CHAPTER - III

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Impact of the enactment of the constitution of India and the establishment of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education

The year 1950 was very important in the history of the development of secondary education of West Bengal. The Indian constitution was adopted and enacted in this year and West Bengal Secondary Education Act was passed in the same year on the basis of which the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education was established. The first had a far reaching influence on educational system of the whole country though the second influenced the secondary education of West Bengal only.

The aspiration of the Indian nation was nicely reflected in the constitution. India aspired to develop as a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic (The two ideals socialist and secular were added by the 42nd amendment of the constitution in 1976). Education has been considered to be a means to reach the goal of establishing such a state and for this purpose the constitution includes several provisions which emphasises reconstruction of education. The very preamble of the constitution which summarises its aims and objectives has significant educational implications. It declared the four fold ideas of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Justice in the field of education implies that every individual must have equal opportunity of upliftment, development and progress through education. To provide justice in the field of education the doors of every educational institution remain wide open to the whole country. No discrimination should be allowed between students of different caste, creed, colour or sex.

The implication of liberty in education is that the liberty of a citizen should never go against the unity and solidarity of the country.
As for example the fundamental rights of the constitution ensures the right of freedom of speech. By virtue of this right an individual is entitled to criticise the government and social evils. But this criticism should not go against the interest of the country. Education is the only instrument which can be used to guide the people for the scientific use of their right to speech. Similarly it can guide people for the proper use of other rights like rights to belief, faith, worship etc.

The preamble refers to equality but this provision becomes meaningless if there is no equality of opportunity in the field of education. One of the most important objective of education is to equalize opportunity, enabling the backward or underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever, for the improvement of their condition.¹

The educational implication of fraternity is much more greater than others. In the society there is a conflict between individual interest and social interest. Social unity is a great source of strength of a country. So for the development of the country social unity must be ensured. On the other hand no individual can remain satisfied without his personal dignity. The clause of fraternity aims at assuring individual dignity in one hand and the social unity on the other. Education has a vital role to play in this field. It can only bridge the gulf between these two interests through developing the sense of fraternity. Therefore education should be planned in such a way that it can assure the objective of achieving fraternity.

Besides this as per the spirit of the constitution the nation decided to adopt three major programmes namely -

(i) Democracy as a way of life,
(ii) Socialistic pattern of society,
(iii) Industrialisation based upon modern science and technology.¹

So education should be reorganised in such a way that these goals can be realised in the shortest possible time. For the purpose the entire basis of education must be revolutionised. In order to make the purpose successful the constitution contains several important provisions such as :-

(i) The division of educational responsibility between the Government of India and the state. The constitution has included education in the State List. In consideration of the diversities in India the makers of the constitution included education in this List. Amongst the people of different regions of the country there are diversities of language, culture and the art of living on the one hand and there is a strong note of unity on the other. So natural development of language and culture must be ensured for the fullest development of every individual of the country. In order to achieve this goal decentralisation of the power of moulding education and culture is necessary.² For this reason education has been made a state subject. But by the 42nd amendment of the constitution in 1976 education has been included in the Concurrent List. Placing education in this list means the most dominating role of the Central Government in the over all determination of policies, priorities and programmes. But some thinkers argued in favour of making education a concurrent subject. Their arguments are as follows :-

¹ Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik - Student's History of Education in India p. 372.
² Bhabesh Moitra - Dui dristibhangi-dui niti, Shiksha O Sahitya, Teachers' Journal Vol. IXV No. I), All Bengal Teachers' Association.
(i) The centre should be given adequate legal power in the fulfilment of the directive principles of Article 45 of the constitution.

(ii) For effective planning and implementation of educational, social and economic programmes, the centre should assume more powers.

(iii) For a uniform educational policy and a national system of education the centre should provide effective leadership of the states.

(iv) The resources of the states are too meagre to provide for the development of education in desired directions. The centre can spend more money for educational development.

(v) For minimising regional imbalance in educational development, for equalisation of educational opportunities and for the creation of an egalitarian society the centre should be entrusted with educational responsibility.

(vi) For lack of adequate authority of the centre national policies and many excellent recommendations and decisions of different committees, commissions and conferences have remained unimplemented.

(vii) Centre can take a more vital role in promoting national integration through education.

But on the otherhand many sensible educationists are not in favour of increasing authority of the centre and placing education in the Concurrent List. Most of them are of the opinion that if education is included in the concurrent list the states would be losing their initiative in raising resources for implementation of various educational programmes.
Secondly, India is a democratic country and as such the provinces should play an active role in the field of education. Thirdly, the states might not tolerate an encroachment on their rights on the plea of developing a national system of education. In a vast country like ours, the position given to education in the constitution is probably the best because it provides for a central leadership of stimulating but non-coercive character. The inclusion of education in the concurrent list may lead to undesirable centralisation and greater rigidity in a situation where the greatest need is for elasticity and freedom of experiment.

The second important provision is about the official languages of the provinces and the union which has a crucial connection with education. Article 343 of the constitution of India provides that Hindi in Devnagari script will be the official language of the union. In order to make transition from English to Hindi acceptable to all, it is provided that English shall continue to be used until 1965 for all official purposes of the Union. The provinces can adopt Hindi or any other language of the fourteen languages mentioned in the language schedule of the constitution. (Asamese, Bengali, Gujrati, Hindi, Kanari, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu.) The constitution offers due place to mother tongue of every people in the field of education. Article 350(4) declares that it shall be the endeavour of every state and every local authority within that state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue.

Thirdly, the constitution contains important provisions for safeguarding the cultural and educational rights of the minorities. It is one of the seven fundamental rights guaranteed in the constitution of India. It declares -
(a) any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same (Article 29);

(b) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language (Article 29).

(c) All minorities whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institution of their choice (Article 30).

(d) The state shall not in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority whether based on religion or language (Article 30).

Fourthly, the constitution wants to form India as an ideal secular state. So it has included provisions by which education remains free from the shadow of religion. It directs that:

(i) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution maintained out of the state fund (Article 28).

(ii) No person attending any educational institution recognised by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds, can be compelled to take part in any religious instruction or in religious worship (Article 28).

In addition to these the constitution gives further guarantee to the important minority of the Anglo-Indians.

The constitution also maintains adequate safeguards for the advancement of weaker sections of the minority like the schedule castes
and the schedule tribes. For this purpose the constitution includes Educational and Cultural Directives (Articles 45, 46, 49) in the fourth part of the constitution called the Directive Principles. It provides that

(i) the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly schedule castes and schedule tribes.

(ii) the state can make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class or for the schedule castes and the schedule tribes.

The constitution also realises the importance of spread of education for the proper development of democracy. So it directs the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children between 6 and 14 years within a period of ten years that is before 1960. The constitution has some other provisions which have an indirect bearing on the development of education such as:

(i) It guarantees equality to all citizens.

(ii) It prohibits discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15).

(iii) It guarantees equality of opportunity in respect of public employment (Article 16).

(iv) It prohibits employment of children under the age of 14 in factories, mines or other hazardous employment (Article 24).

Thus the constitution may be considered as an important landmark in the educational history of India. India started planned development in the field of education in 1950 after the constitution was adopted and enacted and more vigorously after the first election in 1952 with the universal adult suffrage.
Establishment of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education

Another important event which influenced secondary education system of the state was the establishment of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. The Act for the formation of the Board was passed in 1950. But the idea was much older.

The Calcutta University Commission, 1917, under the Chairmanship of Sir Michael Sadler, first recommended the establishment of a Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education. The commission was appointed primarily to enquire into the working of the Calcutta University but it was also given the power to make recommendations with regard to the reorganisation of secondary education in Bengal. The Commission felt that a Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education constituting of the representatives of Government, University, High Schools and Intermediate colleges should be established in each state and entrusted with the administration and control of secondary and intermediate education.¹

The Secondary Education Commission 1952-53 also recommended that there should be a Board of Secondary Education.²

The creation of a secondary board was emphasised because it could improve the quality of administration and control. In West Bengal duality of control was a remarkable defect in the system of secondary education. There were two controlling authorities - one was the University of Calcutta and the other was the Department of Education. The university was the affiliating body. It had no direct connection with the schools because it had no inspecting officers. It maintained some rules and regulations of its own concerning the establishment,

recognition, and running of High Schools. It also conducted the Matriculation Examination which only emphasised the requirements of collegiate education. The second authority was the Education Department of the province. It granted aids to the schools. It had its own rules and regulations. The Department also appointed different inspecting officers. The University had to depend upon the reports of the inspecting officers. Due to this duality of control it was impossible to conduct objective investigations regarding the aims, functions, organisation and methods of secondary education. There was no chance of qualitative and quantitative improvement of secondary education.

Secondly the reason of creating a Board was to take out the control of secondary education from the hands of the Calcutta University because it only aimed at preparing the students for entering the university. So it did not prepare the students adequately for their future life. Moreover, the students who do not go upto the collegiate stage, gained no permanent achievement.

Thirdly, for smooth and efficient administration of secondary education an autonomous body, free from government control was necessary. Thus the Board of Secondary Education was an integral part of any scheme of reform of secondary education in West Bengal. So the state government established a Board for the regulation, control and development of secondary education in accordance with the provisions of the West Bengal Secondary Education Act, 1950. Secondary education here included general education, all kinds of vocational education such as Technical Education, Industrial Education, Agricultural Education, Commercial Education and even education for the physically handicapped and mentally retarded and defectives.

The Act of 1950 also provided for the composition of the Board. As the Board was entrusted with immense responsibility the question
of its constitution was very important. Secondary education was expected to take its root in the many sided currents of real life. So the Board as its controlling authority must represent different interests of the society. It should represent the University of Calcutta because secondary education was linked up with higher education, however complete in itself it might be. So the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta was an ex-officio member. The Government Departments of Education, Industry, Agriculture, Health Service should have their representatives in order to relate the functions of the Board to these Department. Beside these there should be representation of the Engineering and Technological Institutions, other Art and Science Colleges, District School Boards, Provincial Legislative Assembly, Boards of Technical Education and of Anglo-Indian Education, and specialists in Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, Women's education, Medicine and Teaching. But the most important of all was the representation of the Headmasters and the Headmistresses, male and female teacher and members of the Managing Committees.¹

According to the provision of Secondary Education Act of 1950 the functions of the Board may be broadly divided into five heads:

(i) To provide and maintain secondary education in different parts of the province so that it may be available to all who need it.

(ii) To direct secondary education in accordance with well formulated principles and code.

(iii) To supervise education through well qualified inspectors.

(iv) To control schools through its regulations.

(v) To develop secondary education quantitatively and qualitatively through scientifically conducted research and experiment.

So that the Board could perform these functions efficiently an Executive Council is constituted under the direction of the Act of 1950. Beside these there are some committees to assist the Board in its function.

(a) **Finance Committee** : The duty of the committee is to prepare the budget of the Board.

(b) **Examination Committee** : The committee shall make recommendation to the Executive Council concerning

(i) the rates of remuneration to be paid to the paper setters, moderators, tabulators and examiners for such examinations.

(ii) the fees to be paid by the candidates for such examination.

(iii) the fees to be paid to any persons connected with the holding of such examinations including the invigilators and supervisors of such examinations.

(iv) any matter relating to such examinations which may be referred to it for advice by the Executive Council.

The Committee may appoint sub-committees to advise about any matter relating to examination.

(c) **Syllabus Committee** : The duty of the committee is to

(i) make recommendations to the Executive Council about the Curriculum and Syllabus of Studies to be followed in recognised High Schools.

(ii) advise the Executive Council about the text books to be used in recognised High Schools and publication of such books.

(d) **Recognition and Grants Committee** : It deals with all matters regarding giving recognition or withdrawal of recognition, sanctioning and withdrawal of grant - in - aid to individual schools.
(e) **Girls' Secondary Education Committee**: It deals with all matters relating to the education of girls.

(f) **Committee for Secondary Education of the Educationally Backward Classes**: It deals with all matters relating to education of members of the educationally backward classes including the tribal people.

(g) **Appeal Committee**: It hears and determines appeals from decisions in disputes between teachers and Managing Committees of High Schools.

The Board meets its expenditure from the Secondary Education Fund. The Fund consists of all sums received by or on behalf of the Board, all sums paid by the State Government to the Board, all fees realised by the Board, all sums representing income from endowments properly owned or managed by the Board and all sums received from the sale of publication. This Fund was the only source of the Board's expenditure but no expenditure should be incurred from the fund unless it was approved by the Budget. Any excess expenditure must have previous permission of the government.

Thus the policy behind formation of the West Bengal Secondary Education Board is mainly to do away with the duality of control and to create an autonomous body which will be the final authority relating to every phase of secondary education.

But this policy of the government can not be materialised because the Board is constituted in such a way that it can not come out of its dual administration, neither can it become an autonomous body. The very constitution of the Board shows that the government has strong hold on it. Firstly, some important members are directly related to the government. Secondly, for the first five years the president was
appointed by the government. Even after this five year period the final authority in appointing the president is the Provincial Government. The inspecting officers are under the Government Education Department. So the direct supervision and inspection of High Schools depends on the government. It is the report of the Inspecting Staff which decides the fate of the High Schools. If the Board wants to influence the inspector in any matter relating to secondary education it can only do so through the Education Department. So the duality of control continues to exist.

Regarding the problem of finance the Board again depends upon the government for the execution of any developmental scheme and for distributing grants to schools. The Act of 1950 clearly mentioned that the Budget must be approved by the government. The Board should not, without the previous sanction of the government, incur from the Secondary Education Fund any expenditure under any major head of account in excess of the amount provided under that head in the approved budget estimate. Again the fund is too meagre to solve the prevailing problems of secondary school of West Bengal such as unhygienic condition of the schools, insufficient equipment, want of health supervision and free health service, paucity of well trained teachers, want of proper teaching aids, insufficient number of schools in different localities, want of proper library facilities etc. Again the paucity of fund hinders proper research and experiment for framing proper curriculum and syllabus, devising scientific techniques of instruction and examination.

For every scheme of improvement the Board has to look forward to the government for financial help. In this situation it is very difficult for the Board to remove these glaring defects of the existing

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system. The Board is, again, not sufficiently autonomous. The State Government retains the power of suspending any resolution or order of the Board.

All these are according to the West Bengal Secondary Education Act, 1950. This Act was repealed by West Bengal Secondary Education Act in 1963. But the changes were not remarkable. The formation, functions and powers of the different bodies remained almost unaltered. The Left Front Government came to power in 1977 and made several amendments of the Act to infuse democratisation, decentralisation and development in the formation and functions and development of the Board. As regards the formation of the Board the greatest step of democratisation is the inclusion of thirty three wholetime and permanent teachers of recognised secondary schools\(^1\) and three whole time and permanent members of the non-teaching staff of recognised secondary schools.\(^2\) The teacher-members are elected by the teachers themselves and the members of the non-teaching staff by the non-teaching employees. Thus out of a total of sixty one members thirty six are from teaching and non-teaching staff. So they form the majority in the Board.

The government is of opinion that more people through election means more democracy. This step of associating greater number of teachers and non-teaching staff helps in the involvement of them. More involvement of teachers ensures speedy and effective implementation of the programmes of the Board because the teachers are the main functionaries at the grassroot level. When they are involved at the level of planning and policy making they feel enthused to its speedy and effective implementation. These members can take part in

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all committees including Executive Committee except the Examination Committee. Thus domination of the autocratic forces is reduced and the democratic process is ensured.

Provisions have also been made for the inclusion of several categories of teachers like two persons from amongst the teaching staff of training colleges, one wholetime and permanent member of teaching staff of colleges nominated by the State Government, one wholetime and permanent member of the teaching staff of primary schools nominated by the State Government. The logic behind inclusion of such persons is that a particular stage of education is directly or indirectly related to the other stages. The representation of such persons also enriches the function of the Board on the basis of their valuable suggestions. This endeavour of democratisation of the Board is unique in India.

As regards other processes of democratisation decisions are being taken and policies are framed in consultation with recognised professional associations. Help of these associations are also being taken in execution of the policies. But there is a public criticism that in practical field instead of consulting all the recognised professional associations only the opinion of the All Bengal Teachers' Association is given due weightage.

After the Left Front Govt. assumes power attempts have been made to improve the conduct of examination by the West Bengal Board. For decentralisation of the whole process the Regional Examination Council which existed prior to 1979 was changed into Regional Council with greater powers. The Regional offices at Siliguri, Burdwan, Midnapore and Calcutta have been activated. The Centre Committees under the Regional Committees have rejuvinated. Special invigilation

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1 West Bengal Secondary Education (Amendment) Act, 1979.
team under the leadership of the Board members have been helping the smooth conduct of examination.

Inspite of all these comendable steps taken by the Board there is a lot of criticism against it. The Left Front Government has done a lot to establish law and order with regard to conduct of examination, still then the public complaint against malpractices in examination halls has not been completely eradicated. Every year the chief minister or the education minister appeals through the mass media to help in the smooth running of the Madhyamik Examination. The sincere effort of the government has to be translated into action by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education as well as the teachers, students and the guardians of the State.