



A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF ASHOK MITRA COMMISSION (1991-'92) REGARDING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

India officially the republic of India (Bharat Ganarajya) is a country in South Asia. It is the Seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country with over 1.2 billion people and the most populous democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the South, the Arabian Sea on the South-West, and the Bay of Bengal on the South-East and Burma and Bangladesh to the East. In Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives; in addition, India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia. Home to Ancient Indus Valley Civilization and a region of historic trade routes and vast empires, the Indian subcontinent was identified with its commercial and cultural wealth for much of its long history. Four world religions- Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism-originated here, where as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity diversity and Islam arrived in the first millennium CE and also helped shape the regions diverse culture. Gradually annexed by and brought under the administration of the British East India Company from the early 18th century and administered directly by the United Kingdom from the mid-19th century, India became an independent nation in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by non-violent resistance led by Mahatma Gandhi. After 1947, different educational committees and commission was established by the Left Front Government in West Bengal. Ashok Mitra Commission (1991-'92) is one of them. In this paper the authors try to highlight the various educational contributions of Ashok Mitra Commission regarding secondary education in West Bengal. The authors also try to shed some light to the relevance that the secondary education under the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal in the present context.

KEYWORDS : Ashok Mitra Commission, Secondary Education.

Introduction:

In India secondary education grew up in isolation from the system of elementary education. So necessity arose for the establishment of secondary schools. Primarily it was meant for the upper class and was really a preparation for college. In order to know the present system of secondary education, it is necessary to attempt a brief review of the various govt. resolutions, reports and recommendations, which have approached this problem directly or indirectly. As early as 1830, the authority decided to give English education to the Indians in order to qualify them to take a large share in the civil administration of their country. Consequent on Macaulay's Minute (1835) regarding the educational policy of the future.

In 1837, English was made the court language. As a result of this Western education in preference to traditional learning gathered momentum in the country. However, by 1852, there were only 52 secondary schools throughout the country. Since secondary education was specifically and exclusively meant to be college preparatory. The Wood's Despatch (1854), marked the beginning of a new era in the educational system of India and gave a further stimulus to the cause of secondary education. Secondary education received great encouragement and the system of grants-in-aid as recommended by the Despatch also benefitted secondary schools.

During 1854-1882, certain defects were clearly discernible in the secondary system-the mother tongue was completely dropped as the medium of instruction, no steps were taken for the training of secondary school teachers. The Hunter Commission (1882), studied the problems and position of secondary education of those days and suggested for the first time the diversified courses of instruction at the secondary level. It recommended that in the upper classes of high schools. The growth of secondary education was very remarkable in the period intervening 1882-1902, as the number of schools increased from 3916 to 5124, the enrolment also increased from 214677 to 622868.

It was the Indian University act, 1904, which empowered universities to formulate necessary rules and regulations for the exercise of control and grant of recognition in respect of each high school. During 1905-1917, the most features were rise of national tendencies, the problem of the medium of instruction and the tension between universities and government about control over secondary schools. According to educational policy of Lord Curzon and resolution of National Congress, the ultimate result was that, English continued to be the

medium of instruction in secondary schools. During the same time two agencies were giving recognition to the secondary schools; Education department for grants -in-aid and university for permitting them to present their candidates in Matriculation Examination. Subsequently there was a great expansion of secondary education.

In 1929, Hartog Committee emphasized upon the diversified curricula in the secondary schools. In 1934 Sapru Committee adopted of diversified courses of study at the secondary stage which should be closely related to the vocational requirements of different types of students. In 1936-1937, two experts in the field of education, the report of Wood-Abbot in the secondary level, there should be emphasized in vocational and technical education. Sargent Committee was established in 1944. It recommended that the high school course should cover six years and the normal age of admission being eleven years. High schools should be of two types, academic and technical. Before independence of India, such were the important recommendations made by different committees and commissions. There was rapid expansion of secondary education and the number of schools by the year 1947-48, was 12693 with an enrolment of 2953995 pupils. The corresponding figures for 1916-1917 were 4883 and 924470 respectively.

Tara Chand Committee (1948) recommended that secondary school should be multi-lateral but keeping in view the local conditions. This committee also recommended that a commission should be appointed in order to investigate the problems of secondary education. University Education Commission (1948-1949): This commission considered different aspects of the secondary education. The recommended that students should be admitted in the university only after completing 12 years of study in school of intermediate college.

Secondary Education Commission (1952-1953) stated that Tara Chand Committee and Central Advisory Board of Education make different suggestions to reform it. Kothari commission also emphasized for upholding the standard of secondary education in India.

In West Bengal, the Board of Secondary education was established in 1951 under the act of the state legislature called the west Bengal secondary education act of 1950. The board was inaugurated by the then Governor of West Bengal Dr. K.N. Katju on 3rd May, 1951 and the board started functioning under the chairmanship of Sri Apurba Kumar Chanda. Previously this was done by Calcutta University. The Board was subsequently renamed as West Bengal Board of Secondary

Education in 1964, under the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education Act of 1963. During its long history the board was superseded by the state govt. twice. The first instance was from 1954 to 1963-Bengal Secondary Education (Temporary Provision Ordinance 1954 and the second occasion arose from 1978 to 1980. The Board, an autonomous body, in its present look into existence from January 1964. The operational ambit of the board has increased manifold over the years. In 1951 the Board started its journey with 1270 high schools taken over from Calcutta University which increased to 2312 by the end of 1963 and to more than 8000 by the end of 1975 including some schools outside the territorial jurisdiction of the state. Presently the Board is handling around 10238 numbers of schools.

In West Bengal Secondary Education Structure has been formed for conducting the course of studies (from V to X classes). It is a major academic course of study concerned with various disciplines- Humanities group, Science group and Social Science group also. This system started functioning since 1951 after establishing a board, The Board of Secondary Education under an Act of the State Legislature called The West Bengal Secondary Education Act of 1950. Before that higher Secondary education system was continuing since independence.

The setting up of an education commission has usually accepted as both an important event and a well-meaning gesture in India. Having appointed a commission, government too normally accords its report all respect even when it has reasons to heartily disagree with some of its crucial recommendations and is eventually found loth to implement even those measures that it pretends to endorse. Political parties in India canvassing diametrically opposed policies on almost every other aspect of life have also been known to pay obeisance to the same education commission reports: for examples Kothari Commission of 1964-'66, national education policy of 1968. We would find it if we read again the report of the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-'19.

The Government of West Bengal had set up an education Commission in August, 1991 under the distinguished chairmanship of Ashok Mitra. The Commission was asked to look comprehensively in the state of Education in West Bengal Since 1977. The base year of considered an important land-mark presumably because a Left Front government in its present shape had first come to power in West Bengal That Year. The education Commission had completed its task and submitted its report just within year (by August, 1992), which must be by itself regarded as quite as a commendable achievement, considering the spread an unevenness of the educational terrain that the commission had been called upon to cover.

Lastly, we can say, The Govt. of West Bengal was established an education commission, known as Dr. Ashok Mitra Commission. Dr. Ashok Mitra was the finance minister of the Govt. of West Bengal. He was the chairman of this commission. The commission was established under the notification of 6324(t) (RH) Home. The commission was established in 13th August, 1991. The report of this commission was submitted in August, 1992. The commission was established for the development of Primary, Secondary as well as Higher education.

Besides Dr. Ashok Mitra as the Chairman other members of the Commission were Prof. Pabitra Sarkar, Prof. G.S. Sanyal, Arun Chaudhury, Mustafa-Bin-Kasim, Parames Acharya, N.S. Ghosh, Gouri Nag and Sunanda Sanyal.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To develop the secondary education under the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal.
2. To evaluate the secondary education under the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal in the present context.

Methodology of the Study:

This study was purely theoretical based. Content analysis of the available documents. Data was collected from two major sources i.e., to study the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission regarding secondary education in West Bengal as only the primary source of the data collection and as secondary sources, the investigators were collected data from different types books, journals (including e-journal), articles written by great authors.

Delimitation of the Study:

The study was delimited with the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission regarding secondary education in West Bengal.

Analysis and Discussion:

Some important issues dealt with by the Commission:

Primary Education: It is worthwhile to mention in this connection that the Ashok Mitra Commission set up in August 1991, immediately after the West Bengal Primary Board was established in July 1990, suggested not only the exercise of jurisdictional authority of the Board over the District Primary School Councils but also indicated its responsibility to induce the District Councils to coordinate effectively with the district inspectorates of schools and the Panchayet Samitis (Ashok Mitra Commission, Page 42).

English in Curriculum: Himangshu Bimal Mazumdar Committee (1974-79) abolished English in the Primary stage (Classes I-V). The logic was mainly that English would interfere with learning the mother tongue in this stage. In the new setup English was introduced at the beginning of High School stage, i.e. Class-VI. The Education Commission (Kothari Commission) of 1964-'66 was not in favour of the introduction of English in the primary stage. The Majumdar Committee, during its exercise, had solicited the opinions of teachers and other interested people through newspaper advertisements, and also consulted representatives of the NCERT. That the national perspective was kept into account cannot be denied. This policy was followed for a decade despite occasional criticisms from a section of educationists and intellectuals. The Ashok Mitra Commission of 1991-92, however, advised the Government to advance the teaching of English in schools by one class. Thus English began to be taught in Class-V in government-run schools from 1994.

Secondary Education: Ashok Mitra Commission of 1991-'92 emphasized for the development of the Secondary Education in West Bengal. The recommendations of the commission that are following now----

- a) **Curriculum:** According to Ashok Mitra Commission, the curriculum of the secondary education should be diversified and it should be life oriented.
- b) **Time Table:** As per recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission that Time Table should be very strictly.
- c) **School Calendar:** Ashok Mitra Commission Emphasized that in the beginning of the New Year school calendar should give their (Students) hand.
- d) **Teaching Day's:** According to the recommendations of Mitra Commission in West Bengal that total teaching day's may not be less than 220 days.
- e) **Teacher:** As per recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission of 1991-'92. That the teacher should be Graduate. Trained teacher are desirable.
- f) **Private tuition:** Mitra Commission proposed that Private Tuition should be prohibited.
- g) **Tutorial:** At the secondary stage, there should be emphasized on tutorial classes.
- h) **School Service Board:** Every secondary teacher should be appointed by the School Service Board (Known as now School Service Commission).
- i) **Library Service:** Ashok Mitra Commission stated that every secondary school will provide a good Library. In this regard, need a good librarian.
- j) **Examination Reforms:** Ashok Mitra Commission of (1991-'92) emphasized on the external evaluation than the internal examination.

Significance of those Recommendations in the present context:

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. Ensuring their accountability to society through inspection and other ways-and in demanding that the wide- spread malpractice of using school hours and school children for extracting money in the form of private tuition is ended. The commission had indeed bared the ugly face of academic institutions in India. In the way no other previous commission had dared to do. But perhaps this was not what govt of West Bengal had actually bargained for, or even what the commission had anticipated when it had started to write its report. Perhaps only someone's irresponsible maverick character had triumphed in the end. The people of West Bengal should feel grateful for that.

In the present time, the curriculum in West Bengal at all levels of education (Including Secondary Stage) is more scientific and reasonable to us. In modern time, time table of all institution will follow by the recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal. According to recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal that private tuition should be prohibited. In present time, the Govt. of West Bengal announced that private tuition is strictly prohibited. That is good sign for the development of at all levels of education. Tutorial classes will follow in modern times in different aspects. As per recommendations of Ashok Mitra Commission in West Bengal that every secondary teacher should be appointed by the School Service Board. It is called now School Service Commission. The people of West Bengal should feel grateful for that.

Conclusion:

After 1947, different educational committees and commission was established by the Left Front Government in West Bengal. Ashok Mitra Commission (1991-'92) is one of them. Let us now conclude by stressing the main points of the education policy of the State government. The basic objective of the State government's education policy is "To reach the common people with facilities of education in as extensive manner as possible in rural and urban areas in order to help them to understand and cope with the socio-economic environment". Secondary-level education has also expanded enormously after independence. The major issues at secondary level are related to curriculum planning and the examination. Economic Review - 1989-90 - Govt. of West Bengal. At the time of curricula planning an attempt should be made for securing a balance between the secondary and higher secondary stages of education. The contents of school education should be such as to expose the students to social and economic realities. There are some limitations but lastly we can say, It was a 'Milestone in the history of secondary education' in West Bengal.

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