

CHAPTER V**EDUCATION POLICY IN WEST BENGAL – A
CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS****Agenda on Education: The West Bengal Scenario****I**

Close on the heels of our Independence, the ‘School Education Committee’ was set up in 1948 under the Chairmanship of the then Education Minister Sri Harendra Nath Chowdhuri to bring in comprehensive reforms at various levels of School Education. The syllabus that this Committee framed in 1950 with an eye to bring about radical change in the curriculum of primary education was adopted as syllabus for the primary school level. Although his syllabus was not totally consistent with the principles of primary education, it however, reflected the fundamental ideas of the child-centered education in general. This syllabus in almost unchanged form had been in vogue for long twenty four years at the level of primary and lower basic school. To meet the needs of the time and the demands of the changed social context, the Education Department of the West Bengal Government formed the ‘Primary Education Syllabus Committee’ in 1974. ‘The purpose of this committee was to modernize the syllabus and give it a realistic bias. In fact, this Syllabus Committee took up its work in 1977 as per Government Order [No.1334-E DN (P) dt. 13.11.1976, No. 1000-E DN (P), dt. 10.09.1997, No. 159-E DN (P), dt. 1.2.1978 and No. 1251-E DN (P), dt. 30.6.1978] following the installation of the present Government the Committee started its work in full swing’¹. ‘For the spread, development and progress of education, one of the prior conditions is to ensure a democratic environment in the area of education... The democratization of the aims and objectives and subject-matter or education depends a great deal on the active participation of the educationists and teachers and to spread the scope of students’ opinion in the formation of the education policy and programme...’² This (Primary

Education Syllabus Committee) Committee was comprised of the experts on primary education, the eminent educationists, teacher-representatives in the primary and secondary teachers' training Colleges and also persons representing primary Teachers' Association, Primary Teachers' Training Association etc.

"This syllabus has attempted at blending the needs of the total growth of the child with the demands of the developing society. Especially, the requirements of the children of 6 to 11 age group, belonging to the weaker section of the society have been given weight age in this syllabus. The objectives of the primary education have been delineated with this principal goal in view. The applicability of this syllabus in the primary schools of West Bengal has been aimed at. The social relevance and principles of modernization have been in mind in framing this syllabus.

Following are the characteristics of this syllabus:

- (a) Modern thoughts have been incorporated in the syllabus. That is why, primary education has been regarded as an aid to comprehensive growth of the child and the society itself, such objectives as the total development of the child's personality, creation of the sense of true citizenship in a changing society, inspiration for having the benefit of training in the total life-span and growth of efficiency have been adhered to.
- (b) Recommendation of the Education Commission, especially, those of Kothari Commission have been given due consideration in the syllabus.
- (c) A new subject of "Direct Experience Work" having characteristics of the direct observation and implementation has been introduced with a view to making education life-oriented and has given it the quality of practical application. To initiate the child to apply his knowledge to this betterment of his environment and to hold him in assimilating his experiences in different aspects introduction of this subject has been felt necessary.

- (d) Enough scope has been left to introduce necessary changes and modification in the syllabus to make it applicable, practical, relevant to the environment and flexible.
- (e) Provisions for productive and creative work have been made to help emerge effective citizens suited to the age. Emphasis has been laid on curiosity, spirit of discovery and observation.
- (f) On the syllabus of each subject, aims for teaching that subject and general guidelines to the teachers for the method of teaching have been incorporated.

Methods adopted to frame the Syllabus:

- (a) The previous syllabus was discussed and analyzed. It was observed that although some of its aspects could be acceptable, certain fundamental changes were necessary in the light of the experiences gained during the last 30 years.
- (b) At the meeting held at the lower basic training institutions in all the district of West Bengal, the teachers and persons interested in education expressed their views on a set of questions.
- (c) Opinion of the general public was invited through newspapers.
- (d) Appropriate principles were deduced after studying syllabi framed by the N.C.E.R.T. and the authorities of Primary Education in certain states. The Committee also utilized opportunity of exchanging aims with the N.C.E.R.T.
- (e) Besides, the opinion of two more representatives of the family planning organizations and population education was considered.
- (f) The principle Committee constituted sub-committees consisting of experts on different subjects. Representatives of teachers and educationist of all levels participated in these sub-committees. The findings of these sub-committees were thoroughly discussed, analyzed, expanded and modified before being finally accepted.
- (g) It has been possible to keep links between the syllabi of Primary and Secondary Education as far as practicable owing largely to the

fact that the Administrator of the Board of Secondary Education was associated with the principle committee.

As a first step to the framing of syllabus, the committee determined the aims and objectives of the primary education and prepared a preliminary report incorporating recommendations for necessary organizational framework to implement their aims and objectives and a proposed structure of the syllabus.

This report was submitted to the W.B. Government, for its consideration as preliminary recommendations.

The different sub-committees then started preparing drafts and syllabi of various subjects. The Committee has made certain recommendations in respect of administration, inspection and teachers' training for proper implementation of the total syllabus. Those recommendations of the report are enclosed below: The Committee expressed the hope that the syllabus of the Secondary Education will be revised on the basis of the syllabus approved by the Committee³.

Curriculum or syllabus is a coordinated working process through which the aims or targets of education is reached. The syllabus of Primary Education may be directed mainly into the following four groups:

1. Games, sports and Physical Culture
2. Creative and Productive Oriented Work
3. Work based on actual experience or Actual experience based work.
4. Reading-teaching based work.

On the basis of the four areas as outlined above, the following subjects should be treated as the Course of Education at the Primary Stage:

“(a) Games, Sports and Physical Culture ... (b) Creative and Productive Oriented Work... (c) Work based on Actual Experience or Actual Experience Based work... (d) Reading-teaching Based work: This

group can be sub-divided as follows: (i) Mother tongue, (ii) Mathematics, (iii) Knowledge of environment or surrounding⁴.

(i) Mother Tongue

The gradual explosion of knowledge has made indirect aids to education inevitable and mother-tongue has been recognized as the medium by all. Besides, in expression feelings and thoughts mother tongue has its place at the top. Obviously, plain and simple culture of the mother tongue forms a ritual part of primary education. Through the mother tongue knowledge about various subjects, ideas values have to be built up.

(ii) Mathematics

Clear ideas about the simplest processes in the world of Mathematics have to be built up..

(iii) Knowledge of Environment and Surroundings

Environment may mainly be divided into two major groups. In the first two stages (class) the students have to be introduced in a very general manner to the environment in which they live. From the third stage (Class III) this introduction to environment has to be over four distinct areas or branches. These branches would obviously include history, geography, natural science and life science. In the fifth stage (Class V) the areas as indicated would be given a definite shape⁵.

“The present state government has taken certain off-beat measures without following the conventional trend. It has tried to give practical shape to some important subjects which should have materialized a long time back. They have taken measure to implement certain aspects declared by the Directive principles of the state policy in the Constitution, some proposals of the Union Government declared in different times and also to implement the hopes and desires of the common people reflected through the various recommendations of various commissions and committees⁶. To fulfill the objectives of primary education the Left Front Government has taken the following supplementary arrangements and

said: "...should necessarily be made in order to fulfill the objectives of primary education.

1. Regular checking of health and necessary treatments'
2. Arrangements for lunch;
3. child-welfare activities;
4. Arrangements for building up repairs of school buildings and furniture and minimum equipments for teaching ... In West Bengal, there must be an 'Infant class' attached with school ..."⁷
 "This infant class will act as a preparatory base ... spelt out guide book for the teaching (if necessary in more than one volume) is necessary for the purpose of proper implementation of proposed syllabus and curriculum... Arrangements for proper and regular inspection should be made in order to properly implement the proposed syllabus"⁸. Sri Bhavesh Moitra said in this respect: "The present State government feels despite many limitations and hindrances certain welfare activities can be done to give minimum relief to the people. In the meantime free education upto Class XII has been introduced, to pay the full salary with regularity of the teaching and non-teaching staff, to supply regularly to 31 lakhs of students' tiffin, clothes, books slates etc. New primary schools are being established and even secondary schools are being sanctioned. This is being done not only to educate a handful of rich children but to spread education to all the quarters of the society"⁹.

To determine the educational frame-work at the primary, secondary and the degree levels as well as the introduction of the different languages in the different levels is not the brain- child nor the whim of the West Bengal Government. The present Educational policy of the West Bengal Government is closely linked with the all India Educational perspective and the moot point of this policy is to rearrange the Educational policy so that the slogan Education for all is justified and to make Education meaningful to each individual.

II

Language plays a vital role in the development of a child and in the present educational policy of West Bengal, the language to be taught is the bone of contention and the argument is over the place of mother tongue and English in the school.

In this context, it is necessary to discuss about the medium of education as well. There is, however, no controversy in any advanced or socialist country about whether the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction or not. This is essentially the problem of a country which was once a colony. Now, the question is which language the child will learn to read, and write at the primary stage of education. If we want to get education as strength of learning instead of viewing it as a mere garb and if we want to reach it to all the stratas of society, we must realize then that there is no substitute for mother tongue. But unfortunately, there is a section of people among us who think otherwise. They think that the modern Indian Languages are incapable to be the media of instruction at all levels of education and also to be the vehicles of high thoughts and so called high offices. "In education "the mother tongue is the mother's milk" – these famous words of Rabindranath failed to touch the right chord of some people and it can be easily imagined that it is very difficult to change their attitude.

The discussion on language education in schools will remain incomplete if we do not touch upon an important point, that is, the question of learning a language other than the mother tongue. "The need for teaching a second language is not only important for international and inter-state communication but also for exchange of views between the different language group in a particular state"¹⁰. English is called the window of the world. So English should get the preference for the selection as the second language. Now the most stirring question is: What is the purpose of learning a second language and when should it start?

It is proper to arrange teaching English or any other language after learning well the mother tongue. We may quote Tagore in this regard. He

said that learning Bengali properly would lead to correct English learning. His conviction was that if the practice in writing in the mother tongue became easy then one can master a second language in due course and try to write the language with confidence. One need not weave a texture by carefully stitching the worn out sentences of English much in vogue. Tagore emphasized this theory of teaching a foreign language with the help of the mother language after learning it well in several other places.

Learning a second language will be facilitated and get fillip when a learner is mature in age, conscious about the importance of learning a second language and above all has acquired improved aptitude in the mother tongue. "If the teaching of the second language along with the study of its literature is made compulsory from class XI to class XII and a well arranged syllabus is prepared and placed before the students and teachers of West Bengal then it can be said confidently that the students will be able to master the mother tongue as well as English in a far more better way. If we sincerely want mass oriented administration, universal and effective education, then we have to stand firmly for the mother tongue and regional languages"¹¹.

To ensure democratization of education system, to ensure the right to express and right to profession, Sri Bhavesh Moitra wrote: "It is accepted by all that the educational institutions are the centres for learning and development of thought process. The successes of all these institutions depend a great deal on the scope of independent exchange of views. It can be said with all certainty that teachers, students and administrative personnel's are enjoying the right to independent expression of opinion fully. At the same time, all are enjoying the facilities of Trade Unions and students' Union irrespective of political allegiance. Apart from this the discussions related to the aims of education, the necessity and utility of its subject matters has spread even to the remote villages of West Bengal today"¹².

As we have seen earlier the all round participation of all sections of the society in the formation of the policy perspectives and at the stage of implementation of the primary syllabus and education, likewise, this policy has also been followed with regard to Madhyamik or Secondary Education. "Readers must know at present at the Secondary level in class IX and class X in West Bengal Board of Secondary Education the third language is not a compulsory one. One can take it as an optional subject. This decision was taken after having an elaborate discussion among the heads of the Department of Education of all Universities in West Bengal, distinguished educationists and the leaders of the Madhyamik Teachers' Associations. In the formulation of the mathematics syllabus, the discussion was also taken after having an elaborate discussions for about a year among the retired and present stalwarts of mathematics of all the Universities of West Bengal with the representatives of the different Teachers' Training Colleges in West Bengal. The same policy has been adopted to determine the syllabus of Geography, History and other subjects at the secondary level. In formation of syllabi at the Higher Secondary and College education specialists and teachers are taking part. They also took part to bring necessary changes and developments in the aforesaid syllabi. The democratization of the education system can only be possible by following this democratic policy to formulate and develop the syllabus. A democratic basis of education has been laid by following this policy at all levels of education system in West Bengal"¹³.

III

On 19th and 20th October 1977 the Student Wing of the CPI(M) took one important Resolution in Mabalankar Bhavan, New Delhi. The resolution said: "The Democratic Student Movement believes in formulating democratic education for the people as the most important task ahead for the educational reform. The Government should accept these basic demands related to it and would take effective principles to give it a proper shape. The Democratic Students Movement pronounced it

fully that these demands are taken as an inseparable part to establish an honest society, to fight against capitalism and also to establish a society free from all sorts of exploitation... the convention evokes for the struggle to accept all these above mentioned demands and objectives by the government and to deter any endeavour to continue old principles. The Democratization of Education and Right to Employment are the two most powerful weapons in the hands of our people"¹⁴.

The convention also demand that the primary schools should be upgraded upto the VII standard and should be made free and compulsory by 1980 as a first step. The immediate next step should be to introduce free and compulsory secondary education and also to start vocational training. The democratic education can only be possible by establishing a compulsory and free school education till class X. the basic aims of the education system would be to eradicate mass-illiteracy. Necessary steps should be taken to literate effectively all the men and women till 35 year of age and mass-literacy campaign should be launched in wide-spread scale. To meet up this appropriate plan should be taken by the government and cooperation of the literate section of the mass and students organizations should be evoked and raised.

"To reach the goal of the Universalisation of Madhyamik education special aids and facilities should be provided for the pupils among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The convention also demanded to increase the amount and number of scholarships for the students from the backward sections of the society"¹⁵. They are also against the 'so-called' "Public School" and "Model School" system and demanded their immediate abolition as these structures are against the interest of the mass education movement.

The convention of the Students' Federation of India in New Delhi in 1977 argued the cause of education through mother tongue. The resolution stated: "Our country is multi-lingual, thus it requires the constitutional recognition of each and every language. The replacement of English as the medium of instruction should be made by the vernacular

languages. Only that policy can develop the mental faculties of the students which uses the mother tongue to impart education and which also encourages and protects the regional languages of the minority groups. The languages like English and Hindi should not be imposed forcefully¹⁶.

According to them education should not be de-linked from jobs. As the Right to Education is an integral part of the Right to Employments, so the provisions should be kept by U.P.S.C. and other job-providing organizations to allow students to use any regional language. Ample text books and other teaching aids should be provided in the Indian languages. They also demanded 'to tear up the three-language formula' as it is an 'burden' to the system. The Mother-tongue would be followed strictly upto Class VII. Later on any other languages can be taught to the student according to his capacity and willingness.

The convention of S.F.I. said in 1977: "... to ensure democratic rights of the students as a vital point of Democratic Education System"¹⁷. They have also supported the cause of free and fair franchise system to form students' Union and to elect their representative and even to send their representatives at the highest decision making bodies of the College and University administration. During the Howrah Convention of S.F.I. State Conference the resolution was also taken to initiate students democratic movement at the school level and necessary procedure should be adopted to form Union in schools through popular franchise of the school students to enhance and encourage different innovative and leadership qualities.

According to the statistics found out by the Convention of 1977 it is stated that, "More than 60 p.c. of the educational intuitional are under private concern and they have been turned into business organization which is based only on monetary profit and the corruption is the key-word. The educational atmosphere is completely spoilt by the private ownership and the educational and monetary interests of the students and teachers are at stake. The Government should take over these

schools and take active part in the formulation of the policy adaptation and administer by involving people in the process of democratization”¹⁸.

According to the resolution of the Convention of 1977 it was stated that minority and religious schools and colleges can be allowed to run but the State cannot provide them any monetary help. They should run on their own expense. Later during the intermediate stage the Convention evoked that all the State Governments would provide equal salary and facilities to all teachers at par with the Government schools. Their salary should be disbursed from the Government exchequer.

The Convention also stated against the 42nd Amendment Act of the Constitution. The Convention favoured the cause of education to be placed in the State list. Replacement of education from the State list to the Concurrent list has given birth to unnecessary concentration of power. They favoured the opinion of the Kothari Commission to place education in the State list.

The Convention also favoured the initiation of the work and production oriented education system. It suggested beginning with vocational education at the last stage of the elementary education system. Because the percentage of school drop outs at this stage is generally highest. The need for work experience and to relate students with the productive activities should be started at the fag end of the primary education. This will also help the student not to avert physical labour and to divert their attention from just to secure a desk job or sedentary jobs.

Thus the convention demanded: “Allotment of Educational Finances should be second highest in vocational training. Highest allotment of money should be in elementary education. Productive and work-oriented education which is related with the basic question of the spread of industries should get priority”¹⁹.

The Convention also proposed that Right to be employed must be ensured after the completion of education at every stage. “The Right to employment should be enlisted in the Fundamental Rights of the Indian

Constitution. To fight against unemployment is to fight against capitalism uncompromisingly. To achieve this the society has to be changed radically with the combined help of the student, youth and the exploited section of the society"²⁰.

With a demand to introduce scientific syllabus with modern and democratic view, the resolution of the Convention said that to throw away the undesirable burden, the convention demanded to the Union and all the State Governments to introduce syllabus with a modern scientific outlook. There should be uniformity of syllabus throughout the country. All the unscientific prejudices and obscurantist and colonial outlook should be replaced immediately from the syllabus. The reactionary and narrow political vested interest that has been imposed systematically down the ages should be done away with. There should be a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge in the syllabi of the various classes.

In regard to the Higher Education the Convention of the S.F.I. said that ostensibly the 5th Plan allotted more money for higher education which made the school education suffer. The Union Government's plan to serve higher education. As a result of the elementary, secondary and 10+2 or Higher Secondary spheres became weak. So the whole scheme of the education policy of the Congress Government was completely faulty, impractical and fallacious.

Curbing the percentage of students during 1975-76 and 1976-77 in higher education and introducing autonomous College overtly established the elitist foundation of education more strongly. The convention also demanded to ensure to the students of technical and professional course apprenticeship programme to spread widely these course as well as to ensure jobs in industries to these qualified apprentices. In Medical Courses, the Convention demanded to introduce short Medical courses pondering the immense need for treatment of the vast rural population. These trained personnel on medicinal course should be provided with scopes to complete their full-length course to

increase their skills and opportunities to get a better job in due course of time.

The Convention stated that apart from the remnant of Colonial past, the imperialism has made headway in our education system straight after independence. It has said: "To cancel the Indo-American Commission on Education and to stop taking financial aids in the educational sphere of India by the imperialist power like U.S.A. to check the penetration of rotten Yankee culture in India. Hence, the student community needs to continue their struggle"²¹. The convention also declared that at the expense of school education the over-growth of higher education is not the sign of overall good health of education. This tendency should be checked.

The Convention stated in clear words that the problem of mass-education is an inseparable part of the fundamental problems of social and economic sectors in society. Immense rate of illiteracy, higher rate of dropouts in the school level and elitist trend of educational establishment can only be deferred by taking appropriate measures to eradicate poverty. According to the Convention these measures will be completed with land reform, providing minimum wages to the workers according to their needs, to minimize immense inequalities. Appropriate policy should be taken to give rightful share to those who are involved in manual labour and producing material goods. The struggle behind these demands is fundamentally related with the problems of educational system of our country.

Finally, the convention concluded with the call to connect the struggle of democratic education system with the main-stream of peoples' democratic movement to bring revolutionary changes in society.

The structure of the 'District Primary School Council' according to the revised Primary Education Act of West Bengal 1980 is given below. The example is given of such a district which no sub division or Mohakuma.

1.	Member by virtue of Post	3
2	Government Nominated	6
(i)	Female	1
(ii)	Schedule Cast	1
(iii)	Scheduled Tribe	1
(iv)	Religious Minority	1
(v)	College Teacher	1
(vi)	Madhyamik-School Teacher	1
3	The elected members from among the members of the Zilla Parishad	3
4	The elected members from among the members of the Municipality	4
5	The elected members from among the members of the Panchayat Samiti	3
6	The elected members from among the teachers of the Junior Basic Training Institute	1
7	The elected member from among the teacher of the State of Bidhan Sabha	9
8	The elected members from among the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State or Bidhan Sabha	6
9	The elected member from among the employees of the District Primary School Council	1
	Total	35

"Among the 35 members of the District primary School Council 11 members are directly elected. Indirectly elected members are 15 and 6 members are nominated by the Government and 3 members are in the Council by virtue of their posts. The Chairman of the Council of the District Primary Education is also elected by the members from within"²².

The Organizational structure of the State Primary Education Parishad:

1	Elected Primary Teacher	14
2	Elected Teachers of the Teacher' Training Institute	2
3	Elected members from among the members of the Zilla Parishad Municipality and Calcutta Corporation	13
4	By Virtue of posts	2
5	Nominated by the Government	13
(i)	Women Representative	2
(ii)	Anglo-Indian	1
(iii)	Scheduled Caste	1
(iv)	Scheduled Tribe	1
(v)	Linguistic Minority	1
(vi)	Nepali Speaking people	1
(vii)	Madhyamik Teacher	1
(viii)	College or University Teacher	1
(ix)	Chairman of the District Primary School Council	3

Following the basic principle of the above mentioned policy, the organizational structure of the West Bengal Madhyamik Parshad has also rearranged. A comparative picture of the earlier and the recent pattern of representation is shown below:

The Act of 1963		The Revised Act of 1980	
1	Chairman	- 1	1
2	Govt. official by virtue of post	- 7	6
3	Dean of University and the Head of the Academic Institute	- 8	8
4	Government Nominee	- 8	9
(a)	Teacher of the Vocational Institute	- 2	10
(b)	Heads of the Schools	- 2	2
(c)	Education Patrons	- 4	5
(d)	College Teachers	- 0	1
(e)	Primary Teachers	- 0	1
5	Representatives of the Teachers' Association	- 3	0
6	Members of the State Legislative Assembly	- 2 (elected)	2 (elected)
7	Elected members from among the Heads of the Schools	- 2 (elected)	0
8	Elected members from among the Teachers' Training Colleges	- 0	2 (elected)
9	Representatives of the Madrasah Board	- 0	1
10	Elected members of the Parishad employees	- 0	1 (elected)
11	Elected members from all the Madhayamik School teachers including Heads. of Institutions.	- 1	32(elected)
Total		39	71

From the above comparative study of the Acts we notice that among 31 members only 4 were elected in the old Act of 1963, but, whereas, in the new Act of 1980, out of 62 members, 37 members are elected. "This proves the fact that the Left Front Government has established a bright example of democratic representation by including teachers and employees from the various sections of the academic spheres"²³.

Coming next to the question of democracy, decentralization of administrative powers and decision making, we should consider the composition of the Senate and the syndicate. "The difference may be best understood from the following columns:

Act of 1966	Bill of 1979	
(a) Ex-officio members including professor. (Professional posts have gone upto 165 in the last decade. It would be physically impossible to accommodate all these ex-officio members)	87-114	21 elected by Professor from amongst themselves
(b) Nominated by Chancellor	-10	5
(c) Elected	- 52	80
(Principals of affiliated Colleges)	- 8	(10)
University Lecturers and Readers	- 7	
Teachers of Undergraduate Colleges	- 12	(17)
Members of Governing bodies of Colleges	- 6	X
Teachers of Professional Colleges	- 7	(5)
Registered Graduates	- 5	(5)
Total	221	

"It is evident that while the number of elected members of the old senate constituted less than 30% of the total, the new Senate is proposed to have 75% of its members elected from different categories"²⁴.

Coming to the question of the participation of the teachers in the apex-body of decision making at the University level, the comparative study of the Act of 1966 and the Revised Act of 1980 shows:

Act of 1966	Bill of 1979	
(a) Ex-officio	- 11	11
(b) Chancellor's nominee	- 2	2
(c) Elected by Academic Council	- 5	X
Elected by Senate	- 8	3
Elected by Senate	- 8	3
Elected by P.G. Teachers	- x	4
Elected by U.G. Teachers	- x	5
Elected by Principals	- x	4
Total	-26 (of which only 8 were teachers)	29 (of which 19 will be teachers) ²⁵

Other major aspect of Left Education in India is to lay emphasis on Education of women. Realization of the importance of the education of women can be traced back in the writings of the Nationalist leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru. To him: "Education of boy is education of one person, but education of a girl is the education of the entire family"²⁶.

IV

"The past perspective of women's education shows that this sector was badly neglected. While here position in Vedic times or even the Upanishadic era was good, there is no doubt that the period after about 1000 A.D. was a dark age for her"²⁷. Whatever, the historic reasons, her social positions began to deteriorate during the period and had considerable repercussions on her education. According to S.K. Kochhar "the real impetus to workers' education came with the political awakening of the country and the great push Mahatma Gandhi gave to women's movement"²⁸.

The subject of women's education was thoroughly discussed in the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) Report. The report emphatically

said: "For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of man"²⁹.

The recommendation of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) laid emphasis on two major aspects: (1) "The first is to emphasis the special programmes recommended by the National Committee of Women's Education and the second is to give attention to the education of girls in all stages and in all sections..."³⁰.

But the emphasis of the Left Front Government in West Bengal, on Women's Education is not only laid on the social perspective but also on the economic aspects of the society. They think, "The scopes of the development of the girl-child are wide-amongst the present state of affairs of economy, in West Bengal. Almost everyone would agree that certain economic development have been ushered in the rural sector of West Bengal. The opportunity to work has increased in the villages, even for the women, the rate of daily wages have increased, the rate of economic uncertainty has come down considerably as a direct effect of 'Barga-Record' system. Probably, this has increased the number of school-going girl-child in the rural sector of West Bengal. During 1979-86, the percentage of girls in school education, in West Bengal increased to stand 64 p.c., which is highest in India. Free education and increase in the number of schools in village areas has also helped to increase the number of girls in school education"³¹. But the Left Front Government thinks apart from the limited scopes of rural economic development, inflationary growth of prices, certain other social factors are creating obstacles to the fast rate of growth of women's education in West Bengal as well as India. Some of these are listed below:

- (i) Conservatism of parents;
- (ii) Tradition-ridden social customs;
- (iii) Shortage of women teachers;
- (iv) Lack of hostel and school building;

- (v) Outdated text books;
- (vi) Purposeless curricula;
- (vii) Inadequate transportation etc.;
- (viii) Early marriages in rural areas and in certain strata of society;
- (ix) The feeling that highly educated girls would be less amenable to family disciplines; and
- (x) The feeling that higher education for girls is not necessary to run a home"³².

After the Left Front Government came to power, novel thought and new ideas have been introduced in the formulation of the syllabus and the curriculum and new text books have been prescribed. The equality of man and woman can be gauged according to the texts of the curriculum. We can discuss the subject following four steps or formulae.

1. Education justifies our individual entity in the society.
2. If we can prepare a positive model on the differences on man and women, it would have a lasting effect on the thought process of our traditional outlook in a developing country like ours.
3. The government is trying to obliterate this so called difference between man and women within school periphery and in the society also.
4. The State Government has positive role to play to formulate the education policy, composing text books etc. Our prayer to those who will formulate education policy is to obliterate this discrimination of men and woman"³³.

Total Number of Girl-Student only in Villages Class I to V

	Entire India		West Bengal		Entire India		West Bengal	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
Class I	25118584	10615448	2419036	1069217	19996672	8302594	1991060	874380
Class II	18439574	776436	2362992	598467	14326953	5855792	1059016	460252
Class III	16565648	1155457	504532	12753448	5079187	878898	878898	378419
Class IV	14181399	5672072	973622	422198	10693886	4098312	731295	311211
Class V	12378084	477564	922804	375141	9026984	3308433	648637	253829
Total(I-V)	86683289	35676643	6833911	2968555				

Source: 5th All India Education analysis, September, 30, 1986

The Above picture is deplorable, in all India level the number of girl-student from class I to class V is one-third of the total students; whereas the condition of West Bengal is a shade better. The number of girl-student is half of the total number.

The number of student belongs to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe in West Bengal during 1984-85.

The difference stages of schools	Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
H.S. School 91072)	46621	12496	59117	5933	2727	8650
Higher School	129514	60675	190186	28186	11082	39268
Madhyamik School	8834	43129	131469	20059	8774	28833
Primary School	738361	407051	1135412	155335	15530	250865
Pre-Primary School	2050	1140	3190	365	237	602
Handicapped Section	91	35	126	-	-	-
Adult-Education	61999	24775	86774	11914	5656	17570
Oriental Study	124	25	149	18	04	22
Music /Arts	06	07	13	-	-	-
Vocational Training	182	61	243	25	01	26
Nursing and Matron Training	-	75	75	-	31	31

Source: Financial Analysis 1990-91, West Bengal Government.

On the different academic institutions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe the number of boys in double or triple than girls. The girls are ahead slightly only in the filed of Art and Music. The condition of the 'Adibasi' or tribal girl-child is pathetic.

In the year 1915, Rabindranath Tagore, Acharya Profulla Chandra Roy, Ramananda Chatterjee had established 'Bharat Hith Sadhani Sabha'. The ultimate truth revealed by their realization was that by inculcating education from within, a total awareness could be developed. "As a consequence to all these endeavours 'the Bangiya Sakhsharata Prasar Samiti was established on 8th September or 1987 ... According to the Census Report of 1991, the total number of illiterate in West Bengal is around 3 crores. Although, West Bengal Government, Zilla Parishad

and District Administration already has involved 1.2 crores people of ten districts under the programme of National Literacy Mission ... The Bangiya Saksharata Prasar Samiti is a mass-movement. The basic premises of the organization are as follows:

1. It is a joint endeavour of all the mass organization;
2. It is a combined effort of all organizations, institutions and individual enterprise;
3. Cultural enterprises;
4. Voluntary involvement;
5. To destroy all the sources of illiteracy;
6. To assemble people in favour of literacy campaign to continue effective propaganda.
7. Apart from making them literate, to increase consciousness in them to take active part in the struggle for establishing themselves in the society.
8. To make the Primary education free and compulsory;
9. To take appropriate efforts with regard to women's education and
10. To ensure right to employment as a result of the literacy mission"³⁴.

Notes and References:

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