

INTRODUCTION

The Europeans came to India primarily with two missions for spice trade and for spreading Christianity. But the historical eventualities made them the master of our country and people; we became their subjects. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore 'Baniker Mandanda Dekha Delo Raj Dando Rupe'¹ — the measuring rod of the trader was converted into the royal scepter.

That was the beginning of the slow march or padajatra of a new age where everything was strictly followed by the theory of percolating down, including education. Indeed, in the language of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore "Villages were under absolute darkness of superstition and towns were dimly illuminated"², where entirely new models of ideas came down or were imported along with the new model of administration drop by drop, infiltrated.

Both the nationalism and ideas of communism in our country were imported by ship. After independence, the nationalistic wind was favourable to the sail of the Congress Party. Now dreams, new aspirations and expectations of the people were also high. But at the fag end of the 1960s the winds changed. The leftists in India could capitalise on the despair and despondency of the people by the utter failure of the Congress in social-economic and educational fields. The political monopoly of the Congress hegemony was snatched away in different states and the leftists in West Bengal successfully installed and paved a much eloquent path — the Marxism in a Parliamentary set up.

Thirty four years of staying in power in a Parliamentary Democracy set up, is no mean a task. Shri Jyoti Basu and later on, Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharjee and their left-government have done it and have happily entered into the domain of the Guinness Book of World Records and have become immortal. In this context a question arises in our minds that as Panchyat Raj System, in itself is a land mark in the Indian spectrum, similarly, in the field of education, can the official lefts of West Bengal claim to be a new path finder in the history of India? While analyzing the

Ashok Mitra Commission Report in the Economic and Political Weekly, 8th May, 1993, Shri Tapas Majumder has asked a very relevant question: 'How much we spend on education, however, is not the main question ... The main question is : Are we getting good value for the money spent?'³ Another pertinent question comes, the left and the communists believe, education to be a catalyst to establish most effective communication to reach the people. Can the lefts in West Bengal claim to have achieved this mission in the face of increasing rise of the B.J.P., and the various regional forces and the other communal forces, and be complacent with their three forts i.e. West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura?⁴

Conflict and compromise; rejection and acceptance are the two important premises of governance in any parliamentary set up. Marxists in general are not believers in parliamentary democracy. But a unique experimentation had been going on for last 34 years in West Bengal. By asking the Ashok Mitra Commission "to look at the changes in the education scene since 1977, the Government of West Bengal was actually fishing for compliments and indirect endorsement of its party-line' but it has produced both compliments and reproach. In the face of ensuing pats, criticism and suggestive measure, it was to be seen how the viable alternative of the future Indian polity and its revolutionary government could react and respond"⁵.

Objectives of the proposed Study

Education plays a key role in the life of a nation. This becomes all the more important in a country where the people are called upon to play a very effective role in not only upholding the democratic ideas but also in spreading the democratic ethos among different segments of the population. Not only that, education provides the channel through which political, social, economic and cultural links can be maintained . This is the communicative aspect of the role of education which is considered very vital in a society characterized by conflicting loyalties and interest. From that perspective, education seeks to maintain a balance in the society. This social equilibrium is necessary for the maintenance of the

social and political system. In other words education not only fixes the 'telos' (ends) of the system but also determines the 'duty' (deno) of the people for whom it is meant.

Coming to India, it becomes clear that education has a 'positive' as well as 'constructive' role to play. If the democratic values of the Indian Constitution are to be maintained, there should be total eradication of illiteracy from the country. In India, education should play such a role as to bring about social equality and justice for all men.

In India, education can work as a 'safety valve' for easing the tension that may generate within the body-politic as a result of uncompromising and often contradictory claims and counter-claims. Education, in India, can play the role of a 'Catalyst' in generating an atmosphere for bringing about the desired social reform. This is the urgent need of the hour if India's democratic governance is made to face all challenges social, economic, political and cultural.

It is rightly admitted that the capability of the India democratic policy depends to a great extent, upon its ability not only to conceive of the various societal demands but also to 'assimilate' them in such a way as to generate a sense of oneness, which in long run, gives birth to a sense of nationalism (national identity).

In the face of Globalization of Economic situation some confusion comes to the fore. Apparently, education does not belong to the productive sector. The investment on education has no immediate return. But it depends solely upon the nation and the national policy makers whether they should invest on an apparently unproductive sector and subject like education? The conflict among the central and state governments about the position of education in the constitution in the Concurrent List creates durable and formidable problem. In a plural society like India the ideological approach to education is also different. The position of education, hanging in between, deters its effective spread and development in the body-politic. The suggestions and

recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and the Education Commission 1964-66 are worth mentioning.⁶

The left attitude towards education is entirely different in theoretical term as well as in practical implementation. Its manifestation in different socialist countries depicts that picture. But when a combination of different left-parties with varied party lines and objective launch an education movement along with other subjects in a small state to further its effective influence on the whole population of our country, the endeavour confronts an obstacle in a parliamentary governance – conflict and compromise; rejection and acceptance becomes the order of the day for it's survival and communication. This is the central theme of the present study.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does education influence the pace of nation-building in a developing country like India?
2. What is the precise role that education plays in a society marked by conflicting loyalties and interest as in India?
3. What has the nature of interaction between education and growth of nationalism in India?
4. What has been the attitude of the ruling party towards education policies in India?
5. What role has been assigned to education in the left ideology in general?
6. What has been the communist perception of education policy in India.
7. How have the C.P.I.(M) approached education and its problems in West Bengal?

Overview of the Existing Literature

While trying to answer the questions raised by the present study about the influence of education in our developing country and understanding the attitude of the ruling parties towards educational policies and the communist perception of the educational policy in India, a great deal of information had to be taken from government and semi government documents.

It is appropriate to believe that the Indian communist community would follow Marx's vision on education as found in Das Capital. While reading extensively for the research, I did not find any comprehensive book on Education/ and educational policies dealing exclusively in the Marxist path of educational experiences. One of the reasons may be justified with these words of Jyoti Basu, the first Chief Minister of the Left Front Government in the State of West Bengal, India: "We never thought that people will elect us to power"⁷ To understand the communist mind in India and their goal with regard to education, two masterly works have guided this work. The first book is "Sikisha O Sreni Samparko"⁸ by Dr. Syed Sahedullah and the second one is 'Siksha Prasange'⁹ by Sri Bhavesh Maitra. Both these books broadly focus on Marxist vision on education in India and global perspectives. Both the authors have illustrated their views citing the examples of educational experiences of erstwhile Soviet Union, China and Vietnam, and have highlighted the marked differences in their approach to education vis-a-vis the educational polices of liberal democratic countries.

To understand the nature of interaction between education and the growth of nationalism in India some books were extremely useful. To name a few ... "The Bengal Renaissance"¹⁰ by Professor Sushovan Sarkar deals with the birth of nationalism primarily in Bengal and how it spread across the Indian Subcontinent.

In the book "English education and the origin of Indian Nationalism"¹¹ B.T. Maccully, the author deals with the influence of

modern English Education in India and the consequent birth of Indian nationalism.

The legendary Professor of History and Philosophy, Arnold Toynbee in his famous book "The Glimpses of the World History"¹² expounds his world vision with the certain conclusion on the gospel of nationalism. Toynbee uses a metaphor of a bee who while collecting nectar from flowers unconsciously helps in pollination of flowers; similarly the colonial master in their endeavour to collect raw materials from the Asian, Latin American and African (ALA) countries unconsciously acted as an active agent to spread the feelings of national upheaval and how the introduction of modern education played a pivotal role to ignite the spirit of nationalism.

Regarding the role of education in a society which is marked by conflicting loyalties and interests in a country like India, the books "History of Education in India"¹³ by S.N. Mukherjee and "Education in India: Past Present and Future"¹⁴ by J.P. Banerjee were very useful.

Dr. Chandan Basu's work on left ideology and Bengal in his book "The Making of Left Ideology in West Bengal: Culture Political Economy, Revolution 1947-1970"¹⁵. (Abhijeet Publication) was very enriching. The author focuses on the critical relationship between the economic structure and the social – historical process on the one hand and links between the expressions of the intelligentsia and archaeology of ideology on the other. The book does not subscribe either to orthodox economic interpretation of historical change or to postmodernist cultural deconstruction of social transition. It goes beyond the "orthodox" and post modernist views of postulating Marxist social history of class struggle approaches¹⁶.

A few books worth mentioning here which helped to shape up the understanding of the work are the four volume study of the cultural formation of the district of West Bengal – "Paschim Banger Sanskriti"¹⁷ by Binoy Ghosh. Another book by the same author "Metropolitan Mon Madhyabittya Bidroha"¹⁸ (Kolkata: Orient Longman – 1999) is also a

useful contribution in the field. "The Nation and its Fragments Colonial and Post Colonial Histories"¹⁹ (New Delhi-Oxford University Press, 1994) by Partha Chatterjee gives us an outstanding discussion of the rationality of the National State.

The writings of Ashok Mitra, "Samaj Sangastha Asha Nirasha"²⁰ (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers 1999) and "Kabita Theke Michile"²¹ (Kolkata: Papyrus, 1995) were remarkable for the proper understanding of the social economic formation and identification of the fabric of power which require rigorous theoretical conceptualization of contemporary class structure, class relations and class struggle of the society. Some of the books that helped me in the shaping of my research paper are the following where the titles echo the content of the writings.

'Left Politics in Bengal: Time Travels among Bhadrolok Marxist'²² by Monabina Gupta, is a journalistic account of a journalist and a former S.F.I. activist. The chronicle depicts the saga of the rise of C.P.I.(M) as the vanguard of revolution achieving the political power and subsequent fall of the political dispensation, Jyoti Basu's "Jatadur Mone Pore"²³, a memoir by the veteran politician and statesmen and Partha Chatterjee's - "The present History of West Bengal: Essays in political criticism"²⁴ were very relevant books.

In S.K. Kochhar's "Pivotal issues in Indian Education"²⁵, the author gives a comprehensive detailed overview of education in India with a historical perspective covering all the areas of pre primary to Adult Education, research in education to equalizing educational opportunities. Explaining what makes Basic Education basic and quoting from Mahatma Gandhi the author says "Basic education is generally interpreted as education through craft. This is true to a certain extent but this is not the whole truth. The roots of "Nai Talim" go deeper. It is based on truth and non violence in individual and collective life. Education is that which gives freedom. Untruth and violence lead to bondage and can have no place in education."²⁶

“Higher Education in India” – Policies, Planning and Implementation”²⁷ Kuldip Kaur – Published by University Grants Commission in 2003 details the higher education policies and plans of the country.

The political role of state, particularly in the newly independent state, is very important in determining the nature of popular consciousness. In a country like India the role of state was fundamentally linked with the legacy of the anti – colonial national movement. For example Bipan Chandra noted, “The national movement ... bequeathed to independent India the political tradition of compromise, accommodation and reconciliation of different interests and points of view. Nehru worked within this tradition in evolving national policies after independence. It was an invaluable experience and legacy for all those who wanted to build a strong and prosperous India and a just and egalitarian society Independent India has as a whole remained loyal to the basics of the legacy of the national movement, a large part of which is enshrined in the constitution and incorporated in the programmes and manifestoes of most of the political parties.”²⁸

The overview of relevant literature would be incomplete without mentioning one book, “Education and the Social order”²⁹ by Bertrand Russel published by Routledge in January, 1988 (first Published in 1932). Here Russell dissects the motives behind much educational theory and practice and attacks the influences of chauvinism, snobbery and money energetically discussed and debated are discipline, natural ability, competition, class distinction, bureaucracy, finance, religion, sectorial education, state versus private schools, education in Russia, indoctrination, the home environment and many other topics. Described by reviewers as brilliant, provocative, sane, stimulating, practical and original, this book contains the essence of Rusell’s thought on education and society.

S.N. Mukherjee in his well researched work: “History of Education in India” (Acharya Book Department, Baroda, 1966); “Development of

Modern Indian Education" (Rama Brothers, Delhi) by Bhagwan Dayal, "Bharater Sikshar Itihas" by Mohini Mohan Pan; Publisher: Renuka Pan Hoogly, 1979. "A short History of Education", Macmillan: London, 1949 by D. Flemming; "Sidelights on the National movement in India" by Nagendra Gupta, Hind kitab Ltd. Mumbai, 1st Education, 1946, enriched me in many ways and guided me to depict the development of education in India and subsequent growth of the idea of nationalism in the India subcontinent.

M.R. Masani's "The communist party of India: A short History", Published by Derek Verschoyle Ltd. (London,) 1954 has not only highlighted the development of the communist movement in India, but the book also opened up the hidden reports of the British Government about the Indian early communists.

A comprehensive study of the left movement in India and West Bengal in particular; the day to day report of the C.I.P.(M) and its activities can be found in Shree Saroj Mukherjee's masterly work: "West Bengal: Marches on an untraveled path", Ganashakti Publisher, 1980.

During the course of preparing this work a number of books and works of some foreign writers were read in detail. But special mention should be given to two books: (1) "The End of History and the Last Man" by Francis Fukuyama and (2) "Reorient: Global Single world Economic System" by Andre Gunder Frank. Both the books project diametrically two opposite world of politics and economy.

T.J.Nossiter has contributed in a big way by delivering two great works on Indian Marxist experiences, viz, (1) "Marxist State Governments in India: Politics, Economics and Society" Printer Publisher, 1988. And (2) "Communism in Kerala: A Study in political Adaptation," Oxford, 1982. These two great works highlighted the ability of the Indian Marxist to adopt themselves in a parliamentary form of governance and by providing "relief" extending its area of influence to achieve ultimate goal of establishing a socialist pattern of society and economy.

Partha Chatterjee a very well known name in India, in his masterly work: "The Present History of West Bengal: Essay in political criticism" has pin pointed the problems and prospects of socialist thinking with special reference to the Marxist rule in Bengal.

The much debated book of Santosh Bhattacharya: "Red Hammer over Calcutta University" definitely highlights the influence and penetration of Marxist regime in the everyday affairs of the University of Calcutta.

Finally, Zoya Hossain's edited: Themes in political parties and party politics in India (Oxford) a recent publication with great craftsmanship highlights the promises made by the political parties and actual practices of the political parties with special reference to the activities of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The discussion of the overview of the existing literature will remain incomplete without mentioning a word or two about the most essential reading of "The fundamentals of Marxist and Leninist Philosophy" by Progress publisher, edition 1971. The name of the book suggests that it has dealt with the basic or fundamental principles of Dialectics-historical and materialistic. The publisher has pointed out that there is criticism about its content but no one can ignore the importance of the discussion of dialectics which is fundamentally the basis of Marxian Philosophy practiced by V.I. Lenin during the post - revolutionary period in erstwhile Soviet Union.

The review of existing literature includes a great number of party documents, government documents and government reports, policies on education, local newspapers and relevant websites which provided the primary and secondary data. But it has been mentioned earlier while trying to arrive at answers raised by the research questions the realization deepened that no substantive work was done in this specific area of study.

Significance of the Study

From the overview of the existing literature it appears that most of the works deal with education in general with a socio-economic and political back drop which has been the subject of increasing scholarly attention across the globe but practically no emphasis has been given on my area of study specifically the education development in the light of Marxian Philosophy in India. Therefore the policy perspectives and strategies of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is not seen significantly in any work. Thus present research work seeks to fill that void.

Therefore when in August, 1991, the West Bengal Government decided to have the educational scene surveyed, it was a positive step forward. Not many states take initiatives of this kind. It was equally gratifying that Sri Ashok Mitra was asked to head this commission.

As one of India's most respected and committed Marxist economists, he has always been an intrepid critic of authoritarianism. He is also known for his criticism of some of the policies of the Left Front Government of which he was the first Finance Minister. The report submitted in August 1992, amply justifies the confidence reposed in him. Amrik Singh in his article "Combining Moral Commitment with Pragmatism": Ashok Mitra Commission on Education in the Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 28 (July 17-24, 1993) has aptly stated that three things stand out about the report of the Education Commission appointed by the West Bengal Government under the chairmanship of Ashok Mitra. Firstly, except for 'professional education, the entire educational scene is surveyed and hardly anything worthwhile has been ignored or left out. Secondly, the report is not only an analysis of the problems; it is also "a feasible programme of educational goals and objectives for the short run as well as the longer time frame". Finally, while it is informed by a certain measure of moral commitment, what the report has to say is utterly free of dogma; it is nothing if not pragmatic.

It has now turned in a report which is not only a model by itself, but is perhaps the best documents of its kind produced in recent

decades. What is more, it can also be adapted by other states to suit their requirements.

Like the report the present research work will enhance the existing body of knowledge of Marxian Perspective of education in particular which in turn will help to list the research questions thus helping to evaluate the theoretical frame work, identify the factors and forces that tend to come in the way and finally, suggest measures along which future courses of action need to be undertaken to ensure and strengthen the process of educational policy and the strategies of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Justification

The present study, a very modest one, is basically analytical in nature based on historical investigation and appropriating the role initiated by left led governments under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The moot point of the present research is to locate the role of educational endeavor as an important catalyst or tool of socio-economic progress and the development of left ideology within the broad framework of our constitutional mechanism.

It is said that "the analysis of the elementary aspects of the leftist movement exposes a good detail of the mass mobilization and popular politics; it does not necessarily explain the intricacies of the role of the intelligentsia in the formation of left consciousness and ideology". But no conscious effort has been taken so far to pin point the role of education to mobilize the mass movement and boost the political consciousness to expand its area of influence in the body polity of the country. To be precise, here lies the importance of this research work which tries to highlight the role of educational endeavour in Marxian method in India with special emphasis to West Bengal. This particular area remains unnoticed, long ignored and not explored. The incisive analyses of the socio-political and economic outlook, transformations and juxtapositions have been focused through the candid lens of semiotic historical analytical method.

Chapter wise Break-up or Plan of the proposed Study

The present study proceeds along the following chapter wise plan: In Chapter I there is the impression of the modest effort made to introduce the subject matter as well as objectives of the proposed research study identifying the problem area with regard to education and body-politic as such.

The Chapter II is a general survey of the educational policies adopted in context of Left Political ideology.

The Chapter III named 'Education Policies in India: An Overview' attempts have been made to analyze the different aspects of education in the light of the socio-political development since the days of the advent of the Christian missionaries.

The Chapter IV 'Agenda of Education: The Indian Scenario' basically deals with the development of Leftist view since the early days of nationalism till the present day in the state mentioned.

In the Chapter V effort has been made to modestly analyze the educational policies adopted by the Left Front Government headed by C.P.I.(M) in West Bengal at the various levels of education.

In the Chapter VI a modest effort has been made to identify the problems of Socialism as 'Re-envisioning Socialism' in the present day context. The Seventh Chapter shows the paradigm shift keeping in view the impending public opinion and high profile and much debated industrial policy adopted by the Left Front Government under the leadership of Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya.

In the last and concluding Chapter endeavours have been made to critically put forth a subjective viewpoint on the policy perception of the Left Front Government and suggest a few corrective measures which are based broadly on the Ashok Mitra Commission Report which has looked comprehensively into the state of education in West Bengal since 1977. The base year was considered an important land mark presumably

because a Left Front Government had first come to power in West Bengal that year.

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.

Methodology

The present study, a very modest one, is basically historical analytical in nature and hence collection and analysis of government/semi-government documents had been the major source of findings. For the purpose of arriving at a particular conclusion, reliance had been placed on party-documents, statements of the policy-planners, government resolutions and public policy declarations relating to education policy. The study has thus followed the method of content analysis. In the process, the methods of deconstruction and reading between the lines of the documents relating to education by the Left Front Government in general and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in particular have been tried to explore and address the research questions. Besides, the researcher had observed the developments and thus the insight and wisdom of the researcher in observing the educational policies and their application were of immense help in supplementing the historical analytical information as well as the findings of the content analyses. In the process of analysis, some reflections of left-leaders as expressed through their own works on party lines had been consulted. With a view to supporting the contention, references had also been made to secondary sources and papers/ articles published in leading Journals of the discipline. National, regional and local dailies and weeklies had also been consulted for collecting data, both primary and secondary.

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