

## POINT OF VIEW

## “Of Self-Respect and People’s Power”

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AT THE VERY OUTSET I DO thank the eminent intellectual weekly—*The Frontier* for initiating the debate on the performance of the last Left Front Government (34-years-unique in the history of world democracy). It’s recent election defeat is mainly due to anti-incumbency factor. There are other small factors as well. It happens in all civilized democracies of world—United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Holland and Italy. It is nothing unusual. However, democracy in India (29 states and 7 union territories) is still *immature* (except the State of Kerala). They are not interested in policy matters and future directions. They are carried away by irrational emotion and sentiments. Reason, logic and futuristic ideas are dead in their dreams. They only think for today and not for tomorrow. The result is: they get a government they deserve. It is sad. It is deplorable. It is disastrous at the end. *The Frontier* editorial (June 5-11, 2011) is a point in question. The Editorial “Is There Another Way?” Says: “....After Communal partition in 1947 the worst thing happened to the people of West Bengal was the installation of CPM-led Left Front Government in 1977”. Does the Editor want that the hated emergency of crafty Indira Gandhi should have continued? No clear statement. People’s reaction was different. After the democratic installation of CPM-led Left Front Government in 1977 by overwhelming popular consent, the people of West Bengal tasted the honey of political independence for the first time. The Editor seemed to have overlooked this historical fact. It is an intentional omission or a deliberate distortion of the reality of the day? In order to establish the credibility of *Frontier* established by the eminent intellectual and poet-Samar Sen, the Editor should come out clean and transparent.

Secondly, the Calcutta Notebook by DRC (June 19-25, 2011, p. 5-6) is irrational, biased and one-sided. It seems to be blind to reality and logic. It totally ignored the positive achievement of the past Left Front Government; it only intentionally and craftily highlighted the negative aspects of the Left rule for 34 years. It diminished the status of *Frontier*. Nothing in this world is a paragon of perfection or a den of fallibilities. Every thing is composed of good and bad. Rationality, reason and logic demand that assessment should be balanced. The Calcutta Notebook deplorably and totally failed on that count.

**LEFT GOVERNMENT’S ACHIEVEMENTS**

During its 34 years’ rule of the state, one needs to carefully consider the following aspects :

1. Land reform in 1969 and from 1977 onwards.
2. Increase of agricultural output.
3. Self-sufficiency in food production—West Bengal is the highest rice-producing state in India and also in the forefront in production of vegetables.
4. Decentralization of power leading to empowerment of people at the grassroots level—institution of Panchayet System in the rural areas.
5. Reservation of seats for backward classes (female included) in municipalities, corporations and panchayets.
6. Voting right at the age of 18.
7. Free education for all upto class 12.
8. Free distribution of books upto class VI and free school costumes once a year.
9. Distribution of bicycles to rural students.
10. Stipend to girls from class IX onwards in economically depressed families.
11. Modernization of Madrasa education.
12. Arrangement for studying in ALCHIKI alphabet in primary schools in tribal areas.

13. Introduction of Santhali language research at University and language education level.
14. Establishment of Aliah University (old Calcutta madrasa, Estd. 1780).
15. Improvement of Standard of Technical Education and Training and Establishment of Engineering Colleges in the State (both public and private)—Establishment of West Bengal State University of Engineering and Technology.
16. Establishment of West Bengal State University of Health Sciences and increase of seats in medical colleges and establishment of new universities—Burdwan, Gourbanga, Vidyasagar, West Bengal State and so on.
17. Expansion of small and medium cottage industries all over the state.
18. Formation of self-dependent groups among pure families, particularly women.
19. Organizing unorganized labour force.
20. Eliminating semi-fascist terror encouraged during the hated Emergency declared on the midnight of June 25, 1975 by Indira Gandhi.
21. Restoration of real grassroots democracy.
22. Communal harmony—No Gujarat-like rioting—while Sikhs were slaughtered in Delhi by the goons of the dirty political dynasty after Indira Gandhi's unfortunate assassination by her own body-guard due to her own self-destructive policies, West Bengal under Left-rule was absolutely peaceful.
23. Establishment of social and prestigious status for rural cultural workers—Jatra, Folk musicians etc. etc.
24. Establishment of cultural hub in Kolkata—Nandan, Rabindrasadan (“Covent Garden” of London).
25. Transformation of Presidency College (Estd. 1855 from Hindu College, Estd. 1817) to Presidency University (This author is a Presidencian himself).
26. Attained social prestige and human recognition for working class people, cultivators etc.

Why Calcutta Notebook of DRC is silent about all these?

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

“Several years ago, there was pandemonium in the Lok Sabha when a member flaunted a doctorate from a foreign institution which did not exist.” (perspective, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, Wednesday, April 27, 2011—“Copycats Calling” by Shabbir Ahmed, p.7). Further to this, a letter writer in *the Sunday Statesman*, Kolkata, May 15, 2011, p.6— N K Dasgupta wrote: “...The only frailty in her entire career is almost juvenile..... when she used a fake doctorate degree from a foreign university as a handle to her name.”

The former Oxford professor Dr Tapan Roy Chowdhury, a Presidencian, also mentioned about this fake degree holder in a long interview in the Bengali daily—*Aajkal*, Sunday, February 14, 2010, p. ‘kha’ (à) and about her jumping on the car of the veteran leader Jayprakash Narayan. She is now a protagonist of ‘Paribantan’ (Change).

What message the student community will scratch from here?

Why the *Frontier*, DRC of Calcutta Notebook, and the psuedo-intellectuals: the ‘Sushils and Sushilas’ are silent on this issue?

In a letter in the *Frontier*, June 19-25, 2011, p 15, ‘October 8, 1971’, N K Chatterjee brought out the past activities of a former IPS officer—Manish Gupta, now the Minister of Planning and Development in the new cabinet of TMC. Congratulations to Mr Chatterjee.

People’s aspiration and demand are simple. The rhetoric—‘Paribartan’ (change) has no real meaning. They want deed and not words or empty promise. They want transparency, educational honesty, social peace and stability, religious tolerance, communal harmony and social egalitarianism—the past Left Front Government established all these. The Left Front

in opposition is behaving responsibly and rationally for the greater interest of the people of West Bengal.

On the contrary, while in opposition before the election the present ruling party behaved totally irresponsibly with deadly destructive policies on all fronts. It opposed everything (right or wrong) the then Left Government did. Opposition parties never behave in such a manner in mature democracies (in USA, UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Israel, Canada and so on). Situation may arise when it might have to taste its own medicine. □□□