

CHAPTER VIII**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING
OVSERVATIONS**

Indian Society and politics run in an environment of plural framework. Multilingual, multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural backdrops in one sense, kept the demographic picture alienated one from the other. This segmented picture offers to political ideologies and political parties to unite apparently disunited population forces.

The National Political Party like Congress since the very beginning showed the path of balancing among the different factors to increase its mass-base. To increase the popular support the policy of populism comes to the fore. The segmented factors play havoc in the sphere of populism. The choice of a Yadav candidate by all contesting political parties in Yadav majority areas or a Muslim in a Muslim majority area or a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe candidate in scheduled caste or scheduled tribe prone area is a common practice in Indian Polity or in body-politic. The place of ideology or political policy perceptions in a broad framework works least or not at all. The characteristic of pluralism in Indian body-politic is not at all above segmented feelings, nor do the political parties of Nationalist feelings try to take the stake to come out from the narrow and immediate parliamentary gains. The Indian lefts are to adjust and adapt their broad universal theory within this narrow framework and to keep their existence alive as well as march forward to lead in the major political scenario.

After the debacle in the socialist camps in the East European countries and also in the erstwhile U.S.S.R., the Indian Political Parties with absolute nationalist feelings wanted to corner the Indian lefts at the political level about its justification and relevance in the present day world. The irony of fate among these 'left-chasing' political parties is that they are ostensibly attacking the imperialist plans and programmes and economic programmes of the imperialist countries of the West, on the

other hand; they support the debacle of socialists worldwide by the constant intrigue of the imperialist forces against the lefts.

Like other countries, a section of Indian Press also pressed the cause of debacle of the socialist camps in Indian perspective. "For the Left, there is of course no questioning the importance of Lenin. But, as Thursday's quite celebration shows Lenin – or Marxs, Engles or Stalin for that matter – is no longer as effective a slogan for rallying the Indian people together as it once was"¹. To them deprived of its Soviet-era symbols, the Indian Left is delving into the country's past for new symbols. The news tells the tale-tells of the Indian Left, especially the CPI is for instance, greatly engrossed in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago address. It is busy organizing Padayatras through districts of West Bengal with large cut-outs of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam adorning king-size tableaux. And these days, it is embroiled in a better argument with the Bharatiya Janata Party on whether or not Vivekananda was secular.

But from the part of the Indian Left it is nothing new, they have just renewed the stress. In words of CPI Secretary M. Farooqi "There is nothing wrong in our citing th examples Vivekananda or the epics. We are doing it for years"². CPI(M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury explains: "We do not see it as a search for new symbols, but it is an attempt at preventing the hijacking of a certain culture of which Indian Communists are as much a part as anybody else"³.

Farooqi admits that "after the initial euphoria of the freedom movements, the Left failed to take note of the disillusionment of the people"⁴. Thus, M. Farooqi said "This section which felt let down by the degeneration of the Congress in the Post-Nehru period and was, therefore, searching for an alternative to the Congress. This section took refuge in religion and in the BJP which seemed to emerge as an alternative"⁵. To beat the BJP on its own ground, the Left has launched its offensive using the same weapon. "We realized that it is a potent

weapon"⁶. "Indianness is not the monopoly of the BJP. Marxists of India have always attempted to imbibe its own culture. If a Marxist forgets the characteristics of his own country, he is not a Marxist"⁷. "Left's search for new slogans should have begun 10 years ago. It was a serious lapse on the part of the Left that we did not draw on the rich heritage of our Bhakti and Sufi movements, of the Bengal renaissance and so on"⁸. The Left leaders seek to stress that the propagation of Vivekananda or Ramakrishna does not imply that Lenin or Marx have been rendered irrelevant. "We are using an Indian context to only enrich the Marxist concept. Somewhere we have to use the symbol of Vivekananda, somewhere else the slogan of Lenin"⁹.

To combat this immanent enemy of Communalism and Fascist force like the BJP and the RSS Sitaram yecheri said, 'In not allowing the BJP to hijack this tradition the two-pronged strategy of the BJP has to be first understood. On the one hand, the BJP is trying to create a false sense of monolithic unity in Hindu diversity. On the other hand, it is attempting to consolidate this unity by creating hatred against an enemy image. And to combat this, we have to take the bull by the horns"¹⁰.

The attempt of the BJP Governments can be seen in the BJP ruled provinces where they are manipulating the syllabus of schools to steer the young minds of the students. "So the BJP is merely formalizing our political parties' shared ideology into an academic discipline when it 'corrects' history or inflicts 'Vedic Mathematics', for example, on children. An exercise asks the child 'If 15 Kar Sevaks can demolish the Babri Masjid in 300 days, how many Kar Sovaks can then demolish it in 15 days?'

The States that have experienced BJP Government, children have already been doped with 'history' as 'corrected' by the RSS/ Samples: (i) the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Upanishads are definitive history; (ii) the Aryans alone constitute the architect of Indian civilization; (iii) the Indian (i.e. Hindu) soldiers should be regarded as the first

freedom fighters since they inflicted an ignominious defeat on Alexander the Great"¹¹.

It is not enough to note that these blatant lies being passed off as "history", are calumny against a whole community. What is worse, these are intended to brainwash our children so as to make them inveterate believers not in Hinduism, nor in Ram, but in the Big Brothers, who insists: don't ask questions; hear and believe. Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings demand the opposite. When he tested his guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa's dislike for money and matter the latter said: "That's it: Test your Guru before you trust him"¹². Vivekananda said, "The only power is in realization and that lies in our selves and comes from thinking ... the glory of man is that he is a thinking being ... and therein he differs from animals. I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority"¹³.

However, three conclusions are unavoidable. One, the battle for what Vivekananda called "Man-making education" must start in the field of politics. Indira Gandhi's Emergency has shown us the havoc that dictatorship can play with the lives and liberties of common people. There is no question of exchanging democracy for dictatorship. So, two, we need politicians but, three, we must either reform them or they will bring on dictatorship - and concomitant evil, fascism - destroying the bases of democracy like education.

The left politics of true secularism has paved the way. If we have eyes to see, our students are ready to acquit themselves creditably. "Look at the BJP affiliate, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad's bastions in Uttar Pradesh - Benaras Hindu University, Allahabad University and Himachal University the ABVP was routed in the last students' union election in these three Universities. The All India Student Association which won had drummed up only this slogan: "End Politics of religion and violence"¹⁴.

Setting a Policy in Practice

A section of Indian Press always follows two pronged strategies to combat left influence in India. When Left Front in West Bengal first time in Indian constitutional history introduced Panchayat Raj System, the initial step towards an untraveled path in an environment of static rural set up it created some administrative static backlogs, the Press of the particular kind became arrogant and fastidious to Left-Front. They never admitted openly, despite World Bank's recognition of the success of Left approach to implement a purely Gandhian far sight. But secondly, with the recent decision of the Left Font to reintroduce English in the Primary level. Ananda Bazar, the leading Bengali Newspaper wrote: "In the rural regions of the District of Burdwan, a very common feature that is noticed over the last few years is, farmers are cultivating their agricultural fields with their own tractor"¹⁵. But Ananda Bazar also states: "Another startling feature that is noticed in Santinikatan, the brain-child of Ranindranath, the ideal seat of learning through mother tongue, the number of mushrooming English medium schools, the long ques of eager parents for an English medium school admission form shows us the transformation of the entire educational as well as economic scenario. The demands are changing with the development of the rising "new class" at the village level. Thus, the left Front in the State once again reintroduced English at the lower level in schools Though, the argument to support to the cause of not introducing English in the lowr primary level was "The children will learn better if only mother-tongue is introduced in the primary level. The solid base of mother-tongue will help them to learn English better in the Madhyamik level. The existence of two languages will not help the other to learn any one of the language'. This explanation of the one language theory in the Primary level by the Left Front was purely academic. Behind it, there was far-reaching effective political interest. It was fit with the then village demand. As a matter of fact, popular slogan of the eighties is taken back for same cause of retaining popularity"¹⁶.

III

Assessment of the Left Front Government Education Policy in the First years: A brief overview:

For the last 34 years a Left Government despite different odds was in power in the State of West Bengal. Certainly, this is an alternative approach in the body polity of Indian plural society. So far we have discussed almost elaborately the different aspects of Left perception of education that they are following amidst much criticism on certain aspects. The arrangement they have made after coming to power in 1977, to analyze and evaluate those arrangements and set up of their education system, they appointed an "Education Commission" in the year 1991 in August headed by Dr. Ashok Mitra, the former Finance Minister of West Bengal Left Front Government along with eight other learned members. The Government asked to submit the Report within six months. But after consecutive two amendments of that instruction, the tenure of the Commission had been increased. The Commission has submitted their report in the month of August of 1992. The extension of the tenure of the Commission also happened in the case of the Commission of 1981 headed by Dr. Bhabotosh Dutta. The Commission only dealt with Higher Education. The Bhabotosh Dutta Commission finally submitted their report in the year 1984.

In the assessment and analysis of the Ashok Mitra Commission Report, we find the different constructive criticisms and suggestions of the left perspective of education of the Left Front Education in West Bengal.

The Subject-matter of Consideration and the Periphery of Suggestion

The subject-matter of consideration of the Commission was specified most elaborately by the Government. In the 1.2 paragraph of the Commission Report has stated to evaluate and analyze "The entire spectrum" of the education of "the State". But the Government put stricture to limit the area of suggestions. In the area of reference, the portion of 2(d) has categorically said to suggest "a feasible programme in

the light of social and economic circumstances obtained in the country of the state. It has again said in part 2(g) to the commission to suggest "an outline of the appropriate institutions and policies consistent with the existing social milieu. Despite the strict instruction of the Government, the commission said in their suggestions in the 7th paragraph of the 18th Chapter, 16th Chapter and the 19th Chapter "The ailments that the present education system is suffering from, they can not be eradicated by the segmented approach. What is essential that is total transformation of social ethos and the general attitude of the community".

Once again at the end of the second Chapter of the portion 2.48-2.51, the Commission said, there is no substantial change brought in the qualitative term after Independence. It is altogether the continuation of the imperial education system introduced by the British Government. They have stated, "No radical alternative has been given a trial".

In the Para no. 4.5, the Mitra Commission said, the State Government has not taken sufficient initiative in the sector of literacy during 1977-1987. In the last two years although some initiative has been taken but the population of the districts where people from the age group of 9 to 55 come under the literacy enterprise and 80 per cent of them become literate are called "Complete Literate" districts. (Para 4.7). The Commission has given stress on 'Universal literacy' of the boys and girls of the age group of 14 years and expected that all the right-thinking people will agree with their point. The Commission said the number of Primary Schools has increased 25 per cent during Left Front Government and number of School going children has increased 80 per cent since 1977. The number of teachers has been increased considerably. The present ratio is 1:40; the government is thinking to change the ratio by increasing number of teachers and wants to make it 1:30. The organizational and institutional set up has been rearranged in an elaborate fashion, the salary of the teachers has been increased considerably well (Para 3.2 - 3.6). The government has allotted one thousand crore rupees for only primary education. Though to evaluate the policy of the Left Front Government the Commission put the note

that 95 per cent of the money is being spent just for disbursing salary and if the Government makes the student-teachers ratio 1:3-, their 100 per cent of money will be spent for salary purpose (93.8 Para). In the Para 3.11 the Commission categorically stated that some teachers at the primary and other stages are not giving full attention to their teaching assignment rather they 'sub-contracted their teaching function to a number of chronics'.

The Commission praised the State Government in the Para 2.4 for increasing plan and non-plan expenditure for education. In 1976-77, the non-plan expenditure was 12.89 per cent on education. During 1991-92, the non-plan expenditure was 21.10 per cent. In addition to it planned expenditure the proportion would be 25 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. Though this is a marked development in the State of West Bengal, but still, the Commission has stated that in comparison to other state it is still behind. Rather West Bengal is trying to 'catch up' with the other states. The Commission has further stated that the norm decided by the 9th Finance Commission for the expenditure on education, in accordance to it West Bengal in the field of Primary education has spent 84 crores of rupees less in the non-plan expenditure.

The statistics it has given in the 4.1 column of the 47 page is that in 1981 according to the population ratio the percentage of literacy was 48.65 in 1991, the ratio has increased and has become 57.41 per cent. The rate of increase of the percentage is 18.6. To make it 100 per cent, with this rate of development it will take 23 years. The literacy rate among women in West Bengal has increased from 36.07 to 46.57 per cent and with this rate of development it will take 53 years to reach the goal of 100 per cent. West Bengal is much ahead than all other Indian states. But the rate of development is very slow in West Bengal itself (Column 2.28).

In column number 2.12 we get the percentage of children in the age group of six to fourteen years who belong to the classes of standard I-V and VI and VII. If we analyze this statistics a little carefully we will

realize that since some students belonging to Class I to V and also VI and VII, are older than the rest of the students of the class; therefore, even if the ratio is one hundred per cent still it cannot be concluded that all children belonging to the age group of six to fourteen years are going to school. Though it is difficult to assess, what the ratio should be to be absolutely certain of the number of school going students but it is presumed that 125% would give a fairly good idea. The 2.12 columns of the Mitra Report shows that in West Bengal in the session 1987-88 in the classes of I to V the ratio was 118.1, Tamilnadu's ratio was 131.8, Maharashtra 121.7. The position of West Bengal was fifth. In the area of classes VI and VII, West Bengal occupied the ninth place with a ratio of 57.6%, Kerala's ratio was 96.9% and Himachal Pradesh 9.9% in the field of girl education in classes V and VI West Bengal stood 8th with the ratio 57.6% whereas Kerala's ratio was 95.7% and Himachal Pradesh's ratio was 76.4% and Tamilnadu's 71%.

Commending highly about West Bengal's effort for the spread of literacy over the past two years, the Mitra Commission also stated that the whole praise should not go to West Bengal alone since the Central Government's National Literacy Mission authority played the role of a catalyst.

The Commission report has repeatedly praised the West Bengal Government for increasing the budget to be spent on Education. The page 15 of the Commission Report Column 2.1 we get the difference the expenditure on education in West Bengal in the year 1976-77 and 1992-93. In the area of Primary Education Government had spent 53.64 crores. It is certainly a substantial increase but the inflationary rate and devaluation of money demands more expenditure and allotment to fulfil requirements. This should be kept in view.

Recommendations suggested by the Ashok Mitra Commission Report

The different suggestion and recommendations made by the commission's report in its various Chapter have been compiled briefly in the 19th Chapter. In total there are 108 suggestions, some of them are:

1. Stress should be laid on the repair and the construction of the School building and basic teaching-aids should be provided (19.10).
2. Tiffin should be provided and minimum clothing for girl-children should be given (19.15)
3. Timely distribution of free books which are readable and not torn (19.11).
4. Play-grounds and equipments to be provided for their physical development (19.16).
5. More stress to be laid on the education of Muslim and Adivasi girls from the poorer and backward sections of society (19.19).
6. There should be a proper library and librarian in every school (19.85, 19.88).
7. Proper arrangement should be made for regular inspection of schools (19.14, 19.29, 19.30).
8. 220 working days should be scheduled for every school per year (19.28).
9. Payment of salary of teachers at all levels should be disbursed on the first date of every month. This responsibility should be shouldered by the Government (19.109).

If we look back a little in the year 1977, dated 19th and 20th October, at Mabalankar Bhavan, New Delhi, a Left Front Student Organization, popularly known as S.F.I., had made similar demands as mentioned above as well as in the previous chapter mentioned by me. The same suggestions made by Mitra Commission after 15 year of Left Front Administration, does it not throw enough light on the state of affairs or is not the suggestions made by the Leftist Ashok Mitra Commission enough criticism?

Apart from the above mentioned suggestions, the Commission also suggested a few changes to be made in School, College and University

education. Among them one is that the subject called compulsory Additional in the name of teaching language is termed as an oddity and should be removed, instead definite books should be recommended and examinations conducted (19.47 and 8.43).

The Commission also stated that the question setting pattern should be changed thoroughly. The so called objective questions should be removed and questions should be based on comprehension, so that the student can be tested on the expression of their thoughts and ideas clearly and logically (19.77, 11.22).

Regarding the function of the College Service Commission the Mitra Commission stated that the College Service Commission or C.S.C. would only prepare a list of eligible candidates on their educational qualification for College teaching. They should have no role what so ever to decide which College the lecturers should be appointed to. The C.S.C. enlisted candidates would apply to different Colleges seeing advertisements, and College authorities from among the enlisted applicants would selected the best one. (19.47).

Accordingly for certain critics this is an ideal suggestion to check the nepotisms and the corruption at the Party level. But I personally feel that corruption would still prevail, only the power would be transferred from the C.S.C. to the respective College authorities. So the condition of the eligible candidates would be from the fire to the frying pan. Ostensibly we see that the Left Front Government is vehemently protesting against the Central's decision of autonomous colleges. Whereas if this Mitra Commission's suggestion in this sphere is accepted then it shows that left Front is not only falling in the trap but also tacitly advocating the Central Government's decision on autonomous Colleges.

The Commission has also suggested that the Government should not interfere or intrude in the daily affairs of any educational institutions. This policy should be observed meticulously by the Government. The Government should only look after the financial matter (19.68).

In the 16th Chapter the Mitra Commission has also mentioned the relation between state and Central Government with regard to education, which we have discussed in the earlier chapters. Now, the commission stated about the introduction of 'Navadaya Vidyalaya' or 'Model School' in the state (16.12, 16.14) in the 16.15 paragraph, the Commission has expressed hopes that the Central Government would change their opinion and make the Navadaya Scheme acceptable to the State. In 19.108, the Commission has stated "if the Navadaya Schme is to be made acceptable" Then the whole set up has to be changed. Now the question arises to whom is the Commission directing its question? If I know correctly, the Central Government has not asked for any suggestion in this context. And the State Government does not have the authority to make and modification in the 'Navadaya Scheme'. Then, "If the Navadaya Schme is to be made acceptable. ..." then what are we to follow? Is the State Government trying to pacify and mould the opinion of their ardent student and youth wings who are protesting vehemently against the 'Novodaya Schme' or are they trying to reap the harvest of overflowing money that is being procured for the elitist Navadaya Scheme? Are the bureaucratic lefts trying to balance precariously on two boats?

Certain Suggestions which has raised a storm of Controversy

1. The pass marks are to be increased to qualify for Madhyamik Examination. The pass mark for every subject should be 40 and average percentage should be 50 (19.27). The Commission presumes in the next 5 to 10 years there will be an up-gradation in the level of teaching and other essential matters (5.37).
2. At present two papers are allotted for mother-tongue. The Commission suggests that one and half papers should be kept for mother-tongue (19.35) and half paper should be allotted for any classical language, for example, Sanskrit, Arbi and Parsi etc. (5.64).
3. Regarding the teaching of English the Commission has stated that instead of introducing English in Class VI which is prevalent now,

it should be introduced in Class V. The Commission also suggests that the book prescribed at present named 'Learning English' should be changed thoroughly (19.36). Two members of the Commission Dr. Gouri Nag and Sunanda Sanyal have differed in their opinion and have expressed their suggestion to introduce English from the third form.

4. The expenditure regarding education is increasing and to implement the Commission's suggestion it is going to increase further. Keeping these points in mind the Commission has decided to increase tuition fees and examination fees. In the secondary and Higher Secondary levels let the prevailing condition of no-tuition fees remain. But a development fee should be taken in an uniform manner in the whole state. Keeping in mind the students coming from poor families, 30 per cent of students should be exempted from this fee. Out of the 70 per cent of students, 500 rupees are to be taken yearly from the student of urban areas and 250 rupees per annum from the students of rural areas. In the undergraduate level 50 rupees per month should be charged and in the graduate and post-graduate levels 75 rupees per month should be charged as "tuition fees". Again the exemption should be given to those 30 per cent poor students. Suggestions have been made to hike the fees considerably in the Engineering and Medical courses. Examination fee, library fee, laboratory charges and also the hostel seat rents have been exempted from this hike (19.112, 19.13, 19.101).

To provide mass-education and to make education for all was the prime slogan of the left in India. Based on this foundation they refuted the 1986 Central Education Policy as it termed its education for the few in expanse of all i.e. elitist education. Now, if this suggestion of the Mitra Commission is accepted by L.F. Government would it not be following the same much protested footsteps?

5. The Commission has also suggested that teachers from the Primary level to the University level should retire at the age of sixty years and there should be no exceptions; the Government should make categorical announcement on this issue. It has also mentioned that the retired teachers should get their P.F., pension and gratuity in regular manner (19.102).

The argument put forward by the Commission supporting the retirement age of teachers at the age of 60 is: it will increase the scope of employment. At present, this State of West Bengal has 50 lakhs of unemployed youth (are they all still young?). Out of which 20 lakhs are educated unemployed (do they still remember any text of their school days? — it is a matter of conjecture (15.37). The Commission says if the teachers retire at the age of sixty, it can provide employment for some educated unemployed. We support this noble thought. But the teacher community who represented the Commission if they glanced a little beyond their Commission Report, they would see that the educational institutions of the state have various positions lying vacant year after year. Right under their very nose we have the glaring example of Calcutta University which has four vacancies in each department. The whole esteemed University has more than hundred posts of teachers lying vacant¹⁷.

Part-times worth Rs. 120 to 150.00 per class are carrying out the farce of educating the students under the direction of the State Government. Deaths, retirements or when some teachers leave their jobs voluntarily the vacancies are never filled up. Probably, the teacher members of the Commission who helped to formulate the report became acclimatized with those vacant posts in their one's own institution. So the noble suggestion of the Commission to procure employment, it is another historical myth?

In the beginning of this Chapter we have noted that politics and need for politicians can not be ignored. And citing the statement of Swami Vivekananda we wanted to bring real and man-making education

for every strata of the society including the political leaders irrespective of their ideological leanings and party allegiances. We have also said that Mitra Commission wanted to bring change in the entire spectrum of political system. Unlike Bhabatosh Dutta Commission, they have been asked to suggest evaluate and recommend future educational properties within this given set up. Despite limitations, they have addressed new words to all sections of population irrespective of their ideological biasness to be good to bring final good in the education policy for men ultimately. Thus, Prof. Jyoti Bhattacharyya said that "the members of this Commission is a type of good men"¹⁸.

The Suggestion on the Rearrangement of Allotment of Expenditure of Education

The last but not the least, the Commission has put forward its suggestion on the rearrangement of budgetary allotment on education in the paragraph no. 19.118. As mentioned earlier the greatest emphasis should be laid on Universal literacy and the education till the age of 14 years. Overriding priority should be given on this issue. Immediately after this the Commission has stated to bring down the expenditure on the Dearness Allowance in the Primary level from 95 per cent to 75 per cent and in Madhyamik level from 80 per cent to 55 per cent. The reason put forth for this argument is that if the lion's share of the money is spent on D.A. and salary then next to nothing is left for repairing of the school building, library, laboratory, black board, atlases and books. But the Commission has not suggested any means or way out to execute this above suggestion. Professor Jyoti Bhattacharya in the famous Bengali magazine "Desh" showed some way out. To him (1) to increase the money allotted for education in a considerable amount and the lion's share of it should be spent on basic amenities required for the school. (2) If expenditure cannot be brought down in this way, then another procedure is, to cut down substantially the different allowances of the teachers and non-teaching staffs. And to formalize these aspects, (a) D.A. should be brought down; (b) number of teachers and non-teaching staff should be brought down. But from among these three ways, which way should the

State Government adopt? The first one is beyond the financial capacity of Government. The next one will hurt the interest of the teachers and non-teaching staffs and immediately it will hurt the vote-bank of the Left-Front Government. The third proposal is within the capacity of the State Government. But the Government is bound with the promise of spreading education. To fulfil this promise the Government is liable to increase the number of schools and to recruit new teachers and non-teaching employees. But the encroachment or educational expenditure can only ensure the qualitative development – Nanhya Pantha Vidyate Ayanaya.

But one note of lamentation is that the Commission has not shown the way out from this jigsaw or riddle.

The Problem of Discussion the Mitra Commission Report

The CPI(M) West Bengal State Committee Publishes a highly esteemed cultural and literary magazine 'Nandan'. In its February 1993 issue, the Party said with a tone of complain when the second issue on "Education Commission" was published on December, 1993 and they had an expectation to get sufficient response and storm of debate on the various suggestions, analysis-evaluation and recommendations on the Ashok Mitra Commission Report. But nothing happened of that sort. Nandan magazine questioned – "but why" Are we not thinking about education? Are we hesitating to express our opinion? Thus, where is the opportunity or scope to develop our education?"¹⁹

To this I have an answer from my own personal experience: while writing this thesis on The Educational Development and Marxian Philosophy: Policy Perspectives and Strategies of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). I faced a serious obstacle to catch hold of this "Ashok Mitra Commission Report". I sought help from teachers who are so called Left Leaders with radical and progressive eloquence. I shuttled from desk to desk of bureaucratic left academician and I am sorry to state that even the highest position holders of a university who happened to have the copy of the Ashok Mitra Commission report, refused to part with it even for half a day, lest a poor student should know more, now a very relevant

question arises, why I did not go to the university library, the answer lies in the fact that the librarian then realized after query that the report should be on the shelves. If I am not mistaken a copy of the Mitra Commission Report should be in every school, college and university library, especially in West Bengal for the left party professes that democratic participation is the crux of real democracy to move ahead with 'People's Democratic Movement'. My genuine effort to seek out the commission report proved to be futile, so how is it expected that lay people will comment on it when they are ignorant of its existence due to its non-availability. Red Tapism and bureaucratic attitude have eaten up even the educational field of the Leftist West Bengal. Can we lay the entire blame on the prevalent system? Though, somehow I managed to get hold of a copy of the Mitra Report, I feel fruitful participation requires dissemination of knowledge and for this ample supply of material and their easy availability is necessary. Otherwise the whole affair is like Don Quixote's fighting with imaginary windmill.

The other impediment pointed out by Sri Jyoti Bhattacharya is that although the Left Front long propagated for the massive introduction of mother tongue, but in case of their said Commission Report, they have prepared it in English language and that English language is fit for the erudite world only. Professor J. Bhattacharya being a well known professor of English of the University of Calcutta raised a very apt question "Are their participation not required those who do not know English"?²⁰

In fact, the Mitra Commission has, by implication at least, left us in no doubt about what it thought of the state of education in West Bengal.

"But perhaps this was not the government of West Bengal had actually bargained for, or even what the commission had anticipated when it has started to write its report"²¹.

The advantage of democracy is the adjustability and tremendous power of acclimatization with the changing demand of the polity. The examples are not meager.

The greatest example of it is the birth of the notion of 'Welfare State'. Shri Jyoti Basu told in one interview in London in the "Meet the press" programme that ours is a welfare government providing relief to the people within the existing structure. This adjustability gives the birth of governance which is based on patch-work. The Ashok Mitra Commission rightly said that nothing of radical sort can be expected within this structure (Parliamentary Structure). Only thorough change in the socio-economic ethos can bring radical change in the education policy. The question is related with the system. What is common to the Congress, the Janata Dal or the BJP, the point that is also common to a left party sitting in power in a Parliamentary form of government? All the Policy perceptions centres round the vital point of vote-bank and survival and continuation. So, nothing is unexpected in the Left Front Education Policy perception. It is old wine in new bottles where the whole system is suffering from acute bottleneckness.

In recent years the greatest complaint against left rule in West Bengal, especially in the field of education, was the politicization of education. All India Trinamool Congress often described this tendency as the 'Anilization of Education' named after late Anil Biswas, the former State Secretary of the communist Party of India (Marxist), West Bengal State Committee and also the former Left Front Chairman.

The urge for science education is another trend among the young Indians and West Bengal is no exception. But lack of good number of Engineering and Medical Colleges in Bengal has seen exodus of students from West Bengal to other states. Recent initiatives and introduction of good many engineering colleges could control to some extent this exodus. But there is enough room for improvement, specially, in this sector and also in the field of Medical Sciences. An effective PPP model can only break this stagnation.

It is a fact that the Left rule in West Bengal could successfully develop an inner urge among the people for education. The parents are ready to sacrifice their comfort for the better education of their children. Parallel education in the form of 'Private Tuition' is a case in point.

The reality says, keeping in mind the all India perspective on education that when the students are to compete nationally to grab berths in good colleges then thorough changes are required in syllabus and medium of instructions as well as in infrastructures. Through the years the rural students are performing well in Secondary examinations than their urban counterparts in West Bengal. To retain the same trend proper infrastructure and appropriate dissemination of knowledge is also needed for plus 2 level as well as higher education to stop the inflow of students from rural Bengal to the urban Bengal. Serious attention should be given to this subject.

In the realm of technical education substantial development has taken place in the last 30 years. A few more Polytechniques and ITI Colleges are in the pipe line including Women's Polytechnique Colleges.

But the demand of the time is to establish a two way Communication between the Industrial Houses and the institutes to upgrade the syllabus to fulfil the need of the market. This condition is also equally applicable in relation to management courses. The University- industry linkage is the need of the hour.

Some states of India introduced All Women's University. West Bengal is yet to get one. Like other states of India, the fees structure and also the pay structure of the teachers and non-teaching employees of the ever enlarging private sectors of West Bengal are not justifiably equal. Except a few aberrations the private sector education initiatives are fully profit oriented. The government can do a lot in this grey area.

The recent voting patterns show the dejection of the minorities towards the left. The unprecedented unemployment and lack of education among the minorities is the real reason of their aversion to the existing political system. This is certainly alarming.

The hills, the terai, some highly underdeveloped districts, the tribal dominated jungle mahal demands special attention. The problem is two pronged: (a) The identity crisis; (b) Lack of proper training and education leads to unemployment and abject poverty. They became easy pray to rebel causes. The effect of the left front government was not enough to solve these problems of the body-polity.

But above all, the highest criticism against the left-rule education policy is its all partisan attitude. Although non-left political parties have equally vitiated education in many ways but the expectation of the people of Bengal from the leftists were little different.

The exasperation of over politicization of education in the name of democracy is reflected in many ways. "The red hammer of Alimuddin street had hit not only Calcutta University", Writes Shree Abhijit Guha, "as portrayed so vividly by the late Professor Santosh Bhattacharyya in his book, Red Hammer over Calcutta University It also affected the other Universities of West Bengal during left rule". The author has gone to that extent by saying, "Academic excellence was ruined in the name of democracy and the university administration was controlled by the party apparatchiks from their district and Kolkata headquarters"²².

The political scenario of West Bengal with regard to education is torn between the two opposite ideas but with a basic aim to control it. In the language of Shree Abhijit Guha in the article: "Both camps are essentially advancing political arguments, one in the name of "de-politicization" and the other in the pretext of 'democracy'²³.

Thus the author commented, "Suffice it to say that "de-politicization" is in itself a political poly similar to unionization of campus in the interest of 'democracy'²⁴.

Ragging takes place when generally the student-body is not politically motivated.

Campus violence is closely associated with the student politics.

Long back, during freedom struggle movement Mahatma Gandhi once qualified the student-struggle with the impending and eminent freedom struggle of the country with these words: "Education can wait but not the freedom of the country". It has encouraged the Indian students to get involved in direct politics.

Now after long 64 years of independence one recommendation of the Lyngdoh Commission was that "no candidate should have a political affiliation".

In a country where 35 crores of people live below the poverty line and equal number of people are illiterate, thus it can be said with all wisdom that Indian student now, henceforth, follow the age-old saying: Chhatranang Adhayanang Tapa' (Student's upright responsibility is to study). At least Lyngdoh Commission Report on Student Politics implies the same spirit.

No one would argue that students are the most perceptive and active body of any living society. They are like live-wires. The Telegraph editorial of 10th March, 2012 reads: Everybody would agree that the root cause of college and university violence is the result of the rivalry among political parties, a rivalry actually located outside the campus.

Suggestions are many. But in a vibrant democracy the spirit of democratic movement are to be carried by the young generation and certainly the students should maintain a pro-active role in the whole process. However, they should not forget their priorities with regard to academics.

However, in this age of '21st century socialism', a group of socialist school believes that 'they delineate their ideas and praxis as different from '20th century socialism'²⁵.

This Latin American project of 21st century socialism suggests that support of a larger population can be achieved by mobilizing a coalition and by remaining the oppressed beyond narrow class terms.

Infact, the relative success of a few experiments in Latin America encouraged the Left in South Asia. It is a project well worth examining and learning from.

Though Amrita Basu compared Parliamentary Communism with that of northern European social democracy. But concept of '21st Century Socialism' is broad based. "The CPI(M) now seems to be deliberating upon the merits of the Latin American experiment, as seen in its draft ideological resolution document that was released recently"²⁶.

While one group of political scientists "Analysing the theoretical debates about parliamentary socialism in Europe to elucidate the CPI(M)'s approach in West Bengal. How successfully had parliamentary communism achieved radical reform? To what extent do structural conditions determine political parties' strategic choices" Might other strategies have produced more progressive out comes?"²⁷

One the other hand, comparatively a new group of political scientists puts emphasis 'by staying true to electoral democracy and by rejecting the notion of Vanguardism by a political party that supposedly represents only the interests of the working class"²⁸.

It is to be noted that the Partido Socialist a Unido de Venezuela led by Hugo Chavez, the Morimiento al Socialismo led by Evo Morales in Bolivia and the Alianza PAIS led by Rafael Correa in Ecuador - "differ from social democratic parties elsewhere in their strong rhetoric against imperialism, the formation of alternative political alliances..."²⁹.

The editorial article of the EPW says: "The success of the Latin American socialists projects elsewhere"³⁰.

It writes with a grumbling note: "China is socialist only on paper, relying on state capitalism and market forces for its development. Cuba has also initiated limited market reforms to address its economic stagnation". And for long North Korea has been on autocratic dictatorship"³¹.

Thus the paper suggests: "As the Arab spring and the occupy Wall Street protest suggest, any acceptable alternative to both authoritarianism and formal liberal democracy can only be a perceptive, deliberative and substantive variant of democracy that is able to correct the iniquitous tendencies of unfettered capitalism"³².

To conclude with the valuable words of Bertrand Russel he saw the aspect of "Education and the social order" from his own point of view. In the concluding two paragraphs on the subject he wrote in 1932 which is still very relevant even today "Everything deliberately planned is likely to suffer from undue simplicity, leading to momentary and even to a kind of insecurity from perpetually learning the same note struck. It may be that life itself will avoid this danger; at any rate, in Russia, there is still so much surviving from before the Revolution that Communist planning cannot introduce undue simplicity for a long time to come. But in education, if there were not such obvious and interesting practical tasks to be accomplished, the danger of over-simplification would lie very real. The world is more rich and varied than the Marxian formula. A generation confined within the philosophy of *Das Kapital* may be useful, happy, and formidable, but cannot be cocksure and shallow. But in saying this I am speaking from the standpoint of philosophy, not of politics"³³.

Thus Bertrand Russel Continues

"From the standpoint of politics (in the widest sense) I think our verdict must be different. Communism offers a solution of the difficult problem of the family and sex equality - a solution which we may dislike, but which does, at any rate, provide a possible issue. It gives children an education from which the anti-social idea of competition has been almost entirely eliminated. It creates an economic system which appears to be the only practicable alternative to one of masters and slaves. It destroys the separation of the school from life which the school owes to its monkish origin, and owing to which the intellectual, in the west, is

becoming an increasingly useless member of society. It offers to young men and women a hope which is not mechanical and an activity in the usefulness of which they feel to doubt. And if it conquers the world, as it may do, it will solve most of the major evil of our time. On these grounds in spite of reservations, it deserves support"³⁴.

The above opinion passed by Bertrand Russel with regard to the Philosophical basis of a Marxism and its relevance may raise questions it has its pros and cons, in the face of recent developments in the world perspective. But keeping in tally with the opinion of Russel with regard to the relevance of Marxian concept of Politics it can not be ignored completely.

The nature of the Indian government and politics requires a broad discussion. But here in this discussion we have a very little scope to deal with this subject. Nonetheless, in the face of viciously fomenting communal demons, the low profile of economic development, the arrogant social condition of various sorts – economic disparity, the influence of caste, creed and religion in every spheres of social and political life and the role played by the ruling class is not wholly satisfactory, so far. Though, the so called democratic and liberal forces are vehemently trying to corner, the lefts citing the recent debacle of their various camps. Still, the lefts in India, a step aside, with their certain exceptions in view point are not in the lurch but constructively trying to pave their way in the mind of the people. Their varied programmes certainly catching the centre point of discussion. The liberals in India is suffering from setback in their liberally arranged so called secular education. The leftist in India are staying within the same political-administrative framework assuring among many other things communal harmony and steady administration. Thus, the need for left ideology and politics cannot be ignored fully in the present perspective of the Indian government and politics.

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