PREFACE

The State of West Bengal as it has emerged truncated as a sequel to the partition of India, hatched surreptitiously by the imperialistic powers and vested interests and perpetrated upon an unwilling nation, offers a grand socio-economic spectacle of contrast. West Bengal is ridden with problems that are legion while at the same time West Bengal has demonstrated strength and determination to resist the challenges of poverty and insecurity. West Bengal has had a legacy of social movement for the betterment of the society. It is in this context that the social security measures have to be studied and analyzed.

West Bengal came into existence with smallness in size but enormity in problem. Two years after the independence i.e. in 1949 Sarat Chandra Bose accredited leader of undivided Bengal gave a stern warning about the future of West Bengal with the remark "the very existence of West Bengal is at stake and her economy is in a perilous condition." The celebrated journalist Sri Ranjit Roy remarked with equal vehemence ... "not only has the State's economy gone to pieces, her entire social and cultural fabric has started disintegrating. As a matter of fact, the Bengalees once swayed the destiny of India, now they can not even determine their own!" To elucidate further it may be stated that after a few decades of planning no other State provides as cruel evidence of poverty and degradation as does.
West Bengal. And unless there is change in Centre's policy this State's manifold economic and social ills will remain in a state of flux. Consequently all the menacing problems like unemployment, economic stagnation may even ultimately bring about an explosive situation.

The programme of building up a new India on a socialist pattern was initiated by late Jawaharlal Nehru. The programme has been given a new colour in the recent times by his successors. The major scheduled banks were acquired in order to embark upon 'a new and more vigorous phase in the implementation of the economic plans, to accelerate the achievement of our social control objectives and to impart an element of dynamism into the process of development.' But it could not be achieved upto the desired extent because of inner contradiction leading to conflict between principle and practice. Moreover the countrymen at large could not find scope to cooperate with the administration predominantly isolated by the strong bureaucracy from the masses.

To quote Dr. Myrdal of international fame 'efforts to create machinery for self Government, co-operation and popular participation without changing the basic structure are essentially to by-pass the equality issue. And this attempt to evade the problem of inequality is in large measure responsible for the failure of the reform policies.' Asian Drama Vol. II Chapter 18, Page 883.
After fateful partition, a joint gift of foreign rulers and indigenous leaders West Bengal with poor peasantry and huge majority of impoverished people of different classes 'embarked on a new journey for economic rejuvenation.'

Before going into details of West Bengal's various performances, let us objectively study the West Bengal's present position in proper perspective. We are under obligation to place all the cards before the table. Nothing needs to be concealed. Nothing should be shown which will create confusion and dismay for unrealistic assumption.

Prior to or just at the time of partition the industrial situation of West Bengal was not so much hopeful. The crisis in agriculture had deepened for excessive dependence over it. The burden of unemployment was on the increase. The State's finance was in worse shape. Considering all these bare facts, Dr. Bhabatosh Dutta said, 'It is not a time to re-examine the provisions of the constitution with a view to ensuring a more flexible devolution of finances for developmental schemes. In fact the constitution of land stands as a stumbling block. It resembles from all practical points a unitary one with some outward features or cover of federalism. The centre holds unfettered sway over the states. Rightly remarked Ranjit Roy.

'From careful analysis it may be proved that the discriminating policy of the centre has brought about a rapid decline of West Bengal..... Without basic change in Government of
India's policies (economic, fiscal and for rehabilitation) a revival of economic life of West Bengal is an impossibility." Mahatma Gandhi was perhaps one of the rarest personalities who had the clear understanding over the needs of the mass when he spoke in one occasion. "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the steps you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he, gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control of his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubt and yourself melting away."

The most urgent need of India today is to find means of reducing the want and distress of her people. Millions of India's men and women are in want - and terrible want. The cultivators live in the most pathetic condition. They grow food for us but themselves remain half fed or unfed. The people working in mills and factories live in great misery and in unclean huts. Those who are a little high in rank are really much poorer than the most ordinary people of advanced countries. Elimination of poverty and consequent steps to uplift the underprivileged should be our major social objectives.

In a country where three fourth of the population is engaged in agriculture and supporting activity and much of the remainder is indirectly dependent on it, the provision of more
numerous and remunerative jobs should be deemed to be a key element of a new agrarian policy.

Ever since Independence the Government has been committed to evolving a national land use policy. But land continues to be subjected to unchecked speculation and exploitation. Even in the limited area of land reform, progress has not been so much as it should have been or up to the expectation. And at places ill conceived reforms and land distribution programmes have done more harm than good. The prices of essential commodities are beyond the reach of common man. Yet an army of unemployed youths has been raised in the country whose number is swelling every day. To make the Independence something meaningful the teeming millions should be assured of a bright future and that represents a great challenge before the Nation. I think it will not be out of place to mention that some of our neighbouring countries had to face a great deal of or-deals and tribulations and still their performance in the sacred task of nation building should not be belittled. Rather there is enough we ought to take into account with respect and admiration.

In my study I have devoted a good portion of time and attention for going through the contemporary history of China, Japan and a few other adjacent countries. The people of those lands amidst endless deprivation and terrible on-slaught of very frequent natural calamities have been able to stand erect and speedily prosper by dint of their indomitable courage and amazi:
endurance. They have emerged as great and strong nations banking upon genuine love for the country and boundless devotion to country's welfare. They fought prolonged and devastating war. They suffered immense loss of life and property. They witnessed ghastly scenes of ruin and destruction all around. Still they go on advancing in every walk of life beaming with robust optimism and dream of better prospect. Apart from China and Japan other south and south eastern countries inspite of ruthless foreign domination and dreadful exploitation connected herewith have ceaselessly been exerting to acquire economic sufficiency with all sagacious efforts and industry. These are exemplary instances having stimulating effects over others.

From objective analysis it is to be observed that our performance compared to other's has not yet been so much inspiring in our efforts to implement social security measures. Perhaps the extent and duration of the malady or predicament we have been subjected to is deeper. Of course there is no denying the fact that by the late 1940s India was in some aspect an economically backward state. Then public sectors could not play a very significant part and there existed a serious lack of social and economic infrastructure in many parts of the country. And the picture of West Bengal is all the more dismal and frustrating. Still after political independence the State tried to adopt conscious and ambitious plans for economic and social development. India's 5 Year Plans beginning from 1950-51 incorporated strategies to promote rapid and
economic development to strengthen the economy at its base and to initiate institutional changes that are expected to facilitate rapid stride. Yet in view of formidable hindrances and serious short-comings constituting a great threat may a big challenge to the State, it will be rather unwise to expect much of West Bengal shortened by size and wealth tortured by periodic flood and draught and agonised by violent expression of angry and turbulent youth. It is of course a bare fact and a stark reality. Unless it is realized in proper and realistic perspective only air of despair and despondency will be allowed to prevail bringing no agreed or accepted conclusion or outcome. Mrs. John Robinson, first an academician and then a leftist thinker once wrote, "Social life is impossible unless the pursuit of self-interest is mitigated by respect and compassion for others .... Any economic system requires a set of rules, an ideology to justify them, and a conscience in the individual which makes him strive to carry them out."

A regrettable feature of the economic development in this country has been the inability of the system to generate sufficient employment opportunity, to accommodate labour-force coming into the market every year. As a consequence the volume of unemployment has been rising from year to year. This problem of unemployment is spread over the rural as well as the urban areas. Lack of employment for the able bodied youths has prevented them from making any contribution to the economic growth in the country as that has stunted their own growth. Among other
wastes most ineffective is this massive waste of manpower resources through idleness. Any scheme that seeks to make this idle manpower productive deserves to be welcome. The massive un-employment and under-employment shows a defect in social and economic institution. To cover this deficiency or lacuna the principle of providing un-employment benefit is now an accepted plank of social and government policy in the civilized world. It is proper to subsidize the efforts to earn wages. On the other hand when Government makes a public commitment it is for the society at large to ensure that the commitment results in social gain.

Though a mere clerk for almost four decades I have all through nurtured an intense desire to write something substantial on West Bengal where we had to migrate from the district of Jessore now belonging to Bangladesh. And this undertaking I pledged to complete in conformity with the last desire of my departed father, a devoted dedicated and ideal teacher of Behala High School. This aspiration would have remained unfulfilled had I not been blessed and aided by Mrs. Bela Dutta Gupta. With least eulogy and taking recourse to no kind of hyperbole must I unhesitatingly, confess that I have deeply been moved by her kind counsel, thoughtful guidance and sincere interest in my subject of study. My indebtedness to Prof. D.K. Banerjee knows no bound for his wholehearted help and cooperation.
Of late there gathered a lot of difference as well as contradiction between pronouncement and performance on the vital issue of materialisation of the concept and working of social security; and consequently it has become all the more arduous to draw wholly a true and realistic picture of abiding character by reflecting the actual state of affairs. But however her kind and sympathetic advice inspired me to move on. So I felt much obliged to proceed with my assignment in full realisation and acceptance of the following facts.

(a) the configuration of social forces has changed considerably since independence and this process of change is continuing. There has been increasing concentration of the means of production and both the urban industrial group and the rural rich are far stronger today than when independence was achieved.

(b) The Constitution makers had visualized an egalitarian society in independent India. But the society of their conception is still a far cry because there is no denying the fact that our society still remains a society for the privileged and the poor have been increasingly marginalised.

(c) the necessary and congenial conditions for an egalitarian society are yet to be created strengthened by strong political will and availability of adequate resources and funds.

However with lot of limitations and other connected constraints I have tried to complete my thesis with best of my
efforts and ability collecting datas and figures and taking help of books of different authors. And all my endeavours and energy devoted at this advanced age will be deemed truly fruitful provided it becomes acceptable and appreciable to readers and revered examiners.

But even in this humble attempt I should acknowledge my sincere feeling of gratitude to all my friends and well-wishers who have ungrudgingly and voluntarily helped by favouring me with books, periodicals, valuable notes and other informative papers. Of them I shall specially and respectfully mention the names of M/s Kantolal Mukherjee, Dipankar Bose, Santipriya Chatterjee and above all late Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharjee an erudite scholar as well a celebrated author who first instilled in my mind the noble idea of submitting PHD thesis and kindly introduced me to Mrs. Bela Dutta Gupta for this purpose.