

## CHAPTER VI

### RE-ENVISIONING SOCIALISM

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For the last two decades great many events took place; but only two events shook the world, viz., the end of Soviet era and the end of American capitalism. Hence both the isms require self-evaluation in retrospect.

Socialism and economic liberalism (read capitalism) paradoxically, of the same intellectual-origin, namely Adam Smith's idea of bourgeoisie society as a self-acting, self-driven economic order<sup>1</sup>. Adam Smith, J.S. Mill and Herbert Spencer these three main exponents of capitalism in the guise of Individualism shunned "any restriction by meddling Sovereigns or Governments saw this order as being in conformity with the law of nature...being and productive of 'progress' in the sense of an augmentation of the "Wealth of Nation". Therefore, Francis Fukuyama drew the implicit conclusion that nothing lay beyond capitalism, that we had come to the end of history<sup>2</sup>. The echo can be heard immediately after the end of Soviet Era with these confident words from a confidant of liberal democracy: "The legitimacy of liberal democracy [read capitalism] .... Conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently Communism... liberal democracy may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and "final form of human government", and as such constituted the "end of history"<sup>3</sup>. But the unprecedented Economic Recession in the U.S.A. and the Western World literally shattered the day-dream and encouraged to quote Karl Marx once again to say of Classical political economy: ... there has been history, but there is no longer any"<sup>4</sup>.

Impression of capitalism and supportive liberal democracy like socialism is under the scanner. The quest of human civilization is the maximization of freedom. According to Professor Prabhat Patnaik: "True,

it took mankind's quest for freedom ... This quest necessarily entitled going beyond capitalism"<sup>5</sup>.

Capitalism, according Marx, is inimical to human freedom precisely because within it mankind is trapped in a self-acting and self-driven order where individuals become the objects of external coercive forces. This is not just of workers, but even of the capitalists whom Marx in *Capital* (Volume I), described as "capital personified".

Marx's argument however was not just this; it went deeper. For Marx, human beings under capitalism become 'objectified'. Marx did not see productive forces exclusively in materials terms. Rather a 'revolutionary proletariat' in short is not just a productive force, but represent the highest level of development of the productive forces in a bourgeoisie society. Both capitalism and socialism talk about 'Human Freedom', both want to ensure highest level of "Democracy".

Freedom remains elusive under capitalism in spite of its tall claim because human beings under capitalism are actually indistinguishable from things. According to Jean paul Sartre and Saul Bellow: "Human beings under capitalism became *Objectified*. This objectification is in one way related to *Reification* and *Alienation* and in other way this objectification is a denial of freedom.

Soviet form of socialism, according to S. Schram, could not ensure the freedom once envisaged by Marx, Engles and Lenin. Alex Kosygin once remarked that socialism was synonymous with a 7 percent growth rate<sup>6</sup>. Universal adult franchise the means of human freedom in a bourgeoisie society introduced in remarkable Democracies nearly three quarter of a century while the bourgeoisie rule consolidated their position.

In most of the cases the elected government becomes ornamental and the praxis of rule is dividing people into ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. And, finally, denial of meaningful choices to the electorate - appeasement of middle class constituencies by adopting almost identical pro-capitalist policies.

Professor Prabhat Patnaik elaborated this mindless business of liberal democracy by citing example of Iraq war and its background where popular mandate was against invasion of Iraq by the super powers – "...shows the scout respect shown to popular opinion in capitalist democracies"<sup>7</sup>. He justified that *socialism is the full flowering of democracy*. For him, the socialist agenda remains as relevant to day as ever. He also admitted the fact that "this revival of socialism of course will take time", placing the view of George Lukacs in an interview in the New Left Review professor Patnaik is of the opinion that transition from feudalism to capitalism traveled almost 300 years; likewise, the transition from capitalism to socialism will be a long drawn out one. Thus the collapse of the Soviet Union or the ongoing distortions of Marxism in China are simply passing phases of long transition.

At the out set we want to analyze the role of Communist Party of India (Marxist). The making of the left ideology in India and particularly in West Bengal chartered a long struggle through an unraveled path. Before 1967, the left built a deliberative democratic tradition in Bengal. It is comparatively difficult for the social scientists to assess the post colonial agrarian sector of Bengal on the basis of colonial factor. With the departure of the colonial power the dynamics of the power and social structure was also changed.

The partition changed the very basis of demography of West Bengal. The resultant of partition created an agony of separation. The Western World feels the pain of the separation of Germany and Korea after 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Ism created schisms. But the world kept absolute mum on the separation of Bengal and Punjab but shed gallons of crocodile tears on the issue of Kashmir. Anywhere, any part of the world separation leads to pathetic diasporic existence. The diasporic existence of Bengal in India magnifies with its post-colonial and post-independent existence by its new nomenclature – West Bengal.

This new Bengal called West Bengal covers an area of 87,853 square km. losing a huge portion of highly fertile land suddenly caused it

to face an acute shortage of food. The arrival of huge number of refugees from Pakistan and migrants from other states to West Bengal shattered the basis of Bengal's economy, social texture and value system.

A few statistics will illustrate the gamut of the situation and the profound crisis in economy and society immediately after the partition years in this part of India.

Total population of West Bengal	26.30 million
Original inhabitant of West Bengal	21.3 million
No. of non-displaced person from erstwhile Pakistan	0.51 million
Immigrants from other states to Bengal	1.85 million

Thus the gift hamper at the end of the colonial rule was the slice of Bengal and almost 2.09 million refugees<sup>8</sup>.

Without going into much elaboration of statistical figures one can easily understand the sudden flux of population as a huge burden on the agrarian economy of West Bengal. It would not be an exaggeration of the fact that undivided Bengal was economically more independent than independent India. This kind of dependence is there due to "... adverse land-man ration acute food shortage, severe agrarian crisis and class-tension, which influenced qualitatively, the political perspective of the state in the late 1960s"<sup>9</sup>. Sudden flux of population growth in partitioned Bengal was, however, one of the many reasons for ensuring ground for the leftists in Bengal. The magnitude of the rapid and sudden population in West Bengal created many problems:

Firstly, the agrarian sector could not accommodate the extra population because the rural Bengal did not witness any capitalist transformation. Moreover, the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy were over populated to accommodate the diasporic population from the erstwhile East - Pakistan and immigrants of the states in Bengal.

Secondly, the disguise unemployment became rampant and their minimum subsistence was also provided by the rural economy. The extra

expenditure did not allow the agrarian sector to grow on diversity. "After independence, the agrarian sector of West Bengal provided 47 percent of employment"<sup>10</sup>. This imbalance of land-man ratio had a cascading effect on economy and deterred its growth.

Thirdly, Lack of Irrigation Facility was another cause of rural dismal situation in West Bengal during 1947-1977.

#### **Total Irrigation Land in West Bengal**

1951 - 1965	30 p.c. land
1965 - 1966	26 p.c. land
1976 - 1977	28 p.c. land

[N.B. An analytical study by the Bengal Chambers of Commerce and Industry' and Census of India 1981 (W.B.).

Professor Chandan Basu has rightly pointed out in his masterly work, "The Making of the Left Ideology in West Bengal: Culture, Political Economy, Revolution - 1947-1970" that neither proper modernization nor proper method of agricultural science was applied, as a result the average production of principle crops in West Bengal was very low. Even the proportion of double-cropped area in comparison with agriculturally developed states like Punjab and TamilNadu was also low. Professor Basu also pointed out that lack of favourable institutional framework and above all administrative negligence, mishandling of resources and non-chalant attitude of the Central Government was very profound. One report of Techno Economic Survey of West Bengal, 1962 shows that between 1956 and 1961, the annual cereals in West Bengal was to the extent of 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 tons.

Dr. Chandan Basu opined that the agrarian structure and pattern of land ownership in West Bengal remained unchanged though the big landlord class or the Zaminder, an offshoot of Permanent Settlement Act, 1793, lost their ground in the rural power structure before the end of colonial rule in India. It ensures the emergence of middle category of peasantry. Moreover, in spite of the presence of two powerful Act (a) Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 Land Reform and (b) West Bengal Land Reform Act, 1953, the distribution of land ownership did not change at all. Government inertia to implement land reform was profound.

The dominance of middle peasantry and their terms, conditions were against only for the marginalized and agricultural labourers but also against the spread of capitalist mode of agricultural production. The reflection of rural discontentment became prominent during late 1960s.

To quote Dr. Chandan Basu: "The class unrest did not articulate in a large scale until 1967-68 in rural West Bengal. In the late 1960s the political ideology of class struggle was significantly able to deconstruct the hegemonic value of dominant rural classes .... It was the failure of predominant political economy either to implement radical structural change in land ownership or to improve the basic standard of living of the lower orders of the agrarian society. The eventual result was the translation of rural discontent into political of resistance and social change in late 1960"<sup>11</sup>.

The central objective is the quest for human freedom which requires a transcendence of capitalism. Professor Prabhat Patnaik stresses the belief: what is important, however, is the over all vision that we have of the socialism that will emerge, one which accords centrality to human freedom, which remains continuously 'open' and untrained by ossification in any form, and which constitutes an unleashing of democracy and a perennial engagement of the people with politics.

To justify "The case of socialism" Professor Prabhat Patnaik wrote: "To say that the quest for freedom can not be satisfied within capitalism is not the same as saying that socialism is inevitable. The matter in short is one of praxis not of prediction ... it is (i.e., capitalism) friendly to human freedom precisely become the objects of external coercive forces ... whom Marx in capital (Volume I), described as "Capital personified"<sup>12</sup>". The immanent tendencies of capitalism can be seen in Industrial Sector of West Bengal which also extended the cause of socialist movement in West Bengal and helped in a great way the leftists in West Bengal to get their ground.

In his search to develop a 'Histography of Industrialization' Dr. Chandan Basu resorts to the theory of underdevelopment of Andre

Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein. For them, "the rise of the west", "the development of capitalism", "the hegemony of Europe". "The Rise and fall of Great Powers" are to be seen from a global perspective. To Andre Gunder Frank: "All of them were part and parcel of the structure and development of a single world economic system"<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from the much talked about Centre – peripheral dependency in third world countries like India, "It always makes compromise with the feudal property relation and feudal production relations ... The feudal method of labour control is mingled with the compradorial industrial capitalism"<sup>14</sup>. Some analysts like Dipesh Chakraborty, B.R. Tomilson emphasized the presence of community consciousness of the working class instead of class – consciousness. The identical views can be sighted from their works:

Dipesh Chakraborty and B.R. Tomilson writes in the same vein: Historian after debate "changes" and "continuities" in working class history but politics of labour movement is basically governed by re-conceived culture which a hierarchical and in-egalitarian by nature subordinated to imagined communities of a distinctly pre-capitalist character<sup>15</sup>.

Dr. Chandan Basu and Krishna Bharadwaj although dealt the nature of labour movement from a different point of view. They criticized Dipesh Chakraborty and B.R. Tomilson with this language: "it ignores completely how the social relation of production"<sup>16</sup> and "In developmental theory ... in the analysis of agrarian change that the Marxist approach has advanced extensively in India"<sup>17</sup>.

**The rise of left – Ideology: The saga of lop-sided economy: Colonial and Post-colonial industrialization and Regional inequality**

The saga of industry before and after partition is the story of plethora, pain and pathos. The writing of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, Professor S.N. Bose and Professor Suniti Chattaphdyay reflects the ground reality that how potential was Bengal industrially and in its know-how and trade but painful experience of colonial and-reform and

annihilation of several intricate industries in Bengal created plethora of pathos and unmatched unemployment. The diasporic existence of skilled artisans in their own country led to an another level of self-alienation<sup>18</sup>.

In India, the spate of industrialization could be witnessed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mirza Galib, the great poet and close associate of Bahadur Shah Jafar – II, during his short stay in Kolkata, seeing the steam ships floating in the river Ganga realized the strength, ability and inevitability of an imperial rule in India. The lively vivid description can be found in Professor Pramathanath Bishi's historical novel Lal Killa written decades ago much before the Last Mughal by William Dalrymple. Bengal from that time period had an industrial economy primarily, jute, engineering and tea industries. The industries were mostly localized. The other areas were mainly agrarian ensuring the supply of raw materials and food-grains to the industrialized zones<sup>19</sup>.

Dr. Chandan Basu opined in his masterly work: The tragic partition even could not imbalance the industrial structure during 1948. West Bengal had a 'superior position' in heavy industries like, engineering, minerals and metals. A comparative figure will project the case more elaborately:

**Number of Employment in Factories of Mumbai and Bengal in 1948<sup>18</sup>**

<b>Name of Industries</b>	<b>Mumbai</b>	<b>West Bengal</b>
Textile	442,411	3,45,010
Engineering	54,798	1,07,495
Minerals and Metals	6,941	28,940
Food, Drinks and Tobacco	28,957	27,09d1
Chemicals	2,200	7,654
Paper and Printing	16,899	18,959

**Source:** (a) The Bengal Chamber and Commerce, West Bengal an analytical study, 1971; (b) The Left ideology in West Bengal by Dr. Chandan Basu, page 41<sup>20</sup>.

Another important aspect which be observed during 1960s, the number of industries and their employability experienced sudden recession. A few statistics can help to understand the crisis:

Firstly, during 1950 the number of jute workers were 2,85,585. where as lack of raw materials and rise of new competitors like, Pakistan, Thailand reduced the employability of jute workers in West Bengal. As a result, during 1958 the number of jute workers were 2,21,398.

Secondly, some specialized industries like transport and transport equipment's the number of industries reduced to 258 in 1970 but statistic shows that the number was 268 during 1968-69. Thus, the increase in employment in this sector also marginally increased from 79,621 in 1968 to 80,559 in 1970.

The number of Basic Metal Industries in West Bengal was 558 in 1966. The figure reduced during 1970 to 550. This industry employed 88,149 people during 1966. It reduced the ability to employ people to 85,246 in 1970.

The number of Cotton Mills in West Bengal was 167 in the year 1969 could employ 49,416 people. The number decreased to 161 in 1970 and as a natural cascading effect employability reduced to 42,656 in 1970<sup>21</sup>. These can be exemplified in case of Iron and Steel Industry, Chemical Industry and Tea Garden and other Industry projects more or less the same dismal picture was observed.

In the discussion of Industrial Economy in West Bengal during 1947-1970, Dr. Chandan Basu shows that how maternity benefits and introduction of new machinery and improved technology reduced the number of women and forced them to be obsolete in the organized industrial sector. Moreover, the per capital income of workers in West Bengal were lower than that of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi.

The immediate effect of all these despondency leads to the increase of Trade Unions, Shree N.N. Chatterjee shows that the number of Trade Unions in West Bengal during 1950-51 were 967 only. But the figure reached upto 5,020 during 1970. The number of Industrial disputes were 6,39,293 during 1950. Within 1958 it touched the astounding figure of 20,96,668. As a result of Industrial dispute West Bengal lost 20,51,012 man-days in 1961. The loss of man-days in 1970 reached 94,25,300<sup>22</sup>.

It should be admitted that the industrial economy in West Bengal due to capital-labour mis-match between 1947 to 1970, a long-term crisis put the state in trouble. Thus, the study of political idiom demands over all change in the economy and politics. The unprecedented unemployment, price rise put the polity of Bengal to compromise with their standard of living. The ground was ready for the change of dispensation in West Bengal during 1967 and 1969 Bidhan Sabha Elections. The first of its kind a coalition government (break away congress, Bangla Congress with other left and democratic parties) came to power.

## II

In the process of re-envisioning socialism since 1977 till the much vaunted 'Winds of Change', proclaimed by Mrs. Mamta Banerjee the modest effort on my part will be made to sketch the situations, forces and the political education that lead the country, broadly speaking, the left political movement from strength to strength. Ms. Monobina Gupta, a prominent journalist proclaimed as a S.F.I. activist and finally a ruthless critic of left front, especially, CPI(M) after Singur-Nandi Gram episodes, and in her masterly work "Left Politics in Bengal: Time Travels Among Bhadrolok Marxists" tried to pin-point the maladies of the system in a Parliamentary democracy. She also rightly indicated that a robust, vibrant and theoretically sound political platform became viciated by the whirl pool of power politics. They joined a system to change it from within, but the system changed them from within. They have realized the pit fall, but will the uncompromising time and public demand with new political equations allow them to fill in the pits. It's not time alone but conscious and righteous political manoeuvre and political education that can bring back the lost glory and put the socialist movement in Bengal and India in the right track.

In our earlier chapter we have discussed the background achievements, obstacles and failures of the education endeavour of the

left front government in West Bengal as integral part of left-front government's policy perspectives.

Unlike Kerala or other state of India, West Bengal established a political tradition which is unique: after independence except a short-break the Congress ruled West Bengal as a political dispensation for about 28 years. The Left Front Government in West Bengal this year completed their long 34 years of rule, which is certainly a world record.

It was a tumult – and that tumult was a worldwide phenomenon. Everything was upside down from 1950 to 1970 the recognized social sciences were accepting a paradigm shift which was so long not unknown to them but consciously ignored. This paradigm shift was the demand and requirement of the changed time to meet the new challenges. This phenomenon was common to both the world: West and East. At least for the first time they meet each other for their mutual convenience.

In our part of the world, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu took the reader down memory lane in his autobiography: *Jatadur Mone Pore* and captured the time period between the 50s and 70s. "It was the best of time; it was the worst of time". Possibilities and despair were holding the breath: small and big several mutinies were disrupting the state and affairs in West Bengal and beyond the state across the world. The turbulent 60s – "the decades of the moody blues, of defiance and resistance – had arrived, in their full glory<sup>23</sup>". Monobina Gupta in her "Left Politics in Bengal" termed, broadly modern times as "terror" cyber innovation", "market", "consumerism" age. For her the 60s and 70s witnessed dance of rebellions, of defiance...; unfair wars, passionate protests spilling from one country to another, embracing a thousand causes<sup>24</sup>".

The turbulent and rebellious time traveled through uncanny, uneasy and certainly unhealthy path. The list of upheaval is quite long. It is sometimes struggle against apartheid in South Africa, civil rights movement in America; Latin America's protest against U.S. intervention; Vietnam War; Man landed on Moon, the strumming of Bob Dylan, the

Beatles, Pink Floyd Spell bound the millions across the world: "How many miles must a man walk down before he's called a man – The answer my friend is blowing in the wind..." That was certainly the wind of change; and it is now in West Bengal there is a clarion-ate call for change. How potential this clarion-ate call was, we will discuss, but before we get into the subject matter of change in contemporary West Bengal, we will focus on West Bengal during 60s and 70s which could enable the people of West Bengal to install an elected Government called Left Front Government.

The Whirlpool of political change dashed the shores and hills of West Bengal from South to North. The 'Khadya Andolan' or movement asking for food security, release of political prisoners, raising salaries, dearness allowances of school-teachers under the Secondary Board of Education, and unemployment dole resonated through the state. In July 1953, the hike of a one paisa by a British Tram Company backed by the Bidhan Chandra Roy's Government led Calcutta's into a tizzy. The relation between the Congress and left became bitter day by day. The series of political events, e.g., dismissal of the first CPI government in Kerala in 1957 by Jawaharlal Nehru; Police firing on rallyists on 31 August 1959 created a sharp polarization but its reflection was not shown in the electoral battle although CPI could increase its vote sharing from 18 per cent in 1957 to 25 per cent in 1962 but the party could secure only 46 seats against 152 seats secured by the Congress in 1957. Even in 1962 India- China war could not upset the electoral and organizational prospect of the left in West Bengal. In 1964, the ideological conflict finally led to a split. The United Communist Party fractured into Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist)<sup>25</sup>.

The fundamental difference between the two parties were in their perceptions on the character of the Indian State and relations with Congress. "The CPI perceived the Congress as a party of the national bourgeoisie; CPI(M), on the other hand, believed Congress represented the interests of land lords and the bourgeoisie ... The two communist parties parted ways, with mutual animosity intensifying in 1975 when

the CPI chose to back the Emergency. Down the line the CPI conceded its mistake and over time the gulf between the communist parties narrowed till their political stands became indistinguishable from each other<sup>26</sup>.

1966-67, was a turning point in West Bengal politics. A debate over participation in the upcoming synthesis of the prolonged movement in the United Front Government raged within the party. Promode Dasgupta and Jyoti Basu, two iconic figures in Indian Communist movement were holding diametrically opposite views, Ms. Monobina Gupta writes: "It is not without irony that even as far back as 1967, Jyoti Basu was arguing in favour of participation, stressing it would tactically help the party expand its base. Three decades down the line, in the summer of 1996 a similar debate split the CPI(M) wide open, when Basu came tantalizingly close to wearing the mantle of India's first Communist Prime Minister. Back in 1967, Promode Dasgupta provided leadership to the group, known as "Leftists" and later as "hardliners", opposing participation<sup>27</sup>.

Ms. Monobina Gupta also asserts that after intense debate, the CPI(M) decided to join the United Front Government with 18-point programme committed to improving food supply, creating more jobs and better health facilities.

"In this period that GHERAOS, an indelible feature of the history of labour militancy, acquired legitimacy. Labour Minister Subodh Banerjee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) secured cabinet sanction, legitimizing GHERAOS, as an acceptable form of protest<sup>28</sup>. The United Front Government could not survive for long time. The Centre imposed President's Rule in 1968. Ajoy Mukherjee as chief Minister, a breakaway Bangla Congress member, and Jyoti Basu, as the Deputy Chief Minister with their United Democratic Front Government faced the eventual end in 1968. Meanwhile, a government under the leadership of P.C. Ghosh and his party "Progressive Democratic Front", experienced a short spell in power. T.G. Nossiter in his "Marxist State Governments in India: Politics,

Economics and Society" wrote that civil disorder reached its zenith point and around 30,000 people were arrested<sup>29</sup>.

The political bipolarization as Left and Right and in recent years as 'AAMRA' (we) and 'ORA' (they) began during February 1969 with the declaration of the midterm elections. The United Democratic Front could secure 214 seats and Congress only 55. The CPI(M), for the first time, emerged as the single largest party with 80 seats.

The CPI(M) did not get the post of Chief Minister, but was "put in charge of critical portfolios like land and land revenue, labour, relief and rehabilitation and transport ... of the 32 points on the Government's charter of commitments, land distribution was perhaps the most successful, the most talked - about - programme<sup>30</sup>.

The political analysts often say that the 13-month in the second phase of UDF Government CPI(M) paved the way for 34 years of rule [Mamta Banjee says: Misrule] in West Bengal. "In many ways a precursor to 1977, ... the CPI(M) created new aspiration among the landless underclass, disturbing entrenched power relations in the country side Bengal continued to be in turmoil: industrial unrest was escalating; Gheraos were becoming routine, the political landscape in villages was altering beyond recognition Naxalbari was born as armed radicals killed and got killed ... 'power flows from the barrel of the gun", not proved as axiomatic truth at least in West Bengal<sup>31</sup>.

Ideological Debate and Democratic Centralism are the two cardinal principles of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The party plays the role of a catalyst to build public opinion with a hope to capture political power to pursue the cherished policy and to enhance its area and area of influence in parts of the country.

But a group of party workers believe that there is "the negative role of democratic centralism .... Almost without exception, the democratic element, in every crisis, at every political juncture, tends to be guillotined. What rears its head is centralism ... over the years the spirit

of nourishing debate that firms up the ideological backbone of the party has been killed<sup>32</sup>.

For Monabina Gupta, it was not an aberration. In 1977, after Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared general elections, a section of the West Bengal Party were against participating in the poll in the back drop of the farcical 1972 elections which were at that time too vivid.

The inner-party debate sparked by a rally at Sahid Minar when party joined a public meeting by Jay Prakash Narayan, the first and the last rally the CPI(M) participated without party flag. The third occasion the party debated in 1979 on 'July crisis'. The question was to extend or withdraw the support to the Morarji Desai Government.

Monobina mentioned in this respect "I also recall an interesting debate on retaining the word "Socialism" in the SFI constitution: Should the SFI, a mass organization, have the word in its constitution<sup>33</sup>.

The growth of left movement was also accompanied by the growth of disillusionment. "The revolution, it is often said, devours its children". The despondency was very high when Monabina Gupta writes: "The Left movement in India particularly in West Bengal – coursing through a wild and hard terrain seems to have reached a withering plateau<sup>34</sup>.

However, 1977 was a special year in India as well as for West Bengal politics and governance. The infamous atrocity of the Siddhartha Shankar Ray government prepared the Marxists in Bengal to face teeth of violence unleashed during emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In the language of Partha Chatterjee: "The intensity of state repression unleashed in the city (Calcutta) between 1970 and 1973 was of such magnitude that, unlike many other parts of India, Calcutta saw little in the year and a half of the Emergency to add to what it already knew about the way of an authoritarian regime<sup>35</sup>.

The description of West Bengal's academic atmosphere was also the reflection of that uneasy time. It is often said against the left rule in West Bengal that the people in power spoilt everything good in West Bengal. But history writes something different. "When the left Front won

the people's mandate it inherited a state in tatters, where everything apart from violence seemed to have come to a standstill<sup>36</sup>.

Monobina continues the description of the sorry state of West Bengal during Congress misrule: "Once considered among the best educational institutions in the country, Calcutta University was hemorrhaging Examination Schedules were running late by more than a couple of years. Results were delayed long enough to prevent students from applying to Universities outside West Bengal<sup>37</sup>. Sri Jyoti Basu led Left Front Government took time to revamp the system. "The Chief Minister said the government was doing its best to bring the examination schedule back on track. The backlog was stunning high. The result almost never came on time. It was not just the education system that was mangled...<sup>38</sup>.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu promised to run his government not from Writers' Building the imposing red brick building constructed by British architect Thomas Lyon in the year 1780, but from scattered but integrated villages and mafussil towns of Bengal. But following the formula of conflict and compromise; rejection and acceptance, very common approach in any parliamentary system, that euphoria, that 'language of assurance and promise that eventually disappeared<sup>39</sup>.

Although Mr. Monabina Gupta admits that Jyoti Basu had inherited a badly messed up state from his earlier congress dispensation .... "The educational system had to be overhauled on a priority basis. Bit by bit University examinations reclaimed their schedules on the academic calendar students received degrees in time .... But the spirit of violence, like the spirit of resilience, has a way of surviving... West Bengal till today has the highest incidence of political violence ... The Left Front's *raison d'être* which actualized itself with operation Barga, was lost forever at the barricades of Nandigram<sup>40</sup>.

"Prior to 1977, only some 2,75,000 sharecroppers had bucked the rural power structure and registered. By December 1985 as many a 1.3

million of the estimated 2 million West Bengal sharecroppers – 96 per cent of all ‘tenants’ – were recorded<sup>41</sup>.

Primarily, CPI(M) never thought that they will be allowed to do with the government business for a good long-time by the Congress Government in the Centre. ‘Once it became clear that the party would have to rule and produce results and not just for a brief period<sup>42</sup>, Their policies changed with the times, ‘the strategies diversified, some conflicting with the CPI(M)’s essential political philosophy<sup>43</sup>. In the 1980s M. Basavapunniah, in an article in *Desh Hitaishi* posed a relevant question: “How much has the CPI(M) been able to do in West Bengal? Has the party been able to provide relief, rally the people and scale up their consciousness? ... The fall of the socialist bloc subsequently lent weight to the debate on whether socialism can flourish in a multi – party democracy ...<sup>44</sup>.

Parliamentary democracy is characterized by electoral uncertainty. In the summer of 1996 A.K. Gopalan Bhavan became the hub of activity when about a dozen regional party leaders and the Congress leadership ‘beseeched’ Jyoti basu to lead them and the United Front Government. The situation made Jyoti Basu the Man of the Match’ but he not being made the Prime Minister was later described as a ‘historical blunder’.

What a contrast to 2009 when the party ‘plummeted’ to its lowest ever tally in three decades, Ms. Monabina Gupta describes as Sitaram Yechury told the media, the first time since 1989 when the party had no role to play in the formation of a secular government at the centre. West Bengal to-day, in the backdrop of Singur – Nandi gram episodes, at the threshold of Assembly Election and feebly vying to come back to power for the consecutive 8<sup>th</sup> time. Professor Bhaskar Dutta writes that initial euphoria dissipated long ago, only to be replaced by growing disenchantment with the Left Front rule. Like M. Basavapunniah in 1980s Professor Bhaskar Dutta raised the question: Is this bitterness and disappointment of the typical voter in West Bengal unreasonable?

Professor Bhaskar Dutta in his article "Hard road ahead" in the Telegraph, 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011 praised the Left Front Government for their successful implementation of operation Barga and Land Reform measures. But he said that the left in West Bengal could not out shine other states in any other area.

According to Professor Dutta, the ratio of the state's per capita net domestic product in comparison with per capita national product has remained virtually at just below one, between 1977-78 and 2008-2009.

Agriculture sector performed very well but there has been deindustrialization of the state. In the analysis of Professor Bhaskar Dutta, in 1978, the ratio of the rural and urban populations in the state below the poverty line were 58 and 39 per cent, while analogous figures for India as a whole were 51 and 41 per cent.

The corresponding figures in 2005 are 38.2 (rural) and 24.4 (urban) per cent for West Bengal, while in India perspective 41.8 (rural) and 25.7 (urban) per cent. But Professor Dutta's expectation was much higher from a left front government whose USP is 'caring for the people'. In the opinion of Professor Bhaskar Dutta life expectancy in the state is roughly the same as the all India figure.

But he became critical where education is concerned. He wrote: in contrast, its performance in the education sector has been pretty dismal for a state which takes great pride in its literary and cultural traditions. Bengal's relative position in terms of literacy rates amongst the major states is much lower today than it was in 1981.

He shrugged of the blame of 'step-motherly attitude' of the central government to West Bengal and highlighted the control and clout of the leftist over the first United Front Government and he also blamed the left leaders for their inability to utilize that influence to further the economic prospects of the state during the period.

For Professor Dutta, no large, overpopulated, land scare economy can grow without a sizeable industrial sector. West Bengal has been no exception. Professor Dutta depicted that until very recently, there had

hardly been any attempt to attract capital into the state at a time when other Indian states were falling over each other to get fresh investment projects for themselves. For him, the leaders of the left front must have been extremely myopic and unbelievably naïve to believe otherwise.

Professor Bhaskar Dutta finally suggested, "Elections are a great disciplinary device. The threat of losing power can induce good governance. The lack of credible opposition has enabled the left to come back to power repeatedly, and has resulted in arrogance and inability to learn from the past mistakes. Perhaps a spell on the opposition benches is just what doctor should order for the left<sup>45</sup>.

Then he added: "Do the preachers of change think that parties ruling in states like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka or Rajasthan are the torch bearers of democracy? Can the dubious models of governance upheld by these states be an alternative to the Left regime in Bengal?"<sup>46</sup>

Bengal's attitude towards education, culture, tradition and over all political out-look is, perhaps, correctly depicted by Shree Swapan Dasgupta in his article: "The Middle Kingdom" in the Telegraph, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2011. The uncertainty of the time, specially, during 70s, is nicely reflected.

To avoid year loss he expressed his willingness to join a Delhi College to pursue his study in history. To his utter surprise, a 'grand-uncle' asked: "Are there College in Delhi?" Apart from Oxbridge, for a section of Bengali in those days, recommended the Presidency College as the ultimate destination to study history. These group of Bengali neither heard of St. Stephen nor did they want to know. He termed these proud Bengalis as "Umbrellas".

Shree Dasgupta suggests that this can be an interesting subject matter for historians to find out the time period when Bengali bhadralok first started viewing himself as 'the intellectual master race' of India. Even, according to Shree Dasgupta, the much talked about partition of 1947 could not stop Bengali pretensions. The famine of 1943 and partition of 1947 unsettled the Bengali bhadralok intellectuals that

ultimately brought two fundamental changes; Shree Swapan Dasgupta described these changes as distortions.

First with their innate disbelief in capitalism, Bengal's intellectuals detached themselves from the wealth creation process. The virtues of Swadeshi entrepreneurship took back seat when in the 1950s Bengalis accepted 'socialism' as the preferred alternative. He termed it as 'progressive' current.

Secondly, this progressive thought was challenged by multiple intellectual current in Bengali. He charted, during the last decade of Raj there had been several competing trends, viz., loyalism, nationalist conservatism, Hindutva, Muslim separatism, Gandhism Revolutionary terrorism, and Marxism.

After 1967 with the down fall of Congress hegemony and dispensations, the debate became a tussle between shades of either socialism or Marxism. According to Shree Swapan Dasgupta's contention it created 'an intellectual straitjacket and contributed to an intellectual ossification" in Bengal.

Siddhartha Sankar Ray's effort to tackle both the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) and Miss Mamta Banerjee's disastrous 2006 election campaign were tuned with the same line 'a combination of muscle power' and 'progressive posturing'. For Shree Dasgupta in the ongoing election campaign Mamta Banerjee consciously took a middle path by rejecting hardline of leftism during her opposition to the Tata Motor Project in Singur and by promising political Sobriety and development with a human face. But Shree Swapan Dasgupta's contention is that 'the mere fact that she had to genuflect before Left populism to achieve her electoral breakthrough in the 2009 parliamentary election is indicative of the Communist movement's success in making "the political culture of West Bengal drearily monochromatic".

The contention of Professor Bhaskar Dutta is also reflected in the thinking of Shree Swapan Dasgupta. The Left Front succeeded in power equations in the country side. Operation Barga made the share-croppers

the de-facto owner of the land. Literally, empowered the poor complemented by militant unionism triggered the nervous flight of capital from 1967.

With the advent of deregulation, while other states are creating investment friendly environment to woo the ultimate investors for industrialization, Bengal played street cricket during state sponsored bandh holidays. It was observation Shree Das Gupta.

The Left Front intellectuals, according to Shree Swapan Dasgupta, fallaciously thought - 'a more equitable rural society would trigger a new wave of industrialization' since the purchasing power of the people had increased. But this idea did not give any dividend to the left front government.

As a result, Bengal was left far, far behind in the race. The reason according to Swapan Dasgupta was that the environment for investment was not thought to be conducive. The problem was Bengal.

Shree Dasgupta compared in his article Shree Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee with Kautsky but Sri Bhattacharjee was helpless to pursue his 'do it now' culture in an environment of 'chalbe na' culture. Dasgupta believed that any change of dispensation will not bring any radical change until Bengali invites a 'counter revolution' at their head level.

With the effect of globalization and great economic down turn worldwide, like other parliamentary parties, CPI(M) also showed some kind of deviation in its policy perspectives. A section of Indian Press is often active to expose these aberrations. Moreover, it is found that this section of media keeps no stone unturned to prove prevarication of the left from the classical Marxism and Leninism. But they maintain a stoic silence while other major Indian parties deviated from the path of Gandhism became over burdened with corruption, utter in-efficiency and myopic vision problem.

One such startling news is published by the Annand Bazar Patrika on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. The news reads: after BJP it is the turn of CPI(M) to be exposed by the Wikileaks. This will, according to the news paper, raise the

old debate inside the CPI(M) about the question of liberalism and related market economy.

The reporter of the story writes that just a few days ago the CPI(M) polit-bureau member Sitaram Yechuri delivered a lecture in Colombia University and he stated over there that in the name of economic liberalism the United States is persuing the imperialist policy world wide.

Immediately after that Wikileaks exposed a cable report (128590: Sensitive) sent to Washington by Henry Jardin, American Consul General in Kolkata about the exchange of ideas, between the Chief Minister of West Bnegal,Sri Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Mr. Henry Paulson, the then U.S. Finance Secretary. The whole incident took place sometime in October, 2007.

According to Shree Jayanta Ghoshal, the reporter from New Delhi reports that there had been a meeting between Shree Bhuddhadev Bhattachayaya, the Chief Minister of West Bengal and Mr. Henry Paulson, the then U.S. Finance Secretary on October, 2007. The cable discloses that Shree Bhattacharya supported the cause of economic liberalism. The communist parties in India are also adopting with the changed reality. In future all will follow the same route or they will be routed. In this changed economic situation reforms is a must even for the communists. The journalist added that on the eve of Assembly Election in Bengal the Left Front is prioritizing the interest of the peasants and the development of agriculture keeping aside the subject and issue of Industrialization and economic liberalization. The pertinent question is thus: which one is the CPI(M)'s official stand?

It would not be irrelevant here to mention that the Left Front Government in West Bengal declared very clearly: Agriculture is our base; and standing on the firm ground of agricultural success we want to touch the sky, i.e., Industrialization. "Industrialization is not at the cost of agriculture but progress in both the sectors".

The reflection of the same opinion in also expressed by professor Amartya Sen. In an interview with Ms. Swati Bhattacharya published in

Anandabazar patrika on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 Professor Sen advised: "I don't believe the possibility to increase production and income in agriculture is over. Nor I believe there is any antagonism between agriculture and industry"<sup>47</sup>.

Professor Sen stressed on that in West Bengal the land taken for industrialization is very meager, e.g. in Singur only 1000 acres of land is being taken. The pertinent question here is those who will be removed from agriculture, how would they earn for sustenance after their dispossession of land? The question is pertinent.

Professor Amartya Sen emphasized on the complementary nature of agriculture and industry. Mentioning about an article of Shree Ashok Mitra, an eminent economist, writer, columnist and first and former finance minister of the Left Front Government, 'Kayekti Artha Abong udbigna yagasha, Anandabazar Patrika, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2007, raised a very pertinent question: Is the possibility of agriculture as revenue earner really over?

Professor Sen admitted that agricultural yield can be increased by adopting various modern methods of agriculture and more emphasis should be given for marketing and also to establish a close link with modern industries by minimizing the role of the middle man. With the help of the industrialization the agro-production can be increased.

Professor Amartya Sen also identified a truth and has been airing it for last 40 years that our different abilities help to grow and strengthen the economy. In his words: I am for last 40 years sensitizing the cause of education and health. One of the reasons, the standard of living and general physical ability of the public depend much upon education and health facilities. But another reason is that the overall progress of our economy is closely related to education and health services. Thus, progress in agriculture, industry, education and health should be addressed simultaneously<sup>48</sup>.

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