freedom should be given by university administration and as well the state should also provide academic freedom to the universities.

2.6 Perspective of Faculty Members and Students on Academic Freedom:

The question raised to faculty members was, "What do you understand by Academic Freedom?" in order to get a sense of their general views on the topic. They shared a variety of perspectives on academic freedom based on their personal experiences. One of the faculty members responded to the first question by saying:

Academic freedom is the freedom of individuals to express freely and freedom related to academic work without any fear. This is the right of academics who wants to get involved into academic exchange and activities without interference. (Faculty member, JNU/Interview)

This view indicated that academic freedom meant freedom of expression of an individual and freedom of faculty members to conduct academic activities without constraint. The interviewee afterwards also mentioned about what academic freedom meant for scholars, it concerned with freedom of scholars to learn. This point of view was also further opined by another faculty member from University of Delhi, Political Science department that, *'I think academic freedom means for the scholars to have freedom to learn and conduct research in a free environment.'* (Faculty member, DU/interview) In addition to this, another faculty added from the personal experience that, *'academic freedom is crucial for the higher education. It is the freedom of faculty members to teach in their own method, to do research and to evaluate examinations without any regulation and the freedom of students to learn and express views without any external pressure.'* (Faculty member DU/interview)

Academic freedom, according to the interviews with faculty members, is defined as the freedom of faculty members to instruct, conduct study, and publish research without external or internal intervention, as well as the freedom of scholars to conduct research, and express their opinions without being controlled or subjected to external or internal hindrances.

The interviewees stated that academic freedom belongs to both students and faculty when asked the second question. In this regard, one of Jawaharlal Nehru University's faculty members said,

Academic freedom of faculty member means the right to express ideas and participate in academic activities on campus and to take research projects without any pressure. On the other hand, academic freedom of students means the freedom to do research, study and debate without any external interference. (Faculty member, JNU/interview)

Further while interviewing it was observed that there is not much difference between the perspective of academic freedom from both the faculty and scholars point of view. The difference basically comes related to the academic activities in the universities. About this, one of the professors added that:

Academic freedom belongs to both faculty and students for teachers it is about designing curriculum of their own, teaching class without any fear and for students it is about able to do research study, able to engage in academic exchange. (Faculty member DU/interview)

From the interviews taken, it has been observed that there is no official document on academic freedom in the university. This means that there is a lack of priority for academic

freedom in the university. On other hand, interviewees have also stated that academic freedom depends upon the autonomy of the university, *'so far in my knowledge, academic freedom is the right of individual which is related to the autonomy of the university. Autonomy helps in the areas of freedom for faculty and students'*(Faculty Member DU/interview)

On the basis of the interviews take, overall it has been observed that for faculty members academic freedom is basically freedom to be able to research, teach and publish without any interference. Faculty members also put emphasis on freedom to design curriculum, freedom to evaluate and freedom to take up any research projects without any internal or external pressures. It also entails access and available of required resources to be able to do the same. Academic Freedom should come with absence of undue scrutiny and interference.

2.6 Students/Scholars Perception:

Students were also interviewed in order to gain a better understanding of their views on academic freedom. They discussed academic freedom in a variety of ways. One scholar from JNU's political studies department responded to the first question by saying, *"Freedom to express one's academic views in classrooms, conferences, and institutions."* This view indicated that academic freedom of scholars freedom to express views within the institutions. Another student from DU, political science department pointed out that, *'the academic freedom means a space where I can produce and add to the existing knowledge without any political and social pressure. It is an environment free from any restriction an exchange of knowledge.'* In addition to this, another scholar from the political science of DU expressed, *'academic freedom is the freedom to put across viewpoints, freedom to study and research the topic of my choice.'* The interviews with the scholars have led the researcher to observe that academic freedom is the freedom of scholars to study, to choose research area freely and most importantly to engage in academic exchange and explore the intellectual inquires without interference by university and government.

In answer to the second issue, students stated that academic freedom means that faculty members are free to teach according to their own teaching methods. Scholarly freedom, on the other hand, is more concerned with the freedom to research, freedom to choose topics freely and dissent and debate. In terms of their positions and duties, the distinction between academic freedom of faculty members and academic freedom of students was discussed. In this regard, one student expressed that, *'Faculty members should have freedom to design*

curriculum and teach in their own ways whereas scholars should have freedom to study and learn in the classrooms.'

Overall, the interview findings show that academic freedom refers to professors' and scholars' ability to participate in a variety of academic activities. It entails the ability to teach, conduct research, and express their views without being hampered by internal or external constraint. This is critical for universities' continued growth in terms of knowledge creation.

Chapter Three

Academic Freedom and its Effect on Research

3.1 Introduction and Relevance:

The universities are crucial for knowledge society. The role of research in universities in India and in the world is important as aim of research is knowledge creation. This knowledge creation is crucial for the educational process. Hence, research and higher education become inseparable for the basic purpose of knowledge creation. University is a place of free and critical thinking that fosters knowledge creation. In the Humboldtian tradition, the modern university is a place for free inquiry and critical thinking. However, it faces major challenges to maintain this role. There are different school of thoughts which dictates current needs of the society. With this regard, the utilitarianism school of thought states that universities should deliver graduates who are well versed in knowledge and skills which are relevant to the current needs of the society.

Critical thinking and free inquiry play as a foundation for any university to flourish and also, it is beneficial for a larger development of the society. There is a general understanding of critical thinking which is often defined as, an attitude to scrutinize ideas and assumptions through reasoned arguments (McCrae 2011). However, definitions of critical thinking vary, few thinkers state that critical thinking is something which not only beneficial to higher education but also have an overarching aim (Paul R W, Willson J, and Binker AJA 2012). Further, it has also been argued by many thinkers that critical thinking is beneficial for the survival of rational and democratic society (Lipman M 1991). Similarly, there have been arguments made for academic freedom as well which is crucial for the democratic society and have a larger aim which is for the betterment of the democratic civil society. However, such intellectual independence faces threats in many forms. Threats can be multiple sources; for instances it can due to ideological bias, privatisation, bureaucratic indifference and many more.

Critical intellectuals have faced political oppression. However, their situation has reached a crisis point in recent years. Academia have become the victim of repression as there have been reports by many NGOs and other projects working mostly on academic freedom have provided information on the repression on academic intellectuals in their documents [for instance, (Attack G C 2013; Scholars at Risk 2016, 2017)]. Scholars have been attacked, either

they get displaced or have left their homes as refugees. The war alone in Syria has displaced at least 2,000 scholars(Labi A 2014). Scholars or Researchers are often put under attack because of the new knowledge which they produce, which often threatens the existing system or the existing ideologies. Moreover, the pursuit of knowledge or the quest of knowledge is also taken as a threat by the government or the established system which is embarking on an increasingly authoritarian path(van Ginkel 2002; Newman J and Turner F M 1996; Rochford F 2003).

Higher education has an important role in challenging societal prejudices. Critical thinking, which is the foundation in social sciences research. In essence imply a challenge to the orthodox and hegemonic socio-political outlook. The relationship of universities to authoritarian regime is characterised by subservience and resistance during the last century(Connelly J and Grüttner M 2005). There have been times where universities have provided a safe haven to scholars and intellectuals from the reach of the state, by it is very nature being the being the beacons of cultural and political activism(Plesu 1995). However, it has also been observed that scholars and intellectuals are also particularly impacted by the socio-political repression and orthodox and restrictive policies, as universities became the cradle for the regime ideology and a place where its elites can be trained(Mccrae 2011). This, however, is recognised as the curtailment of the academic freedom(Karran T 2009). As a matter of fact, Connelly has described that critical learning and research at the university has always been a challenge to authoritarian regimes and policies due to their 'historic incompatibility'(Mccrae 2011), where he moves further describing that : 'What seems to make the juxtaposition of dictatorship and university interesting is academic freedom: dictatorships destroy it, universities need it'(Connelly J and Grüttner M 2005, p.2).

Academic freedom cannot be just merely envisaged as subset of freedom of speech and expression. Academic freedom goes beyond the subtext of freedom of speech as it covers the importance of the profession itself and also, the inherent vulnerability of academia as it is largely a state funded and heavily regulated sector(Turner, 1988)(Butler 2017). We have been observing that all over world and in the university spaces, critical inquiry and critical scholarship have been shrinking. This is the result of 'authoritarian regression'(Grimm J and Saliba I 2017) in most part of the worlds which is resulting in repressive measures and policies. Academic institutions are vulnerable and powerless as they are dependent on the funding or some other kind official funding and this have often led to potential gains by the authoritarian elites by restricting and tightening the academic controls and restricting the free

flow of knowledge or information, which argued by Marginson have outweighed the cost of repressive measures(Grimm J and Saliba I 2017; Marginson 1997; Selencia E 2014). Considering that universities or academic institutes are largely depended upon the state funds or official funds, then scholars are also considered to be as public employees. This, however, makes exposed to the restrictions taken by the authorities in charge. Argued by (Grimm J and Saliba I 2017), scholars are public employee and even if they are researching in any public or private universities as a researcher and is receiving a public funding or fellowship, then that ultimately puts them to the mercy of the ruling governments, at least institutionally if not individually(Grimm J and Saliba I 2017). This is often result in worse situation when accreditation services come into play. Even private universities depend upon official accreditation. Most often, these official accreditation bodies are centrally controlled and regulated. In the national context, national accreditation agencies such as NAAC, NBA, BA, DEC exist for continuous assessment and accreditation process in the universities and colleges(Nandi E and Chattopadhyay S 2013; Stella A 2015). Universities becomes an open space for the government to control the academic research in the academics.

There are many and various examples supporting this trend of attacking academic freedom in the universities. The organisation like SAR has documented 333 attacks on students and faculty of higher educational institutes in 65 countries between 2011 and 2015. Academic freedom attacks on academics and faculty at higher education institutions have increased, with 257 attacks in 35 countries in 2016-2017(Sundar N 2018). It's a horizon of attacks on hampering the academic freedom of scholars and faculty of the university. These attacks come under the domain of violence, disappearances of scholars or faculties, killings, loss of positions, travel restrictions, imprisonments and much more. These attacks are either by state or non-state actors, where authorities of universities and state also sometimes fail to provide required protection against these attacks(Scholars at Risk 2017).

One such example is of Hungarian Higher Education Act-'Lex CEU.' Despite of the public protests from in Budapest, this law was passed by the government on April 4, 2017 to shutdown Central European University (CEU). This move by the government triggered a wave of protests by the academics and politicians worldwide. It was widely perceived as an infringement on academic freedom. However, with infringements on academic freedom, this move was also considered hampering the basic principles of liberal democracy(Pettai E C and Kopecek M 2017).

Meanwhile, in Turkey there have been cases of dismissal of scholars, restriction on academics to travel abroad, students getting criminally charged, etc. According to the SAR's report, it documented that around 7,023 academic have lost their profession and have restrictions on travelling abroad; around 1,404 staff members, 407 faculty and students have been criminally charged; 294 graduate scholars have been debarred from the Turkish institutions(Index I 2017).Around 60,000 students and faculty members have been affected and been targets of prosecution due to failed the military coup on July 15, 2016. Thousands of scholars at higher education institutes have been sacked due to alleged ties to the Gülen movement and many others have been investigated on allegations of terrorism(SCF 2020)(Watch H R 2018).

In India, we can see threat to academic freedom creeping in as well. There has been assault on the freedom of scholars and faculty members and different nature of attacks on the critical thought manifested in higher educational institutes. The organisations like SAR in their recent reports have documented many incidents as threat to scholars, students and faculty members in the name nationalism or national security. The spaces for ideas and dissent have been curtailed in the name of the growing rhetoric of national security. This trend is diminishing the space for academic inquiry and is an obstruction to the development of a nation higher education that benefits the members of Indian society, as stated by the report(Staff T W 2020). The report stated that with regard to violent attacks on students, it had documented 124 attacks in 42 countries. In India, on January 5,2020 it noted “a political motivated attack” on the scholars and faculty members of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi(Staff T W 2020). The report also mentioned about the arrests of many professors and scholars. Professors Hany Babu from University of Delhi, Osmania university professor Chitakindi Kaseem, Anand Teltumbde of Goa institute of management and many more have been arrested in the name of nation security, under the act of UAPA and allegiance with Bhima Koregaon Violence 2018(Dasgupta S 2020). In August 2019, six students at the University of Hyderabad were detained briefly by police for organizing a screening of the 1992 documentary *In the Name of God*, which was opposed by supporters of right-wing by regarding it as anti-Hindu. Another incident when on March 13, 2019 Central University of Kerala came up with a circular of predefined list of themes for Ph.D candidates and scholars to choose for their research work. The arguments given by the vice-chancellor of the university was that that lot of research in social sciences and humanities that are carried out are academically unfruitful and also that it is a necessary step to limit irrelevant research; and

choose topics or themes that are in line with national interests(Leam T N 2019). Another incident was reported in the Indian Express on December 20, 2009 that "a Chinese student who applied to do his Ph.D in a university in Delhi on caste and class in Malgudi, R K Narayan's fictionalised village, was turned down on the ground that there is no caste system in India ever since reservations were introduced"(Sundar N 2010). Such decisions taken up by the authorities of universities denies the freedom to research and discourage the possibilities of exploration in field of research. In addition, many scholars and students have suffered professional or academic retaliation for critical expression.

One of the other threats which scholars face is at their field-research sites. Such challenge faced by scholars have often hampered their research study and the outcome of it. Nandini Sundar and Ujjwal Kumar Singh have based upon their experiences, stated that academics strive for objectivity and independence in their research work at every step. These two professors from University of Delhi were accompanied by police officials in the name of "security" in Chhattisgarh area and the presence of police at the field-research site resulted in preventing them from talking to people of that area freely. The interference by the officials of the state on the field-research just depicts the restrictions of the free movement of the researcher and a covert way of hampering the research study.

These above instances describe the relationship between attacks on the independence of research and the state of basic democratic values(Corbett and Gordon 2017). This is an 'intellectual massacre'(Pamuk H and Toksabay E 2017)which have put the independent and free research, scholars, and faculty members of institutes of higher education in jeopardy(Grimm J and Saliba I 2017). In addition to this, scholars shifting focus to less contentious topics and practicing self-censorship due to the policies arising and given institutional logic, this evidently limits the freedom of research. These all are the examples of evident cases of academic freedom being restricted. We can also draw from above evidence that modes and targets of repression also differs. It can be in the form of legal, physical, and institutional interventions which affects individual researchers or faculty members in varied ways.

3.2 Brief landscape of Indian Universities and Commissions on Higher Education:

The number of higher educational institutes in India have grown since 1947. At present, according to the AISHE-2019(MHRD 2019),the higher education sector in India consists of 3.74 crore students across 993 universities, 39,931 colleges, and 10,725 stand-alone institutions(MHRD 2019). Of the 37.4 million estimated total enrolment in higher education, about 79.8% of the students are enrolled in Undergraduate level programme. 1,69,170 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.5% of the total student enrolment(MHRD 2019). Around 35.9% students are enrolled in Arts/Social Sciences/Humanities courses at the undergraduate level which is the highest-level number. At Ph. D level, however, maximum number of students are enrolled in Science followed by Engineering and technology. In addition to this, maximum enrolment in social sciences is observed at post graduate level as well, as observed by the AISHE-2019 report(MHRD 2019). About 79.8% of the students are enrolled in Undergraduate level programme. 1,69,170 students are enrolled in Ph.D. that is less than 0.5% of the total student enrolment. There are total of 46 Central universities operating in the country at present. There are 3,880 students enrolled in Integrated Ph.D. in addition to 1,69,170 students enrolled at Ph.D. Level. Total number of 16698 students are enrolled for Ph. D. Economics has the highest number, which is 2733 student enrolled which is followed by History which 2340 enrolled students. Political science and Sociology have 1720 and 1593 students enrolled in Ph. D, respectively.

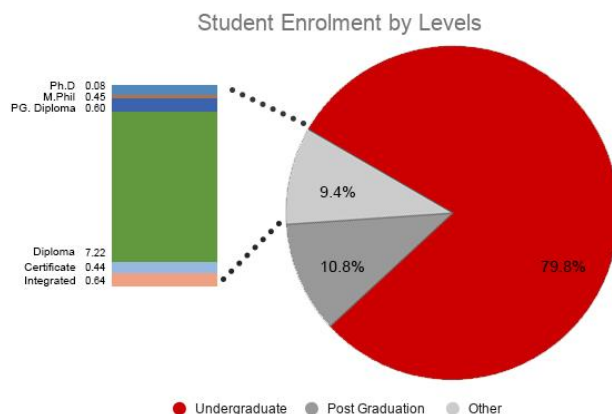


Figure 1 Student Enrolment by Levels (MHRD, 2018-2019).

Moving further, we can recall that India has had a long tradition of academic dissent and debate since the time of Nalanda University, which is basically 5th ce(Sen A and Harriss J

2005)(Vajpeyi, 2017). In the colonial time, when the Indian universities origination, the question of academic freedom was then related to the more of individual's position on political freedom(Sundar N 2018). However, in the post-colonial time, the idea has taken a shift and the idea of university as spaces of critical thinking, critical knowledge, dissent and academic freedom have become subservient to the idea that educational institutes, especially institutes of higher education will become the sites of nation-building. One can see when institutes like Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Managements (IIMs) were set up as the “institutes of national importance.”

However, the earlier reports and commissions on higher education have thought a bit differently on the idea of academic freedom. Reports and commissions such as S-Radhakrishnan Commission report (1948–49), the Kothari Education Commission report (1964–66), and the Yashpal Committee report of 2009(Kothari D S et al. 1967; MoE 1962; Yashpal 2009) have envisioned Indian universities to be spaces of academic freedom and the notion of equality. The Radhakrishnan report has various references to the university autonomy, emphasis on democracy within the university space and also engagement of the university with the outside activities and environment for the development of the society(Sundar N 2018). The report quoted:

“Higher education is unquestionably a state responsibility, but state assistance should not be confused with state influence of academic policies and activities... Teachers must have the same freedom to speak out on contentious topics as any other resident in a free country in order to maintain their professional integrity. The development of this "morality of the mind" requires a free environment”(MoE 1962, p.42).

“Students cannot learn these if the institutions are run on authoritarian lines. We cannot teach the lessons of freedom by the methods of servitude. Students should be encouraged to participate in the social and cultural activities of the areas in which the colleges are situated so that they may become alive to the needs of the society in which they live”(MoE 1962, p.46)

The Radhakrishnan Report came around the time of independence and that might be the reason that values like freedom, autonomy of university, academic independence, and ideas of pedagogic freedom were given importance and were mentioned in the report. In addition to this, the Kothari Commission which came around the year 1966 (Kothari D S et al.

1967) focused clearly on dissent, critical thinking, and universities to be independent in the modern world. The report stated that universities are the spaces of embodiment of critical thought which must engage courageously towards the pursuit of truth, must be objective, and must critically assess the society (Kothari D S et al. 1967, p. 275-276). The universities are undergoing rapid changing in the recent times. Hence, their functions and scope have also rapidly evolved. The report quoted on the functions of the university in the modern world:

“to seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries” (Kothari D S et al. 1967, p. 274).

It further mentioned that faculty should be independent and should preach what they teach and resist in becoming the “organisation man” to the power of the state authorities and university authorities. The Kothari Commission also focused on imparting the Indian Heritage, and universities to be independent. The report quoted: (Kothari D S et al. 1967, p. 280).

“At present, the “centre of gravity” of Indian academic life is largely outside India. That is to say, our scholars and scientists working in fields which are internationally cultivated still tend to look outside India for judgment of their work, for intellectual models of the problems which they study, for the books they read, and for their forum of appreciation and approval” (Kothari D S et al. 1967, p. 280).

The desire was to promote Indian universities, and independence of universities but keeping the values of dissent and critical thinking intact. From this point of view, the universities must encourage dissent, individuality, critical thought, within a climate of tolerance (Kothari D S et al. 1967, p. 276). A university should not respond passively to community demands and endanger its intellectual integrity. The university should balance itself by having faith in the power of mind and help others to share this faith. Moreover, the Yashpal Committee (Yashpal 2009) on higher education focused upon dissent taking place peacefully among social and ideological rivals. However, the report also observed that these places of dissent are diminishing over the period of time in different parts of the country, and which has resulted in long term institutional damage (Yashpal 2009, p. 16). In all these three commissions, freedom of thought, expression, dissent and research were central to the university and its autonomy.

3.3 Growing Restrictions on Academic Freedom:

Research universities are crucial for the 21st century global knowledge economy. These higher educational institutions provide the key link to the nation's scientific and knowledge system. They are truly central institutions of the global knowledge society(Altbach P G 2011).

The issues of academic freedom have been discussed in the previous decades since the time of independence. There have structural problems when it comes to the issue of academic freed as argued by Nandini Sundar and Gowhar Fazili in their report on Academic freedom in India(Sundar N and Fazili G 2020). The several concerns with academic freedom are not new with academic freedom. There were problems since the time of independence (1947), especially during the emergency period (1975-77)(Sundar N and Fazili G 2020). However, with recent reports such as SAR on academic freedom, it has observed the recent decline in in India's position in an Academic Freedom Index. There have many unprecedented threats to academic freedom as well on faculty and scholars of higher educational institutes since past recent few years.

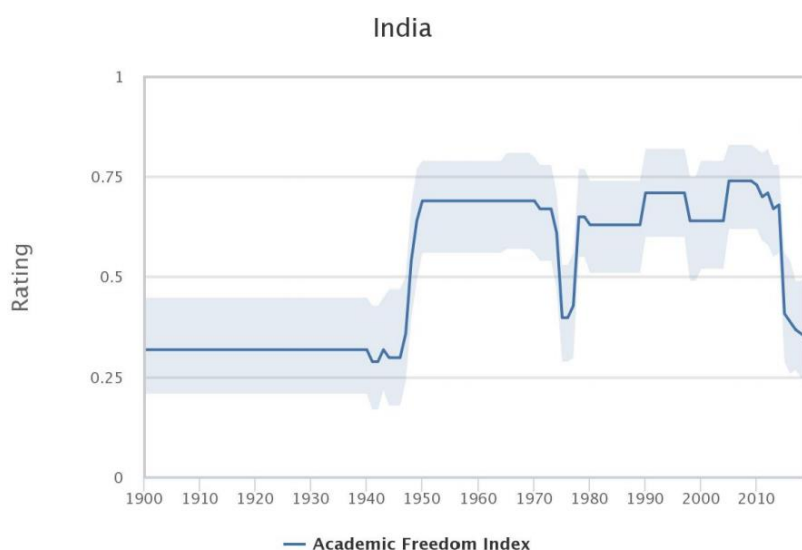


Figure 2 Graph on India's Academic freedom index (V-DEM).

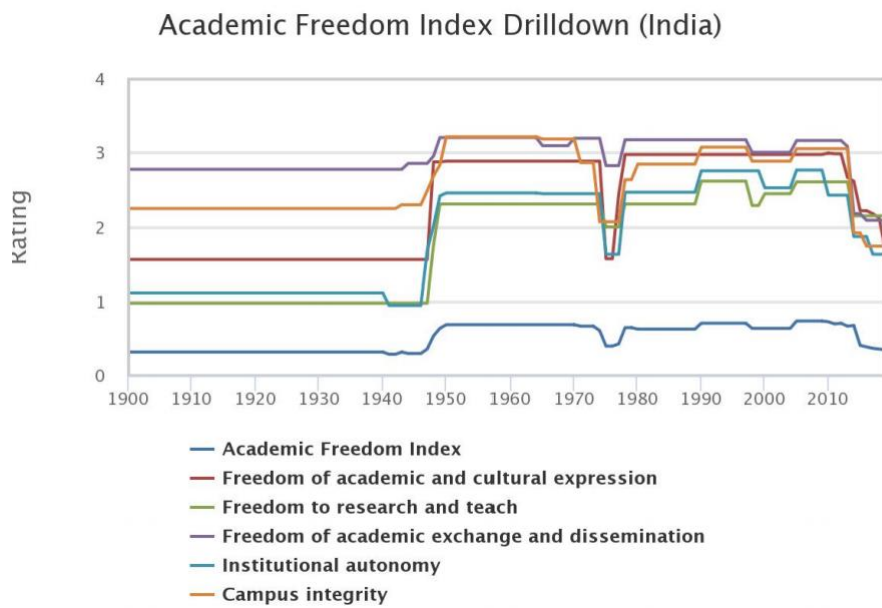


Figure 3 Academic Freedom Index and Variables (V-DEM).

Restrictions on Institutional Autonomy: Restrictions on institutional autonomy affect many aspects in the university and these are such as, selection of universities' authorities like vice chancellors. These restrictions also affect the appointment of faculty, framing of courses etc. As previously discussed, Indian Commissions of Higher Education , the S. Radhakrishnan report, the Kothari Commission report, and the Yashpal report (Kothari D S et al. 1967; MoE 1962; Yashpal 2009)repeatedly gave importance to the need of autonomy of the universities. Even the most recent document, National Education Policy, 2020 recognises the need and importance of university autonomy and academic freedom. However, the meaning of this autonomy in the document is not clearly defined.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) which was set up in 1956, is responsible for the disbursing funds to the central universities, as well as regulating fees and setting minimum standards in the universities, until now. The UGC has seen a gradual accumulation of power and exhibit a natural tendency towards the (education) ministry, as pointed out by (Jayal N G 2019). The UGC is only one of the country's 15 or so higher education regulatory bodies. With the imposition and monitoring of uniformity, the UGC has recently reinterpreted its task of regulation and standing setting(Sundar N and Fazili G 2020).This pattern can be seen in the UGC's introduction of the choice-based credit system, which standardizes the number of teaching hours per course across the country and also, introduces a "model syllabus" that

universities across the country can use. Another example of this trend can be seen in the UGC's guidance on how many PhD and MPhil students a single faculty member can supervise, as well as a list of journals in which students and faculty members can publish, and the importance of teaching, reviews, and other service in evaluating faculty for recruitment. Previously, the UGC's conventional arrangement, which was adopted by the central universities, had a considerable amount of self-governance. They had authority over the content of syllabi, as well as the standards and procedures for hiring faculty and students(Sundar N 2018).

In this regard, NEP 2020 aims to replace the UGC and other regulatory bodies with a variety of other national regulatory, financing, accreditation, and academic standard-setting bodies, including the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority, the National Accreditation Authority, the General Education Council, and the Higher Education Grants Commission(MHRD 2020). However, it is unclear if universities will gain autonomy or if the system will become more centralised as a result of this(Sundar N 2018).

Political Appointments to university Leadership: Vice Chancellors of universities face immense pressure and serious problems even if they have the best intentions of the university. However, appointment of vice chancellors is centrally decided and is indeed a political appointment. One of the biggest threats to academic freedom comes from the appointment of poor leaders in the university, who are inclined towards the influence from the outside, while being afraid and vulnerable to the pressures of an unfamiliar kind, as pointed out by former vice chancellor and chemistry professor Ram Ramaswamy.

The report on academic freedom in India mentions many examples on the political appointment of vice chancellors of universities and the poor decisions taken by them which have hampered the academic freedom of the university and the knowledge production in the university as well. There have been instances where institutions like Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) have cancelled seminars because papers were based on indigenous religions, decisions like curtailing library timings limit the freedom to explore in the university spaces.

Institutional restrictions on Freedom of Dissent: there have been various ways in which institutions put restrictions on the academic freedom of faculty members and students who dissent. One such example is of the emblematic case of the suicide of a student from Hyderabad Central University, a Dalit student, Rohit Vemula, which brought to light the extreme case of caste

discrimination and arbitrary decision making within the universities(Wire T 2017). There are travel restrictions for faculty members, and public universities have denied leave, halted or declined promotions, deferred retirement benefits, and delayed salaries(Sundar N and Fazili G 2020). These practices of curbing their freedom are done to prohibit them from writing in press per publish papers which are not in line with the ideology of the current establishment. Also, the absence of tenure system and more of appointments of the ad-hoc professors on the contractual basis also withheld faculty from participating in activities which criticises the government.

3.4 Restrictions on Freedom to Research and Study:

Universities, unlike any other institutions are affected and burdened by national security rhetoric. In India, the idea of national security rhetoric has been invoked in the name of “hurt sentiment.” The background of hurt sentiments is basically becoming the ground of curbing academic freedom. Gautam Bhatia cites the European Court of Human Rights on the “heckler’s veto”(Bhatia 2016, p. 152), a legal system which applies restrictions on human rights in order to satisfy the dictates of public feeling—real or imaginary—cannot be regarded as meeting the pressing social needs recognised in a democratic society(Bhatia 2016).” In *Rangarajan v P.Jagjivan Ram* the Supreme Court too held that potential threats to law and order predicated on the protests of unreasonable or hypersensitive people could not be a reason to ban a film, and that the administration must provide security(Hindu T 2011).

However, even after the stated law, we still observe ban on books. The banning of books have gone more frequent in the recent years.⁴ This heckler’s veto have now crept into the university spaces and have been applied to holding of seminars, conferences, movie screening and other university events. One of the many examples of such practice is cancellation of a cultural program by Sumangala Damodaran in University of Delhi on August 201; and the reason of cancellation was the security concerns from right wing student association (*See annexure 1 on the Disruption of Seminar and Denial of Permission for meetings, seminars, talks*).

⁴The books banned or threatened on the ground of “hurt sentiment” include, in recent times, Wendy Doniger’s *The Hindus* (2009), James Laine’s *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (2003), Kanchallaiah’s *Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu* (Vysyas: social smugglers), Perumal Murugan’s *One Part Woman* (2015); Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Must Not Dance* (2015).

This kind of cancellation and disruption of seminars, cultural programmes, talks and conferences have an effect on academic exchange in university spaces. It also further leads to the atmosphere of fear due to the university one is enrolled at, or their alleged ideological leanings. This often leads to the practise of self-censorship in the faculty members and the students.

Literature study of Nandini Sundar's article provides certain insights on the reason for such self-censorship amongst academic scholars in Indian universities. Nandini Sundar in her article states that most Indian universities experience a case of one-sided pursuit of academic freedom in their campuses. According to the author, Indian universities for long have witnessed or have been the site of enforcing 'hecklers veto'(Bhatia 2016), a legal system defined by the European Courts of Human Rights that allows the restriction of human rights in-order to satisfy the dictates of public feelings and sentiments(Sundar N 2018).

The author observes that hecklers veto has been frequently enforced in Indian universities on multiple occasions to ban texts, disrupt seminars, discussions, talks on subjects related majorly to social issues such as caste or gender discrimination, and explicit focus on Indian constitution and democracy. Such bans and disruptions in universities have resulted in the prevention of academic exchange of knowledge amongst interested students and faculties. The constant repercussion on pursuing such delicate subjects related to social issues, have resulted in the creation of certain atmospheric fear amongst students and the consequent self-censorship in academic research and public discussions.

The author further states that most Indian universities attempt to portray an image of neutrality during the use of hecklers veto by clamping down on student groups, calling one sided attack on academic freedom as clashes. Most press and media report such incidents as clashes between various political ideologies. For example, in a February 2017 attack by a prominent right wing student organization on a seminar in Ramjas College, University of Delhi, female students testified to physical violence and sexual abuse by the right wing student political body(Sundar N 2018). However, the dominant narrative that gained ground in the press was that it had been a "clash" between two student groups, the leftist student association and the right-wing student body.

Nandini observes that the resultant of such issues and threats have resulted in most universities furthering their stance on neutrality by curbing the students and faculties freedom of speech and expression, rather than providing and promoting a fair and uninterrupted place of knowledge pursuit. Institutions are observed to be restricting extracurricular activities and physically altering the landscape of the institutions. The result of such a step, impedes open and free discussions about varied subjects such as social issues amongst students and faculties, and consequently results in the creation of certain degree of fear and self-censorship amongst the student and faculty body.

Apart from these practices, university authorities as well as central and state government have interfered with the topics/themes of research work at PhD and MPhil level. The Gujarat government introduced the pre-defined list of 82 topic for the doctoral research scholars which included various welfare schemes and programmes of the state and central government. Another such example is from the Central University of Kerala issuing a curricular directing HoDs to come up with a list of topics “considering national priorities.” Adding to this amidst pandemic 2019, Ministry of Education came up with “office memorandum” on January 15,2020 titled ‘Revised Guidelines for holding online/virtual Conferences, Seminars, Training, etc.’ As per the new guidelines, all “central educational institutions, publicly-funded universities” will now have to get prior approval from the ministry of external affairs if they want to hold online international conferences or seminars on subjects related to “security of State, Border, Northeast states, UT of J&K, Ladakh or any other issues which are clearly/purely related to India’s internal matter/s”. Furthermore, they will require approval from the appropriate “administrative secretary for the event as well as for the list of participants”. They will also have to get prior permission from the MEA for “events involving sensitive subjects (political, scientific, technical, commercial, personal) with provisions for sharing of data in any form(Kulkarni S 2021).” This new policy will result in curbing of the spreading of academic knowledge through debate and discussion. Professor Alka Acharya of JNU, pointed out this will hamper the free and frank discussions. Another latest instance of the state interfering with university autonomy and the research is of Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad. Here, the Ministry of Education had asked the institute for a copy of a Ph.D. thesis to re-examine and to be put on hold until then. However, the request was denied by the institute’s director stating that ministry is not the arbiter of complaints regarding a thesis. At the moment, IIM has cited autonomy to get out of this

interference, but it throws a serious light on the question that, ‘can ministry interfere in what kind of research is taking place in the university?’

For a scholar, academic freedom is to freedom to research, study and express ideas without any external interference and influence. It is at the central part of the university life. It is the essence of exchange of knowledge and fostering of independent and critical thinking of students and academics. The curtailment of academic freedom by external or internal authorities or influences like vigilantes or corporate interests will not result in genuine research and its finding. (*See annexure 2 on Restrictions on Academic Exchanges*)

In sum, as academic protocols and conventions have developed over the period are important to university autonomy, however, there is a serious danger of it lapsing into administrative rigidity. On the other hand, universities are vulnerable to the external forces as threat to its autonomy. As successive education commissions have reminded us, academic freedom is at the heart of the university space in disseminating knowledge and flourishing ideas. It is important for the generation of knowledge and academic exchange. Academic freedom is critical for human growth. The freedom to conduct research, publication, and teaching is critical for the advancement of democratic ideals and society as a whole.

The university was created with the student in mind. Information is produced and disseminated for the good of society. And, since the best way to produce information is to put it to the test, academic freedom of inquiry is essential. The safety of academics and researchers must be ensured.

Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusion

The study examines the meaning and the perspective of academic freedom in the university space. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of faculty and students on academic freedom in the research university. Further, this study investigated restrictions on academic freedom and the effect of academic freedom on the knowledge production/research that is taking place in the university. To get the deeper understanding of academic freedom, secondary literature as well as primary literature was taken in the account. To investigate the concept of academic freedom and its effect on research, the following research question were formulated:

1. What does academic freedom imply?
2. What is the impact of academic freedom on knowledge production/research in Indian University?

These questions served as a tool to work out an appropriate methodology for gathering descriptive data, as well as explore the right theoretical insights. The above two question have been answered in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, respectively. Given the research questions and objectives of this study, a qualitative approach/methodology was adopted in this study. Multiple sources of data collection were used in order to understand the concept on academic freedom and the practices of academic exchange and inquires in the university spaces. An interview method with a semi structure questionnaire was opted for both faculty members and scholars/students. in addition to this, a brief online survey was done to gain a deeper insight to understand the practices of research in department of social sciences in the universities (JNU and DU).

Chapter Two Key Findings: Moving on to the chapter 2, which is divided in two major sections and answers the first research question of this study. The first section of the chapter describes the conceptual understanding of academic freedom and the second section gives the perceptions of faculty members and students/scholars on academic freedom from the interview conducted. Upon asking the question, ‘what is academic freedom for you?’ to the faculty members and as well as scholars, the major commonality among the answers given by both was of ‘freedom to exchange of knowledge without any obstruction’. However, the meaning of academic freedom is perceived differently by the faculty and students. Most of

the students answered that for them academic freedom is an absolute right to thought and expression. However, this view differed in faculty members, who answered majorly stating that, academic freedom is not an absolute right. 7 out of 10 faculty members stated academic freedom as a subset of freedom of expression and thought and they did not consider it to be an absolute right. This point of view presented at the time of interview is similar to the arguments of thinkers like (Butler 2017) and historian of higher education (Axelrod P 2017). Academic freedom is a complex concept without having any universal definition of it. There is little understanding of what exactly academic freedom means.

Analysing the interviews further to understand the perspectives of students and faculty members in depth. From the point of view from scholars/students, the researcher observed that the basic idea of academic freedom for a student/scholar is to 'freedom of explore; freedom to express without any obstruction from the state' (S3 and S4/interview). For scholars, academic freedom is about getting freely involved in academic exchange. It has also been observed from the interviews that 'freedom to choose research area or topic' plays a crucial part in the lives of scholars. It is important to observe that for genuine research to take place without any external influence, pressure, and obstruction, scholars need to be free in choosing their topics and areas of research in the university atmosphere. However, two scholars from JNU answered that for them academic freedom is also about more inclusion, broader thinking and not succumbing to the popular, elite ideologies. From the conversations held while conducting the interviews, the researcher also observed the importance of a free atmosphere and a free space while conducting academic exchange and pursuing research. University as a space should provide an atmosphere where such academic exchanges can take place. This observation can further be related to the idea of public sphere which is mentioned to be taken as a theoretical framework for this study. University as public sphere was taken because it is a space where dialogues materialize in terms of arguments, dissent, academic exchange through research activities like talks on various topics, seminars, conferences, and discussions among the stakeholders of the university. Universities are places where public interaction, conversations and deliberation happen. It serves as a site where the nature of State and private interests can be openly debated and contested (Pusser et al. 2012). To have a rational public discourse with reasoned arguments, it is important that there is academic freedom. Further, the findings of the perspective of the interviewed faculty members on academic freedom were that, for most of the faculty members from JNU and DU both, academic freedom is about 'freedom to design curriculum, freedom to design teaching methods, freedom to

conduct research and freedom to teach in the classroom without any coercion by the state authorities.’ The finding from the interviews states that faculty members have a bit of freedom to express in their classrooms, but they do not have the freedom over the content or the curriculum. Freedom to design their own curriculum is restricted most of the times due to the administrative authorities. Academic freedom to teach anything want is limited in this sense. Another finding from the interviews is that faculty members cannot publish anything and everything. Freedom to publish is subjected to the peer review, and sometimes their arguments or thoughts are muted by assessors or editors.

Key themes emerging from the Interviews on the perspectives of Academic Freedom:

Faculty Members:

- Freedom to design and express views on curriculum
- Freedom to teach according to their own teaching methods
- Freedom to publish and freedom to choose research projects without any obstruction from the state authorities

Students/Scholars:

- Freedom to express ideas without any fear
- Freedom to choose research areas and topics and work freely in research
- Freedom to explore critical ideas, independent thinking
- Freedom of academic exchange to pursue intellectual curiosity

According to the above emerging themes, describing academic freedom is a difficult challenge. They defined academic freedom in terms of various scholars' concepts. The findings show that academic freedom is essential for both faculty and students to engage in academic exchange. The research demonstrates the plurality of viewpoints on the meaning and conceptualization of academic freedom.

Chapter 3 findings and The Findings and Analysis of Survey: Chapter 3 focuses upon the second research question. Academic research is needed for the advancement of knowledge, according to the literature reviews conducted for this chapter, and the quality of knowledge generated is linked to the degree of academic freedom exercised in universities. Further findings from the interviews and primary survey study reveal that a majority number of scholars find their institutions to uphold academic freedom, however, researchers suggest that there have been underlying factors which have restricted exercising academic freedom for the

pursuit of knowledge. One of the findings from the interviews and primary surveys of scholars state that a significant number of scholars practise self-censorship in their daily academic exchange. Key findings from the interview of scholars further reveal that the act of self-censorship is observed to be a subconscious practice that results out of the prevailing atmospheric fear that exists in universities. Interviewees further explain that self-censorship is observed to be practised in classrooms while debating on critical issues such as gender or caste discriminations. Data from the interview also reveals that self-censorship is often observed to be practised by individuals to avoid any backlash while providing a critical insight on popular ideologies in public forums.

Findings of this study can be referred to the arguments provided by Nandini Sundar(Sundar N 2018) in her article. Observations by the author reveal that even though most institutions maintain a state of neutrality with respect to academic freedom, many scholars and faculties observe the act of self-censorship and refrain from academic exchange in university spaces due to the presence and practice of 'hecklers veto'. Nandini also states that discussions on subjects focusing on delicate social issues such as gender or caste discrimination, and explicit focus on Indian constitution and democracy, have been frequently disrupted with the enforcement of hecklers veto in universities. The constant repercussion on pursuing such delicate subjects related to social issues, have resulted in the creation of certain atmospheric fear amongst students and the consequent self-censorship in academic research and public discussions.

4.1 Findings of the Survey Conducted:

Have you ever practised self-censorship (that is, refrained from publishing, teaching, talking or doing research on a particular topic, for fear of ne... loss of privileges, demotion, physical harm, etc) ?
42 responses

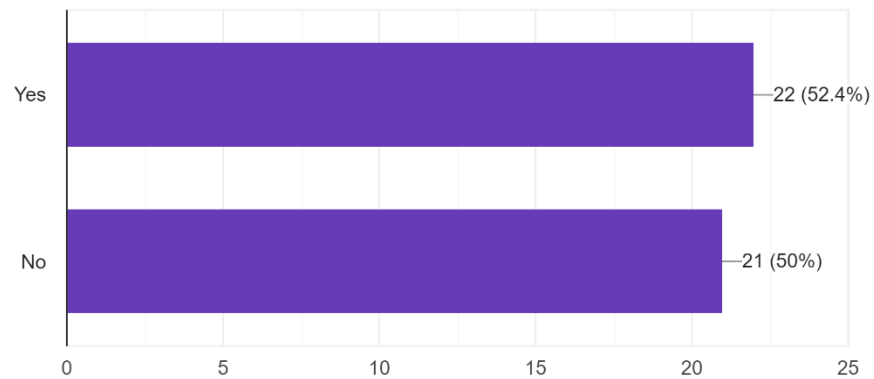


Figure 4 Graph On Practice of Self-Censorship (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

The above graph numbers explains that 22 out of 42 respondents, who are scholars from DU and JNU, have selected YES as answer upon filling the question on self-censorship. 52% scholars have shown that they practise self-censorship in their research, while publishing and also often in engaging in a dialogue or arguments in the university spaces. The tendency to self-censor also matches the interviews procured by researcher while delving into the subject of self-censorship.

Further, it was observed from the interview data that respondents agreed that their research areas or themes are often influenced by the supervisors they want to work under due to the public image in the field of their study. This view came up while interviewing a faculty from sociology department in JNU that 'scholars often choose themes based upon the faculty credentials and public appeal of the faculty members.' One of the faculty from the same department also stated research themes are often get influenced by market needs, rather than the quest or intellectual inquiry.' Therefore, it can be inferred that the need to look appealing in the market for employment is a primary concern or a decisive factor while choosing a research theme.

Does the Institute/Department/Centre in which you work have an official policy document on academic freedom?

41 responses

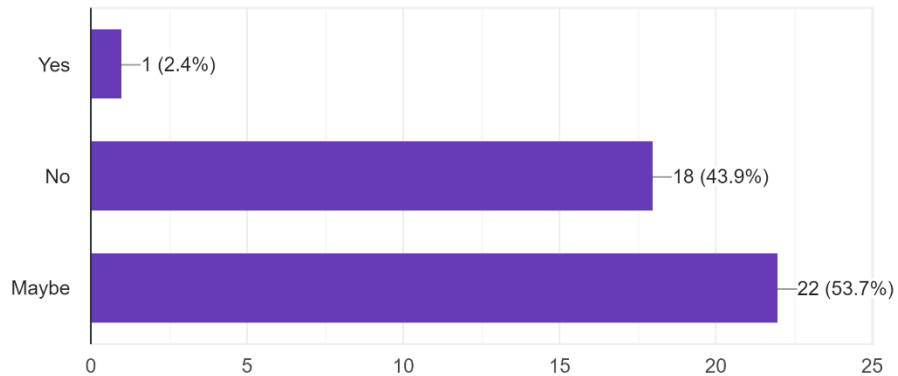


Figure 5 Graph on official policy document on Academic freedom (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

In above graph, it can be observed that scholars are unaware of the any kind of policy that exist on academic freedom in their university. 43.9% says that no policy exists on academic freedom in their institution which is JNU and DU and 53.7% scholars have no actual idea about the policy. This shows that how scholars studying in their respective universities are unclear on any policy document of academic freedom. Hence, it becomes very complex to understand the actual meaning of academic freedom, its limitations and its nature in the university spaces.

Irrespective as to whether your Department/Institute has an official policy document outlining the protection for academic freedom, to what extent d...cted within the academic unit in which you work?

41 responses

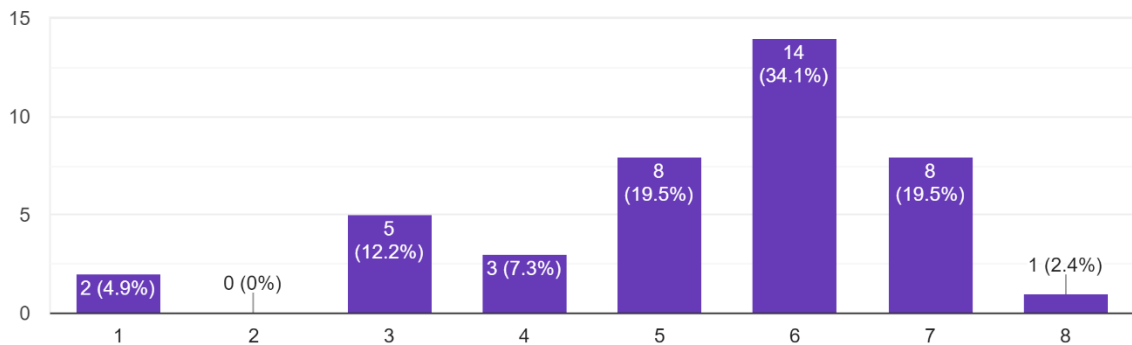


Figure 6 Graph on Academic Freedom (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

The above graph shows that 34.1% scholars on the scale of 6/8, believe that academic freedom is protected by within the academic departments and university they work.

In many Higher Education Institutes, it is argued that the protection for academic freedom at the institutional, faculty and departmental level has ch...What is your view, with respect to your institution?
40 responses

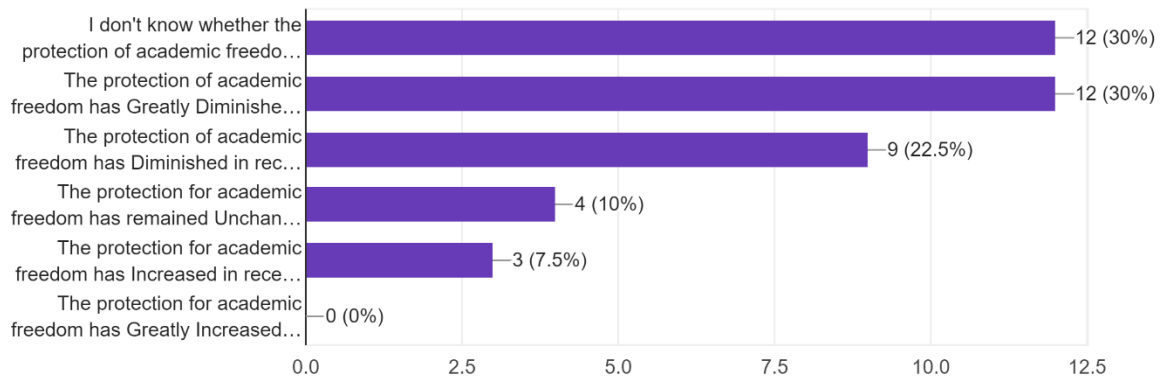


Figure 7 Graph on whether academic freedom has changed at institutional level (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

The above graph show that 12 scholars stated that they don't know whether the protection of academic freedom has changed in institution. Another, 12+9=21 scholars support that the protection of academic freedom have diminished in their institution. This means that that around 50% of the total respondents feel that the protection of academic freedom have diminished in their institutions.

Have you seen in your institution cancellation of any conference/talk/movie screening because of "controversial" topics
41 responses

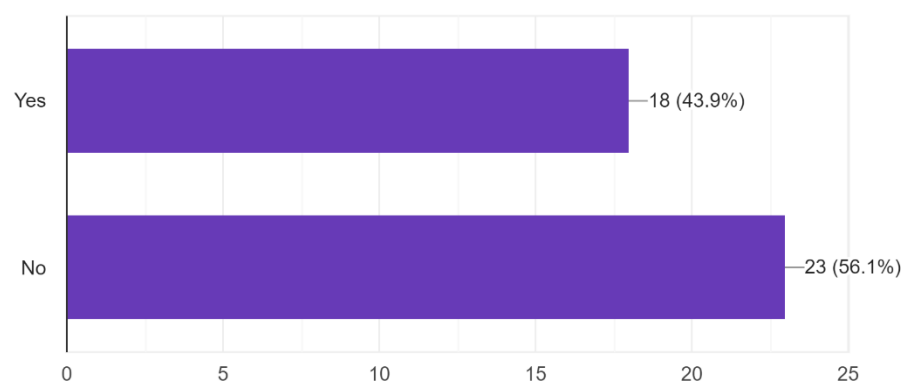


Figure 8 Graph on Cancellation of Seminars/Talks/Movies in the institution (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

The above graph represents that 23 scholars have mentioned that they have not seen any kind of cancellation of any conference or seminars of any controversial topics. However, 18 respondents represents that they have experienced cancellation of conferences/movies/talks in their institution.

Individual academic freedom for research has declined in my institution in recent years

42 responses

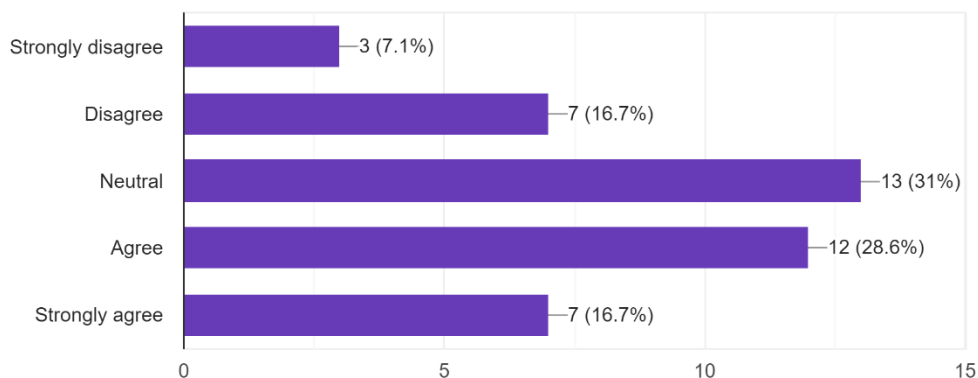


Figure 9 Graph on Individual Academic Freedom for Research (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

13 respondents which is 31% of total 42 responses take up a neutral position whether the academic freedom has declined in their institution or not. The number of responses is to agree is very close that the academic freedom has also declined in the institutions.

Institutional autonomy is important to me

42 responses

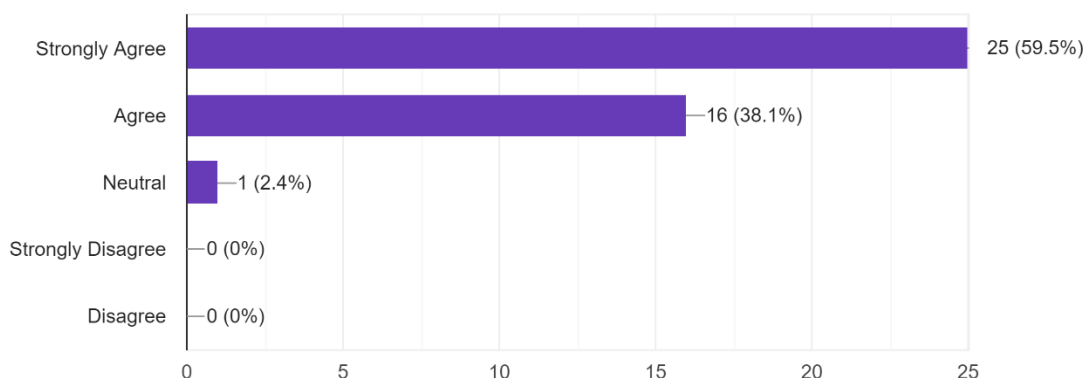


Figure 10 Graph on the importance of institutional autonomy (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

Most (59.5%) of the scholars strongly agree that institutional autonomy is especially important.

Institutional autonomy has declined over past years

42 responses

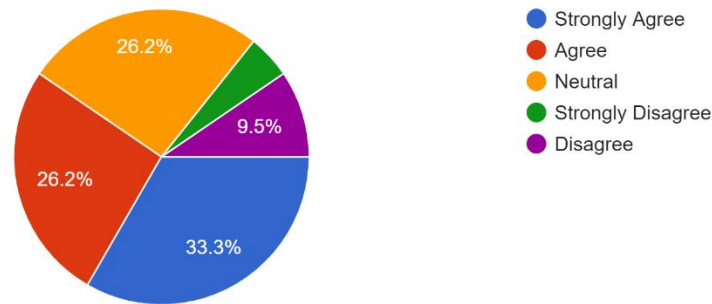


Figure 11 Pie-chart on Decline of Institutional Autonomy over past years (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

Summing up, though the analysis of the data amongst scholars regarding academic freedom reveals that most of them do not have any hindrance or restrictions in their academic exchange and pursuit of research, simultaneously, they do observe diminishing of protection of academic freedom in their universities (see, Figure no.7). Findings from the interviews conducted also suggest that there has been practices of self-censorship, research themes being influenced by market needs in the name of employment, experiences of curbing of seminars and talks. In addition to this, findings from the secondary literature or data, reports on academic freedom in India, SAR, V-Dem reports also suggests a decline in the academic freedom index in India in recent years.

Academic freedom is in jeopardy as a result of political uncertainty, government involvement in research funding allocation, and other internal factors. The country's political structure is the most influential factor in ensuring academic freedom. Owing to the country's current establishment, the university has faced significant difficulties in protecting faculty and student academic freedom over last few years. Political involvement in the management and in the activity of the university, coupled with increased pressures on teaching methods and perform research study has created difficulties in ensuring academic freedom. Hence, data of this observes that there have decline in institutional autonomy too. The data indicated that academic freedom academic tasks suffered because of the lack of institutional autonomy in JNU and DU.

As a result of the lack of policy documents relating to academic freedom, it is difficult to agree on what should be protected. At the national level, there is no separate general policy to protect academic freedom, and there is no separate internal policy at the university level. The failure of the government and university governing bodies to formulate such policy documents to protect academic freedom is an obstacle.

4.2 Limitations of the Study:

The study presented a variety of perspectives on academic freedom, which is viewed as a critical topic in higher education. The current study focused solely on individual academic freedom, which is described as the freedom of faculty members and scholars, as well as the freedom to conduct research and the factors that influence it. One of the study's shortcomings is that another type of academic freedom, institutional academic freedom or institutional autonomy, was not addressed.

The current study was based on small numbers of interviewees due to the limitation of time and the inability to go on fieldwork due to Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, telephonic interviews were conducted. Online survey was also conducted for this study due to similar restrictions as mentioned previously. As many universities were and continue to be shut down, it was a bit difficult and tedious to contact professors and scholars in the time of pandemic. Hence, data collection was done online and through telephonic interviews which was another limitation for this study.

The ongoing situation of the covid pandemic and the consequent travel ban restricted the study to be conducted in universities located within the city of Delhi. Therefore, primary data collection has been done through central and state-run universities, JNU and Delhi University respectively. Data on other universities with a sociology and political science research department were all studied through secondary data.

4.2 Recommendations and Scope:

1. *University autonomy and on campus Freedoms:* Academic voice must be enhanced. Establishing mechanisms for a more collegiate approach to discussion and debate on academic freedom in universities is essential if the concept is to return to being a first order value. Since a lack of university autonomy has been identified as one of the

most significant challenges to student academic freedom, it is recommended that universities preserve autonomy and independence from both state and non-state actors while managing their internal affairs. Students agree that limits on such freedoms have a detrimental impact on their academic freedom, so universities must ensure and protect scholar's freedom, such as freedom of academic exchange, freedom of research, and freedom to express by various student activities.

2. *Departmental Level within Universities*: A study of academic freedom management at the departmental level, including day-to-day practice and operationalization of academic freedom, is needed. This will help the department in producing an official document and promoting academic freedom.
3. University administrations will want to reconsider their support for academic freedom. The research may also aid in better understanding the factors that influence academic freedom in research, as well as the importance of academic freedom for scholars and faculty in the advancement of knowledge.
4. As academic freedom is a complex concept, this study can further be explored in tandem with human rights concept with legal understanding of academic freedom as well.

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- Yashpal. 2009. *Report of “The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education” Challenges of the Higher Education Sector 11 2.1 Distances and Disconnects 2.1.1 Invisible Walls 2.1.2 Divide between Research Bodies and Universities 2.1.3 Isolation of IITs and IIMs 2.1.4 Erosion of Democratic Space 2.2 Architecture of Learning 16 2.2.2 Learning across Disciplines 2.2.3 Teacher Education 2.2.4 Rehabilitating Professional Education in the University 2.2.5 Undermining Undergraduate Education*

Annexure 1 DENIAL OF PERMISSION/DISRUPTION OF SEMINARS/MEETINGS/EVENTS ON CAMPUS

DENIAL OF PERMISSION/DISRUPTION OF SEMINARS/MEETINGS/EVENTS ON CAMPUS						
S.No	Year	Place	Speakers	Subject of Talk	Nature of Action	Source
1	April 2010	JNU	JNU forum against war on people	Cultural program" held against the Centre's 'Operation Green Hunt' against Leftwing groups	Rightwing student groups disrupted the event along with supporters of the Youth For Equality, protested against holding such a meeting days after 76 security personnel were killed in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh	http://twocircles.net/2010sep05/saffron_assault_kashmiri_students_jnu.html
2	Aug 2010	JNU	Tarun Vijay	Right wing student body organized an event on Kashmir	Kashmiri students assaulted by right wing student body when they objected to wrong facts spoken during the event by both student body and the speaker. Tarun Vijay the speaker, called the protesting student "Osama bin laden key dalal"	http://twocircles.net/2010sep05/saffron_assault_kashmiri_students_jnu.html
3	Feb 2016	JNU	Kanhaiya Kumar Umar Khaid Rama Naga Anirban	JNU Sedition Fiasco	Right wing student bodie claimed that anti-national slogans were raised	https://thewire.in/rights/despite-scs-stance-onsedition-chargeslapped-on-jnuskanhaiya-kumar-others

					during an event named 'A country without a post office'	
4	March 2016	DU	Prof. Chamanlal	Lecture on Bhagat Singh	Right wing student body gathered at the event and started shouting slogans. They abused the Professor for being 'anti-national'	https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/traitor-mud-at-bhagat-singh-lecture/cid/1515356
5	Feb 2017	Ramjas College, DU	Students and Faculty	Protest against right wing student groups	Rightwing student body thrashed students entering inside college for being 'antinational'	https://thewire.in/politics/delhi-universityramjas-abvp
6	Aug 2017	DSE, DU	DU Conversations and Sumangla Damodaran (AUD)	Celebrating 70 years of Democracy	Citing security reasons. Chief security officer of DU cited rightwing student group threats	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/fearing-protests-by-political-parties-du-conversations-about-democracy-iikrishnunrest-cancelled-by-dse/articleshow/60206795.cms
7	Sept 2017	JMI, Delhi	Faculty from DU and JNU	Panel on "Shrinking Democratic Spaces in Universities"	Permission declined by authorities on the grounds that the speakers were from outside.	https://indianexpress.com/article/education/jamia-cancels-event-students-say-told-they-cannot-invite-speakers-from-outside/
8	Oct 2017	KMC Delhi	Nakul Singh Sawhney	Screening of 'Izzatnagari ki Asabhya Betiyan'	The event's permission was withdrawn by the HoD citing "technical faults." The students alleged that the HoD was told by a senior member of the university administration	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/ki-ori-mal-collegestudents-not-allowed-to-screen-film/articleshow/61192887.cms?from=mdr

					n that the film was “controversial” and should not be shown.	
9	March 2018	JNU	Atul Johri, teacher	Sexual harassment charges against prof	Long march ends in chaos as police lathi charges protestors	https://thewire.in/education/jnu-lathichargelong-march
10	April 2018	JNU	Centre for Philosophy, JNU; Indian Council for Philosophical Research (ICPR) seminar	Philosophy seminar called off	ICPR called off the seminar because papers were about adivasi religion	https://thewire.in/education/objection-to-paper-person-advansi-religion-government-body-cans-philosophy-meet
11	July 2018	DU	DU Students	The formal launch of a magazine produced by Delhi University students and an accompanying event titled, ironically, ‘Dialogue on Freedom of Expression	“It is possible that rightwing bodies are objecting to our cover story, which is titled ‘Promises Belied’, on the four years of the central government,” one of the magazine’s editors told a news agency	https://thewire.in/education/delhi-university-cancels-dialogue-on-freedom-of-expression-after-abvp-protest
12	Feb 2019	SRC Delhi	The Wire’s deputy editor Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, research scholar, trade unionist and activist from Assam Nayan Jyoti, independent researcher Leki Thungon and Delhi University Prof	Why is the Northeast Protesting – panel discussion	Cancelled by Administration	https://www.news18.com/news/india/srccsnortheast-cell-event-on-caa-cancelled-due-to-unavoidable-circumstances-students-shocked-2470557.html

			Amrapali Basumatary			
13	Dec 2019	AU Delhi	AUD Student Council (Karampura campus)	Screening of "Ram Ke Naam"	Permission denied for being anti hindu	https://canceledevents.in/2020/03/04/ambedkar-university-delhiscreening-of-ram-kenaam-by-anandpatwardhan-september4-2019/
14	Jan 2020	SAU Delhi	An informal students' forum, the SAU Research Association	A discussion on the new citizenship regime "Dark side of democracy: Explaining CAA NRC/NPR"	institution's acting president, A.V.S. Ramesh Chandra, tried to dissuade them from holding a discussion saying it would be unfair because "India gives you rotis"	https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/you-live-by-roti-alone-not-CAA/cid/1741328
15	Feb 2020	Constitution Club of India	Discussion on how hate crimes can be prevented.	Nirbhaya event	Event disrupted by rightwing student bodies	https://thewire.in/politics/watch-asha-aurnirasha-nirbhaya-abvp
16	Feb 2020	AU Delhi	Prakash Karat (CPM Gen. Sec)	A talk on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.	He was not allowed to enter the campus. Election code violation were represented as the reason	https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/prakash-karat-stopped-from-entering-aud/article30629202.ece
17						

Source: compilation of secondary data from the report on academic freedom in India by

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Annexure 2 Restrictions on Academic Exchange

DENIAL OF RESEARCH VISAS/RESTRICTIONS ON ACADEMIC EXCHANGES				
<u>S.No</u>	Date	Name of Person	Academic Event Affected	Source
1	2016	George Yeo	Resigns as Chancellor of Nalanda University citing govt. interference	https://thewire.in/education/george-yeo-reisgnation-nalanda-university
2	2017	Patricia Sauthoff	Contract for yoga course in Nalanda university not renewed because of objection from right wing organizations	https://thewire.in/education/false-say-yoga-isnt-political-american-scholar-whose-course-nalanda-university-cancelled
3	July 2018	Pakistani Scholars denied visa to attend the AAS in Asia conference	AAS in Asia, New Delh	https://www.asianstudies.org/aas-statement-on-2018-aas-in-asia-conference/
4	2018	Visas denied to 30 Pakistani medical doctors	Conference organized by Asian Pacific Association for the study of the liver	https://www.universityworldnews.com/p
5	2020	Jacob Lindenthal	Visa revoked for participating in anti CAA protest	https://thewire.in/external-affairs/jakob-lindenthal-german-student-cao-visa
6	2020	Afsara Anika Meem	Bangladeshi student who posted photos of CAA protest gets notice to leave India	https://thewire.in/education/bangladeshi-student-visva-bharati-cao-protest-leave-india-notice

Source: compilation of secondary data from the report on academic freedom in India by

Nandini Sundar and Gowhar Fazili, SAR