

**A STUDY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT , POLITICS
AND EDUCATION IN INDIA SINCE 1947**

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled " A Study of National Government , Politics and Education in India since 1947" , submitted by SUPARNA BANERJEE is in fulfilment of eight credits out of the twenty - four credits required for the degree of 'Master of Philosophy' of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University , and it is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the countries in the Third World which has recently emerged independent. And like all Third World countries India has been preoccupied with its educational renovations. The need for such educational renovations has emerged from the fact of her inheriting the colonial structure of education. The education system bequeathed to us by the British is unable to meet the needs and aspirations of a newly independent nation. This is one of the first realisations of our political leaders, particularly of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. With that end in view, a series of reforms beginning with the Radha Krishnan Commission of 1948-49 were introduced to alter the colonial structure of the country. Other Commissions followed like the Mudaliar Commission in 1953-54 and the Kothari Commission of 1963-64. Finally an Education Policy, which was India's first was promulgated in 1968. However this was implemented half-heartedly following a change in the political scenario of the country.

Since 1969, following a split in the Congress Party, some States slipped from the hold of the Congress, though it was able to retain its hold over the Centre. The parties that formed Governments in the opposition States were unlikely to hold similar views with the Congress Government at the Centre

which promulgated the Education Policy in 1968. Secondly it received a further setback when the Janata Party formed the Government at the Centre in 1977. This Government lasted for a short period and the Congress returned to power in 1980. But even within this short period, the Janata Government at the Centre tried to revise the 1968 Policy and a draft for a new policy was also made ready which could not be introduced due to its downfall. In 1984, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, there was an election which again returned the Congress to power and the Government under Rajiv Gandhi introduced a New Education Policy. This policy received a setback when the National Front under V.P.Singh captured power at the Centre. This Government also lasted for a short while and the Congress re-emerged in 1990. It thereafter resumed the implementation of the New Education Policy. However by this time many more States had eluded the hold of the Congress and they did not seem to sincerely support the 1986 Policy made by the Congress Government at the Centre.

In the context of this , the questions that now may be asked are : Does the Education Policy change with the change of Government at the Centre ? If so, why ? Secondly is there any ideological relationship between Education and Politics ? Since education empowers people and institutions, everyone wants to have an access to it to acquire empowerment. Does this explain the attitude of

the political parties in power to increase the percentage of reservation to capture grassroots support.

These and other questions I have tried to answer in the present thesis. Based on the available materials on the agenda of the political parties as well as on the reports of the various commissions and committees appointed to restructure the education system in India since 1947, an attempt has been made to delineate the political development in the country, followed by educational, and to discover the relationship between the two based on the programmes of the political parties involved. It is hoped that this work researched to meet the requirements of a M.Phil thesis will be able to fill the gap in our knowledge, which is at the moment is met regionally by Rudolf and Rudolf in their "Education and Political Development", which concentrates on Aligarh and Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh and Baroda in Gujarat.

CHAPTER -II

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN
INDEPENDENT INDIA

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

On 15th August 1947, India emerged out of its 200 centuries old colonial imprisonment, finally moving towards a new dawn. With the Britishers handing over the reins of administration to the Indians, it was the INC which was found to be the obvious successor to be able to lead India towards a bright future.

Founded in 1885, the Congress soon became a platform of affluent civil servants, merchants and western educated intellectuals to lobby the Raj for democratic reforms. For several years, the INC continued to hold All-India conferences and petition the Government of India and the British Government regarding its claims. Initially the INC was a preserve of the landed aristocracy and higher echelons of the society, but with the advent of Gandhi, it became a mass movement for India's freedom struggle.

Throughout the six decades of India's organized freedom struggle, no other political organization was able to put together a combination of economic nationalism and cultural nationalism which could match the INC's ideology in terms of populist mass base and electoral mobilization¹. Its umbrella type ideology had a unique political magnetism.

¹ Iqbal Narain and P.C. Mathur, Politics in changing India, P. 16

After winning freedom, the Congress leadership followed the same strategy of reconciliation and consensus in maintaining their supremacy over the public life of India.

However now the Congress Party had to earn its legitimacy by participating in the electoral process which was based on adult universal franchise and political competition with other political forces and groups. The Congress Party evolved an electoral strategy on the basis of open membership and mobilization of all strata of society, irrespective of regions, religions, castes or classes². It became an all-inclusive party by accommodating many diverse social groups.

There is no doubt that in its character and depth, the Congress was an unparalleled movement for independence, and this had significantly contributed to the leading place of Congress organization in India³. Apart from a brief two-and-a half year interlude, the Congress and its leaders have monopolized India's Central government⁴.

The post - Independence political system came to be dominated so much by the Congress Party that Rajni Kothari called the Indian political system as the " Congress System ". Under such circumstances, it was no surprise that the Congress swept the polls in the 1952 elections. The same phenomenon repeated itself in 1957, where the

² C.P. Bhambri , Indian Politics since Independence , P. 92

³ Rajni Kothari , Politics and People - In search of a humane India , Vol I , P. 27

⁴ Mark Tully and Zahir Masani , From Raj to Rajiv , P. 103

people voted massively for the Congress and the opposition parties lost in front of Nehru's personal charisma.

The Third General Elections came in 1962 at a time when factional strifes had already started within the Congress Party. This affected the performance of the party in the elections and in a number of states, the Congress factions fought each other. The leadership of the Congress faced for the first time, a very critical and aggressive opposition⁵. The Third General Elections was preceded by the Indo-China fiasco and mounting economic difficulties, which also had an effect on the party's electoral performance.

In 1964 Nehru died and India lost a great leader. Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeded Nehru, coming as an odd choice to succeed a man of Nehru's stature. Although he could not match up to the personality of his illustrious and charismatic predecessor, he was good at his work. During his eighteen month rule, he steered India through one of its gravest crisis, the second war with Pakistan in 1965⁶. Shastri died immediately after signing the cease-fire agreement in 1966, making way for Mrs. Gandhi to step in his shoes.

Indira Gandhi's coming to power was soon followed by the Fourth General Elections in 1967. And it was this election which proved a great setback for the Congress. In about 8 states, coalition governments were formed and the strength of the Congress was drastically reduced at the Centre. The reasons given for such a poor show by the

⁵ Rekha Saxena, Indian Politics in Transition, P. 8

⁶ Mark Tully and Zahir Masani, Op. cit., P. 103

Congress could have been many; firstly, the people were agitated due to the conflicts with China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965. Secondly, due to the loss of eminent leaders of the Congress within a short period. The conspicuous absence of Nehru, a formidable asset of the Congress was a main cause. Thirdly, the 1967 elections threw up strong claimants for power at one hand and on the other, the Congress lost its image due to charges of corruption against it, economic crises facing the country and intra-party conflicts. Besides this, Ram Manohar Lohia, a veteran socialist and militant anti-Congress evolved a strategy calling upon all political parties to unite and throw out the Congress from power. This strategy came to be known as "non-Congressism".

The Congress had come out victorious in the previous elections, due to the splitting of the opposition vote⁷. But in this election the opposition parties had prepared themselves well, for "opposing, exposing and deposing " the Congress from power. The 1967 elections were a watershed in Indian elections, as for the first time, the congress realized that its support base had been gradually reduced. Stanley Kochanak noted that the 1967 elections marked the beginning of a transformation of the Indian political system from a dominant one- party system to a multi-party system.

In this elections, Mrs. Gandhi also faced bad innings and the party bosses or the syndicate as they were called, decided to clip her wings by nominating their own candidate for the President of India. This led to the Congress split in 1969, between the Indira faction and the syndicate faction. Such a step reduced Mrs. Gandhi's

C.P. Bhambri, Fourth General Elections and Political competition in India, PP. 114 - 116

government to a minority and it would not have survived, if enough support had not been extended by the leftist and regional parties⁸.

In the battle that ensued, Mrs. Gandhi managed to outmaneuver the veterans and to salvage her image among the common masses. She then undertook two most controversial though measures. One was the nationalization of Banks and the other was the abolition of privy purses given to the princes. The old Congress leadership did not show much enthusiasm, for these steps were effectively portrayed as 'reactionary and conservative'. After introducing these measures and putting her opponents on the defensive, Mrs. Gandhi called an early general election.

In the mid-term elections held in 1971, Mrs. Gandhi appealed forthrightly to the deprived and backward strata of the society. Her passionate call for 'Garibi Hatao' touched the hearts of women, dissatisfied youths and untouchables. The electorate responded to her appeal in large numbers and she got two-thirds majority in the Parliament. Thus the Congress reverses in the previous elections was replaced by a massive support for Mrs. Gandhi, which popularly came to be called the Indira Wave. Another important reason for the Congress success at the 71' elections was the inability of the opposition parties to provide stable Governments in the states ruled by them. The coalition Governments proved to be weak and ineffective and by the time of the next elections they were thoroughly discredited.

⁸ M.P.Singh , Punjab Journal of Political Science, Vol XVI , Nos 1-2 .

This election represented a new alignment of voters in favor of the new Congress based in oppositional and radical sentiments. The election results restored the One-Party Dominant system after a brief interlude of four years, encompassing many features of the pre-1967 era⁹. Indira Gandhi's electoral triumph was followed by an event which finally established her supremacy.

This was the defeat of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan and the creation of the new state of Bangladesh. By the end of 1971, Mrs. Gandhi was able to establish her charismatic leadership in the minds of the people. The Congress Party, the country and the sub-continent were at her feet and this was what changed her into a ruthless and autocratic leader.

There was the collapse of the collective leadership and internal democracy within the Congress and this was replaced by the personality of an undisputed leader. Soon Mrs. Gandhi began to lose her popularity and credibility. This was further aided by the nationwide spread of drought from 1971-73, raging inflation, strikes of railway workers and the Jayprakash Narayan movement in 1974.

Faced with growing doubts about her ability to govern, Indira Gandhi decided to reassert her authority. But this could not succeed as in 1975 the Allahabad High Court found her guilty of corrupt electoral practices. This verdict gave the the opposition ample ground to demand for her resignation and to a spate of anti-Indira demonstrations in the country. Unable to find any other way to stick to her ground,

⁹ Ram Joshi and Kirti Desai , Dominance with a difference- Strains and Challenges , P.P 60-61.

Mrs. Gandhi proclaimed a nationwide Emergency in 1975. The Congress Party endorsed the emergency with slogans like "India is Indira and Indira is India"¹⁰.

The Emergency became notorious for the atrocities committed by the state which was under the control of the ruling power. The opposition leaders and their active supporters were arrested and major attempts were made to amend constitutional provisions to suit party requirements. For 18 months, the Fundamental Rights stood suspended and the Press was placed under strict censorship.

This situation resulted in the rise of Jayprakash Narayan, who started mobilizing the masses to give a verdict against the Congress. Immediately after Mrs. Gandhi announced the end of the emergency and the date for the overdue elections, the non-Congress leaders convened to form an interparty alliance against the Congress.

Jayprakash Narayan's participation in the election campaign was crucial to the opposition in its bid against Indira Gandhi. The Janata Party was formed through Narayan's efforts to merge the parties into a single political entity. The Janata Party included the former Swatantra Party, Organization Congress(0), Jana Sangh, Samjukt Socialist Party and the Bhartiya Lok Dal. It was well propagated that to save democracy, it was essential to defeat Mrs. Gandhi and Congress(I).

The 1977 elections which were held under the shadow of Emergency resulted, as expected, in installing the Janata Party to power. The masses showed their anger,

¹⁰ Iqbal Narain and P.C. Mathur , opcit , P.16.

hatred and repulsion against the Emergency by voting for the Janata Government. The election results proved that the Indian masses were not going to tolerate an authoritarian government.

With the coming of the Janata Party, the "Two-Party System" appeared in Indian political. A new Government headed by Moraji Desai was formed by the Janata Party with Narayan's socialism providing the broad ideological umbrella. However no sooner had the Janata Party achieved the unthinkable by defeating Mrs. Gandhi, than its temporary unity began to fall apart. As the Janata Party was only an alliance of political parties, conflicts and breakups were inherent in its character. Besides this the only activity of the Janata leaders became the criticism of Indira Gandhi which made the party very unpopular.

According to one observer, the reason for the breakup of the Janata Party was the absence of the spirit of compromise¹¹. It failed to evolve a mutually acceptable ideology. The internal disputes loosened ties between national and state levels of both the party and the political system. This made the factions which dominated the Janata Party at the national Parliament antagonistic towards those in the Janata controlled State Legislatures.¹²

In this background, the main catalyst which led to the downfall of the Janata Government in 1977 was the dual membership of the Jana Sangh members who also belonged to the RSS. Besides this, the lack of strong leadership was one the other

¹¹ Minoo Massani and Girilal Jain , "Is Party System Dying", Times of India, Sunday Review, 25th May 1980

¹² James Maner , Indira and After-Europe and the Third World , P.321.

important reasons of the party's failure. Morarji Desai was a seasoned administrator but he was too rigid to be an effective party leader. Morarji Desai's government lost its majority in the Lok Sabha and a new government headed by Charan Singh was formed in mid-1979. But this could not face the Lok Sabha since it lacked majority and so fresh elections had to be held in 1980.

In these elections the voters showed their desire to have a stable government at the Centre. The "Indira factor" which was the main cause of the Congress's failure earlier brought it back to power in 1980. Mrs. Gandhi's success in the Seventh Lok Sabha attributed to the substantial support extended to her by the minorities all over the country¹³. On assuming power she continued with her old style of working by depending on a small coterie. Some political analysts were of the view that the 1980 elections brought back the "dominance of the one-party system". But there appeared a tendency towards a multi-party system, as even though the Congress came to power at the Centre, opposition parties were established in many states and one after another they started splitting away from the Centre.

The Congress continued to rule the Centre for the next few years with relative stability until a national tragedy struck India in 1984, when Mrs. Gandhi was shot dead by her two Sikh bodyguards. The origin of this tragedy was the "Operation Blue Star" to wipe out the terrorist activities from the nation. The murder of Indira Gandhi brought the nation under a grip of terror and to steer it away from a disaster, her son Rajiv Gandhi was promptly sworn in as the P.M by the President on the same day.

¹³ Moin Shakir, "Electoral Participation of Minorities and the Indian Political System", Vol XV, Economic and

The Congress members of the Parliament automatically endorsed the decision. Later when the General Elections were held in 1984 itself, Rajiv Gandhi also got an unprecedented mandate from the people. The masses were very worried about the national security and integrity of the nation and thus they rejected all the anti-national and disruptive forces. Congress(I) came to be seen as the protector from the extremist and the separatist tendencies. Above all, the sympathy votes accounted for Rajiv Gandhi's spectacular victory.

Rajiv Gandhi became the youngest ever Prime Minister of India. He was seen as "Mr. Clean" and a "Scientific Man", who would take India into the 21st Century¹⁴. During his first year of office, it seemed he could do no wrong. But soon he ran into immense difficulties, leading to a disastrous crash of his public image. He was attacked by his critics for lack of political foresight, inaptitude for human management and infirmity of character.

Rajiv Gandhi began with a good image of initiating peace processes in Punjab and Assam and his preference for negotiated settlement. But soon enough he started using authoritarian tactics. His government came to be marred by corruption in high places

¹⁴ Rekha Saxena, Indian Political in Transition, P.30.

with scandals like Bofors. Rajiv Gandhi was condemned both for offending vested interests and his ‘bluntness of judgement’. He failed to maintain law and order in a sharply divided society, to play a positive role in facilitating economic growth and to cope with an uncertain international security environment¹⁵.

By the time the Ninth Lok Sabha elections took place in 1989, the credibility of the Rajiv government had been on a perceptible decline. The people were tired of promises for a clean and efficient administration while they were facing widespread indiscipline and rising prices. At this time corruption was rampant in the corridors of power, communal tension was growing unabated, the law and order system was paralysed and the nexus between mafia, money and politicians assumed increasing proportions. Under these circumstances, the 1989 elections results “reflected a call for change” and were a judgement against dynastic rule. These elections were more open in nature and issue-oriented and it tested the maturity of the Indian voters¹⁶.

For the first time, the non-Congress parties were able to forge an alliance for a one-to-one contest strategy. The electorate in 1989 voted against a complacent government as it had become arrogant and expressively selected a precarious government which they hoped would be responsive. However the votes led to the formation of a hung Parliament, which had never occurred in India’s electoral history. To be able to form a government, the National Front had to align with BJP on one hand and with the two communist parties on the other. The paradox of the 1989 results was that the Congress lost but the opposition did not win.

¹⁵ Myron Wiener , *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics*, ed. Ashutosh Varshney , P.300.

¹⁶ R.S. Morkhandikar , *Elections 1989- Implications and Agenda* , P.148.

The defeat of the Congress could be attributed to the failure of its leader. Among other things, Rajiv Gandhi in his dual capacity as Prime Minister and Party President centralized all authority in himself. He relied on the advice of a small group for all political and administrative matters. He slowly lost touch with the grassroots inspite of making the "much publicized tours of the rural and tribal areas"¹⁷. As a sharp contrast to this, the opposition's Priministerial candidate Mr. V. P. Singh echoed the voice of the vast majority of the Indians.

Resultantly it was Mr.V.P.Singh who became the P.M, heading the National Front Government. However this government could last only for eleven months. As it included clashing personalities like Mr. Chadrashekhhar and Devi lal, differences were bound to occur. Besides this, the Chautala issue, Mandal issue, Mandir issue, withdrawal of BJP's support and above all the split in the Janata Party led to Mr.Singh's failure. Soon he lost the vote of confidence and submitted his resignation.

President Venkataraman then invited Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the largest party in the lower house to form government. But in order to gain time to prepare for the elections, Mr. Gandhi decided to support Mr. Chadrashekhhar from outside. Thus Mr. Shekhar became the P.M heading the shadow Parliament. This was just a "marriage of convenience" according some political analysts as both the leaders distrusted each other and it was only a matter of time before the Congress withdrew its support. This

¹⁷ The World Today , Vol 46 , No-2 , Feb 1990 , P.20.

happened soon and on March, 1991 the 117 days old Janata Dal(S) government collapsed. The Lok Sabha was dissolved and the President was forced to call for fresh elections.

The nation was in the midst of the mid-term elections when tragedy struck again. Just when the second round of polling was about to begin, Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a terrorist bomb attack in a campaign meeting near Madras. This led to the postponement of elections for some time. However when they were finally held the people voted back the Congress to power. Similar to the 1984 elections this time again the people were guided by sympathy over Rajiv Gandhi's death which accounted for the Parties victory. This time again a "Hung Parliament" emerged. The Congress promptly formed a minority government headed by the veteran P.V.Narasimha Rao. The Rao government lasted for its full term despite many ups and downs. Now it has to be seen that the electorate votes it back in the 1996 General Elections or not.

CHAPTER - III

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN
INDEPENDENT INDIA

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

In 1947, when India became independent, we inherited a colonial system of education, which suited the interests of the British Raj, more than ours. In colonial India, there had been attempts made by the leading intellectuals to develop a national system of education but these were largely unsuccessful. This was because, no system of education could come into existence and stabilize itself, in the absence of a national government. So when a national government was formed at the Centre, attempts began for renovating the educational structure of the country.

The political leadership of independent India rightly viewed that the colonial nature of education had to be transformed into a national system of education, which alone could lead to the progress and prosperity of the country. It was realized that “ Education is the most important single factor in achieving economic development and technological progress and in creating social order, founded on the values of freedom, social justice and equal opportunity ”¹.

Education and the Indian Constitution- The declarations regarding education which have been made in the Indian Constitution, maybe treated as the starting point of education in free India.

¹ Government of India , Third Five Year Plan , P.573.

The Constitution has the following points regarding education:

- (a). Free and compulsory Primary Education, Art 45
- (b). Rights of Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions Art 29 & Art 30.(Also Art 350A & Art 350B)
- (c). Education for the weaker sections of the society Art 15,17 & 46.
- (d). Secular education Art 28(1),(2),(3) & Art 30.
- (e). Women`s education Art 15(1) & Art 16 (1).
- (f). Instruction in the mothertongue at the primary stage Art 350(A).
- (g). Promotion of the Hindi language Art 351.
- (h). Conservation of National Heritage Art 49.
- (I). Education in the union territories Art 239.

However all these provisions in the Constitution regarding education relate either to the protection of cultural and educational interests of the religious minorities or the propagation of education in the weaker sections of the society. But there is no mentioning of the objectives of Indian education at all².

Education not an enforceable right- Right to education is expressly mentioned in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Here the use of the word 'right' is not appropriate as Directive Principles are not enforceable in the court by the citizens. Education as a result remains a neglected subject and the amount spent on education is

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² Ram Chandra Gupta, Whither Indian Education, P.150.

disproportionately meagre. Education is the first foundation of Indian Democracy and lack of education among a major section of the population remains a serious handicap. Transfer of Education from the State List to the Concurrent List- The Constitution explicitly states that education is a State subject (Entry 11 of the 7th Schedule of the State List-II).It is also given that the institutions of national importance will be however managed by the Government of India (Entries 63,64,65 and 66 of the Seventh Schedule, Union List-I). But in 1976, through the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, Education was transferred to the Concurrent List. This was done with a view of enabling the Central Government to provide adequate leadership and initiative for qualitative and quantitative improvement in education. The aim was to remove the inconsistency in the education system and obtain an uniform system of education in India.

Such a transfer of education in the Concurrent List requires a new sharing of responsibilities between the Union Government and the States in respect of education, as a vital area of national life. While the role and responsibility of states in regard to education would remain unchanged, the Central Government would accept larger responsibility to enforce the national and the integrative character of education to maintain quality and standards, to study and monitor the national requirements of the country as a whole, cater to the needs of research and advance study and to promote

excellence at all levels of the education pyramid³. A meaningful partnership between the Centre and the States is required for an all-round development in the sphere of education.

The background of this decision to transfer education to the Concurrent List, goes back beyond the 1976 Amendment. A need was felt for stricter control by the Centre, by the educationists even earlier. It was felt that the Constitutional pledges were not being fulfilled within the specified period. Educational targets were not being met in spite of huge sums of money put at the disposal of the States and particularly in respect to higher education. The decisions made in the Centre-State conferences were not being implemented by the States.

The issue was discussed and debated time and again. A bill was moved in the Parliament in 1966 by Dr. L. M. Singhvi for amendment of the Constitution to put education in the Concurrent List⁵. The Sapru Committee also recommended that at least higher education should be on the Concurrent List. The Education Committee(1964-66) voted against putting education in the Concurrent List. It was not in favour of fragmenting education and viewed that the position given to education by the Constitution was probably the best as it provided the Central leadership a stimulating and non-coercive character. According to the Commission, such a transfer may lead to undesirable centralization and greater rigidity and believed that a workable

³ Journal of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, Vol 8, Nos 1 and 2, 1985, P.P 1-16.

⁵ J.Mohanty, Indian Education in the Emerging Society, P.37.

partnership in education could be evolved. But the supporters of this transfer emerged stronger. The only hurdle was that though the Government of India was interested in putting education in the Concurrent List, the proposal did not find support from the States. The debate lingered on till in 1976, the Forty-Second Amendment was finally brought about.

Recommendations of the different education commissions- After independence, many education commissions were setup to ascertain their observations about education and recommend for its improvement. Notable among these were:

- (1). The University Education Commission- The education commission was appointed in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr.S.Radhakrishan, which was known as the University Education Commission. The report of the commission is a very valuable document which has influenced the entire development of higher education in the post-independence period⁶.

The establishment of the University Grants Commission, the adoption of the Three-Year degree course, the improvement of the remuneration of University teachers and the development of research are some of its important recommendations. The Commission viewed that the objective of University education was to harmonise life and the various branches of knowledge. It was therefore essential that the subject

⁶ Prem Kirpal , A Decade of Education in India , P.37.

taught in the universities should bear a necessary relationship to life. The Commission set forth three aims of the curriculum- (a) to provide general education (b) to provide liberal education (c) to provide professional and vocational education⁷.

Above all the Commission laid a great stress on the formation of character and viewed that it was the responsibility of the Indian universities to produce fearless and thoughtful students who would lead the nation successfully. It was essential that the University should bring about not only the mental and physical growth of students but it should also work for their moral and spiritual development. The Commission laid special stress on the importance of the education of women. It also suggested that education should be spread to rural India.

The Commission presented some very valuable suggestions for the development and improvement of education at the University level. It is indeed distressing that these important suggestions have been ignored by the government and our educationists, and little has been done to implement these recommendations.

(2). The All-India Secondary Education Commission- This Commission was appointed in 1952 under the chairmanship of Dr. L. Mudaliar. It was known as the Mudaliar Commission and it had to evaluate every aspect of Secondary education in India and

⁷ Ram Chandra Gupta, op.cit., P.160.

give suggestions and recommendations for its improvement. Secondary Education was seen as the weakest link in our education chain. The Commission submitted its report in 1953, lamenting upon the deteriorating conditions of secondary education.

It stated clearly that most of the schools did not have proper buildings and adequate number of qualified teachers and proper attention was not being paid to the progress of Hindi. The Committee suggested a higher secondary course, study of three-languages, multipurpose schools, examination reform, educational and vocational guidance and proper facilities. It extended the period of secondary education by seven years and recommended that one year should be added to the degree course and two years of the intermediate should be transferred to the school stage. However due to financial considerations, this could not be implemented and instead the Sergeant Report was adopted to create a three-year degree course.

The Commission also expressed its views on the problems of language. It opined that at the middle level, two languages (Hindi and the Mother-tongue or regional languages) should be compulsory.⁸ The above two languages should be continued at higher secondary stage. English would be taught to those who had read it at the middle stage and who had shown a satisfactory progress in it.

The recommendation of the Commission for reducing the total duration of the Secondary phase to 11 years faced opposition and the conversion of Secondary schools into Higher Secondary was slow on account of financial constraints and lack of

⁸ Ibid , P.7.

qualified teachers⁹. Similarly the examination reforms could not make much progress and traditional methods of exams still continued. However there was improvement of service conditions, emoluments and vocational guidance made some progress and regional language was adopted as the medium of instruction and examination at the Secondary stage.

(3). Kothari Commission - With a view of advising the government on the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all its aspects, a 17 member commission was appointed in 1964 under Dr. D.S. Kothari. This commission submitted a detailed national educational programme for the next twenty years in 1966. It pointed out that the existing system of education was largely unrelated to the needs and the aspirations of the people.

The Kothari Commission visualizes a revolution in education. It identified the following major programmes that would bring about this educational revolution: (a) Internal transformation so as to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the nation. (b) Qualitative improvement so that the standards achieved are adequate and become internationally comparable. (c) Expansion of educational facilities broadly on the basis of manpower needs and with an accent on equalisation of educational opportunities¹⁰.

The Commission suggested for the reorganization of the entire system of education- the period of study (at different stages), courses of study, methods of evaluation and

⁹ J. Mohanty, *opcit*, P.42.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, P.37.

examination, quality improvement etc. In its view, the total duration of education should be 16-18 years. The Secondary schools should be of two types-

- 1) High Schools providing a ten year course
- 2) Higher Secondary Schools providing a course of eleven or twelve years.

It suggested that it was highly desirable to adopt an uniform pattern of 10+2+3 for school and college classes in all parts of the country.

The Commission laid stress on a tolerant study of all religions and found it necessary to frame a syllabus containing information about all the major religions in the world. Besides this the Commission put forward several proposals for teacher education, welfare of teachers and students in general, improvement in the examination system, development of scientific, technical, agricultural and vocational education, promotion of research in every field of knowledge and the education of adults and the backward classes.

Reflecting upon the problem of language, it stressed that while mother tongue and regional languages should be the media of instruction in schools and higher institutions, English should be studied right from the school stage. The study of Hindi was made optional but it was hoped that Hindi should be the national language and be able to link the majority of people.

The Commissions advocacy of the development of regional languages was welcome but it remained a pious desire that Hindi , while being an optional language will develop itself in due course and become the national language. But even today, the wishful expectations of the Kothari Commission has not been materialized and Hindi stands at almost the same position as it was then. On the contrary, the craving for English has increased. This is because of the wrong language policy adopted by the Union government and the antipathy of the political leaders to accelerate the process of installing Hindi as the national Language as given in the Constitution¹¹ .

Education and the objectives of the different Commissions- It is obvious from the recommendations of the education commissions that the objectives determined by them were chiefly related to economic, scientific and technological development of the country, modernization of the society, social and national integration and encouragement and consolidation of democratic values. However, except from the Radhakrishnan Commission, none of the recommendations focused on the formation of character as the main thrust of education. Out of the three commissions, appointed by the Union Government, it was only the Kothari Commission which was entrusted with the work of reviewing the entire spectrum of education. The proposed framework of education suggested by it, to reconstruct a desired social mechanism has failed to make any headway. This is particularly so, in the attainment of social and national integration and discipline and cultivation of moral and social values, in the absence of character education¹² . National Policy of Education, 1968- As soon as the report of the

¹¹ Ram Chandra Gupta , opcit , P.160.

¹² Ibid , P.163.

Education Commission(1964-66) was discussed with the State Governments, Universities and in both the Houses of the Parliament, a demand was made for laying down a National Policy of Education. This policy was formulated in 1968 and viewed that the educational system must produce young men and women of character and ability, committed to national service and development. Only then education will be able to play its vital role in promoting national progress, creating a sense of common citizenship and culture and strengthening national integration¹³.

To give concrete shape to the recommendations of the Education Commission and to the Resolution on the National Policy of Education 1968, the NCERT in 1975, brought out : “The Curriculum For Ten Year School- A Framework”. It represented the first attempt to restructure and reorient the content and processes of school education, based on a national curriculum framework. The ten years of general education with a set of common objectives, common scheme of studies and other details as suggested in the document was gradually accepted by all the States and the Union Territories.

While the achievements of the National Policy of Education of 1968 were impressive, the general formulations incorporated in that policy did not get translated into a detailed strategy of implementation in the absence of financial and organizational support. As a result, problems of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay assumed massive proportions.

¹³ The National Policy Resolution , 1968.

The National Policy of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-independent India. It aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture and to strengthen national integration. Since its adoption there has been considerable expansion in the educational facilities all over the country and at all levels. More than 90% of the country's rural habitations now have schooling facilities within a radius of 1Km. There has been a sizable augmentation of facilities at other stages also. The most notable development has been the acceptance of a common structure of education throughout the country and the introduction of the 10+2+3 system by most of the States¹⁴.

In addition to laying down a common scheme of studies for boys and girls in the school curricula, Science and Mathematics were incorporated as compulsory subjects and work experience was assigned a place of importance. A beginning was also made in restructuring of courses at the undergraduate level. Centre's of advanced studies were set up for post-graduate education and research.

The implementation of the Curriculum framework remained uneven among the States and Union Territories. One of the reasons was the lack of a comprehensive plan to link the curriculum changes with the process of teaching and learning, teachers training and examination reform. Another reason was the widespread disparities in the physical and human resources necessary for effective transaction of curriculum in schools.

¹⁴ R.P.Singh, Indian Education : Indepth Studies, P.7.

Janata Government and its Education Policy- When the Janata Party came to power in 1977, the difficulties regarding education was noticeable in terms of administrative, academic, personnel and financial issues, especially because adequate resources were not available¹⁵. The shortfall in implementation came into massive attack rather than the policy itself.

The main criticisms were directed against the ever-increasing academic content and the large number of books prescribed during the school duration. The strident protest was that the students were overburdened with the syllabus and had little time for manual work, sports, social service and creative activities. The practice of providing compulsory education in Science and Maths, irrespective of capabilities of the students, were also questioned. It was also seen that at the +2 stage, the suggested vocationalization was not being attempted at an adequate scale.

The Education pattern was reviewed by the Union Ministry of Education in consultation with a group of experts in 1977. It recommended that the 10+2 pattern should be retained and adequate provision for this had to be made in the Sixth Plan. Besides this, a National Education Conference was also convened in the same year. This favoured the pattern of 8+4+3, to promote the Gandhian concept of education. It

¹⁵ J.P.Naik, Policy and Performance in Indian Education -(1947-74), P.8.

also supported the implications of the 10+2+3 formula that the first public examination had to be conducted after ten years of schooling.

In 1979, the Janata Government formulated its own policy called the Janata Government Policy on Education. The Janata Government got the opportunity to complete the Fifth-five Year Plan and formulate the Sixth-five Year Plan for 1978-83. The Sixth Plan was launched with much enthusiasm. Special emphasis was laid on the potentialities of education to remove illiteracy and unemployment from the country.

Janata Party devised an idea of the Minimum Needs Programme under which not only the minimum economic needs of the people were to be met but also the minimum educational needs. Janata Government tried to bring in useful changes in the educational system of India for the improvement of skills in individuals so that they can become productive members of the society. Besides this, much stress was put on adult education¹⁶.

The Planning Commission constituted by the Janata Government found serious gaps in the education system of the Congress Government. They found that the system could be improved to increase the competitive power of the Indian masses. Most of the benefits of the system had only accrued to a small minority and the underlying principle of the equality of opportunity was only a way to deprive the vast majority of the benefits of education.

¹⁶ R.S.Pandey , National Policy on Education in India , P.P 129-130.

The Commission observed that changes in policy would be required and suggestions were made to make the educational system relevant to our objectives of a) removal of poverty b) removal of unemployment and c) improvement of skills. The Sixth Plan therefore included the Revised Minimum Needs Program as an essential part. This aimed at making a direct attack on illiteracy and making certain services directly available to the poor and strengthen their social base. The Janata Government had some definite ideas in regard to the improvement of the quality of education and its availability to the common man. It was very specific on decentralization of educational administration and on the mode of implementation of the adult education programme.

The Janata Government was in the favour of creating a Welfare State which could be moulded by education¹⁷. Although it had taken some concrete policy decisions which could have gone a long way in improving Indian education, it could not fulfill its mission as it lost power soon in 1980 due to much internal contradictions.

New Education Policy of 1986- When the Congress returned to power in 1980, they made no policy statement on the pattern of education. However they commented adversely on the approach of the Janata Government. On assuming Prime Ministership

¹⁷ Revised Draft on the Sixth Five Year Plan, 1978-83, New Delhi, 1979, P.P 404-406.

in 1985, Rajiv Gandhi declared that he would introduce a new policy on education, to prepare the nation to enter the 21st C successfully.

In his address at Shantiniketan on Dec 1985, he stated that “India had achieved tremendous progress in the field of Science and Technology since Independence but the vast resources, namely the people have remained underdeveloped”¹⁸.

The New Education Policy issued on May 1986 stressed the need to remove the disparities and emphasised the steps to be taken to equalise educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who had been denied equality so far like Women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the handicapped and some educationally deprived minority groups.

The whole nation according to this policy must pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age-group. The new policy implied that “upto a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location and sex should have an access to education, of a comparable quality. To achieve this the Government would initiate appropriately funded programmes. Effective measures were planned to be taken in the direction of the common school system, recommended in the 1968 policy”¹⁹.

As the 10+2+3 structure had been accepted all over the country, the 1986 policy decided to work for the further breakup of the first ten years, and to make efforts to

¹⁸ J.P.Naik , opcit , P.14.

¹⁹ R.P.Singh , opcit , P.9.

move towards an elementary system, comprising five years of primary education and three years of upper primary followed by two years of high school.

The 1986 policy viewed that the national system of education “will be based on a national curricular framework which contains a common core, along with other components that are flexible. The common core will include the history of India’s freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other contents essential to nurture national identity. All educational programmes will be carried on in strict conformity with secular values”.

According to the policy, “ in order to promote equality, prejudices and complexes transmitted through the social environment and accident of birth. has to be removed. Minimum levels of learning will be laid down for each stage of education. Steps shall be taken to foster among the students, an understanding of diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country”.

The policy emphasised that steps would be taken to facilitate inter-regional mobility in higher education in general and technical education, in particular. It sought to strengthen national institutions like the UGC, AICTE, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Indian Medical Council, along with NCERT, NIEPA and the Indian Institute of Science and Technology to implement the New Education Policy.

The Policy planned to organize programmes on adult literacy, elementary education, vocational education and higher education. The government proposed under this

policy, to gradually increase the expenditure on education till it uniformly exceeded 6% of the national income. The implementation of the various parameters of the New Policy was proposed to be reviewed every five years. Such programs included "Operation Blackboard", Open University and teachers training.

In order to accelerate the growth of talent among the rural children, particularly who have been neglected for long, a central schools of model schools were launched, simultaneously with this policy²⁰. These schools were to be set up one in each district and called Navodaya Vidyalayas.

The National Policy of Education which was formulated in 1986, was reviewed after five years by the Acharaya Ramamurthy Committee, under the National Front Government. It was seen while a good start had been made in terms of its proposals, much had to be done for the actual implementation of its policies. However with the coming of the Congress Party again at the Centre in 1991, a renewed emphasis has been put on the implementation of this policy.

²⁰ J.P.Naik , Opcit , P.23.

CHAPTER - IV

**NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND
THE EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA

After independence, when the Congress took over the reins of the country, one of their main concern was education. The British system of education had to be altered in order to suit the needs and requirements of a newly developing nation. Jawaharlal Nehru himself stated that it was important for the Indian masses to gain a proper understanding of the political process. For Democracy to be effective, it required an educated electorate. Such a statement was quite justified in a country teeming with poor illiterates who did not take any part in deciding their own and their nation's future.

Previously, the education system under the British Government was only intended for the "classes and not the masses"¹. The Congress Government was quick to highlight the fact that they were determined to change the past and bring education to the masses. They were aware of the fact that education was the key to modernization and it was important for bringing about social, economic and political development.

In spite of all these tall claims, the new government could only provide vocal support to the issue of mass education. It failed to decide upon a definite policy of education to be followed. Between 1947-67, innumerable committees, conferences and panels, including three commissions were set up with no constructive results.

¹ Atmanand Mishra , Education : Changing Strategy . P.70.

These discussed some particular aspects or levels of education only but did not produce any comprehensive policy on education.

There was absolutely no attempt made to consider the entire system of education, comprehensively from the pre-school to the university stage and draw up a perspective plan of reforms. Hence the reform in education initiated in India after independence was piecemeal and scattered. The limitations on our success were due to several factors such as inadequate emphasis, piecemeal rather than integrated approach, adoption of wrong policies, the class base of the political power structure, failure to initiate a simultaneous and vigorous programme of social and economic reform and inadequate human efforts inputs².

It was not that the Government of India did not make any efforts but these were not enough. The Central Advisory Board of Education was set up to handle problems relating to education. But it was so involved with the immediate problems that it did not occur to it, to suggest to the Government, for appointing a Comprehensive Commission to survey the entire scene of education and recommend an integrated series of modifications. The Education Commission of 1964-66 came a little late, when the people were fed up with the continuous modifications and reforms relating to education.

² J.P.Naik, Policy and Performance in Indian Education (1947-74), P.18.

Although Nehru had observed that the entire basis of education must be revolutionalized, it actually did not and could not come true. India after independence was faced with crucial problems like refugee rehabilitation, integration of the princely states, reorganization of bureaucracy and the army, among many others³. In the middle of all this, what was only feasible for the Government was to appoint in 1948, an University Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr.S.Radhakrishnan. It was set up for the reconstruction of University education, to be able to provide manpower for the socioeconomic development of the country. Setting up of such a Commission surprised many as reforms were proposed to begin from the top and not from the bottom which was teeming with illiterate masses⁴.

The Radhakrishnan Commission stated that “any University reform will remain largely ineffective unless the level of Secondary education is raised”. Therefore the Secondary Education Commission was appointed in 1952 under Dr. Mudaliar to suggest measures in this sphere.

If the recommendations of the two above Commissions could be analysed, it can be seen that they dealt with the two areas of education, in which the ruling elite was

³ S.C.Ghosh , Education Policy in India since Warren Hastings , P.108.

⁴ Atmanand Mishra , op.cit , P.174.

interested. Both these sections received large allocations of funds⁵ and underwent rapid, unplanned and uncontrolled expansion, resulting in deterioration of standards and creation of severe problems of educated unemployment.

The impact of the Mudaliar Commission on Secondary Education was short-lived. It soon became evident that the higher secondary and multipurpose schools were not going to deliver the expected goods. They failed to develop the desirable personality traits and encouraged a vocational bias.

The Constitution of India in Art 45 had provided that free and compulsory education should be given to all children upto the age of fourteen years within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution. On account of popular enthusiasm created by the attainment of independence, a vigorous programme of expansion of elementary education was launched in the beginning.

The First Five-Year Plan allocated 55% of its educational outlay to elementary education and the Finance Commission provided Rs.9 crores to the backward states for this purpose. But the Second Plan reduced its allocation to 30% for this sector as it hoped to reach the target in the coming fifteen years⁶.

A plan panel in 1957 suggested that it should be accomplished in two phases; in the first phase, to cover the entire age group of 6-11 years by 1965-66 and in the second phase to cover the age group 11-14 years by 1974-75. Even this target could not be

⁵ J.P.Naik , Some Aspects of Post-Independence Development in India , P.P 60-61.

⁶ Atmanand Mishra , op.cit , P.183.

achieved on account of the immensity of the problem and difficulties in implementation. This was due to inadequate resources, poverty and illiteracy of the parents, large annual increase of population, 80% of which lived in rural areas and were tribal and backward people.

The Education Commission 1964-66, finding the accomplishment of the target impossible by the speculated time, extended the two phases to 1975-76 and 1985-86. At the end of the fourth plan, the estimated enrollment in the age-group of 6-11 would be 84% and in the age-group 11-14 would be 36% of the total population in the respective age-groups⁷. However these targets continued to lag behind. After the failure to reach the estimated figures, no further specified dates were set for providing education to all children in the two age-groups. If special efforts are not made in this direction, it might need us another 45-50 years to reach this goal.

Basic Education was accepted as the national system of education for the elementary stage. The Zakir Hussain Committee elaborated its curriculum and method of teaching with the craft, physical and social environment of the child. This was designed to develop qualities of self-reliance and to be democratic citizen. The first two plans enthusiastically provided for the extension of Basic Education, but the Government was not satisfied with its progress. The Third Plan showed a lukewarm interest in this and the Education Commission 1964-66 banished it altogether from its recommendation and introduced a new idea called "work experience". The Fourth Plan did not mention

ibid

Basic Education in any special manner. Thus a good scheme of education, which our education system required was not pursued and implemented effectively at all.

The main obstacle to this has not been the lack of funds or availability of suitable teachers, as has often been made out. Perhaps the most important reason for this, was its non-acceptance by the classes in power. The existing model of primary education was primarily designed for the upper and middle classes in India, especially those living in urban areas. Hence they resisted any attempt to change this system. Also it has been seen that primary education had not been included in any of the election manifestos of the political parties. Politicians have stood for opening High Schools or Colleges but not primary education institutions. This issue has been completely neglected and no significant debate on this has ever been raised in the Parliament. If the period fixed by the Constitution had been adhered to, and a tremendous effort made, this miracle could have been achieved by the year 1960 only. But now it has become increasingly difficult due to the large-scale cost increase and also a tremendous rise in population.

Apart from primary education, even adult education has not received the priority that it deserves. The experience of the last 48 years in India has shown that the Government, by and large still represents the haves and the upper and the middle classes. The representatives of the weaker sections only play a minor role. This has led to a growing alienation between elites and masses in all spheres of national life. This explains why there is a resistance to any change that would effect the position of the privileged classes⁸.

⁸ S. R. Sharma, National Policy of Education, P.4.

The 1968 National Policy on Education was a historic document as for the first time, after independence, the Government had formulated a comprehensive policy on education, which it intended to follow. By this time the pressure on the ruling party had increased so much that it had become bound to introduce such a policy document on education. Thus it was more a political rather than an educational decision.

After independence, the educational facilities in the country were increased. The result was that within three decades after independence, there was tremendous but unplanned expansion in education, particularly in higher education⁹. The Indian economy could not keep pace and could not absorb the output of an unplanned expansion in education. The growing number of educated unemployed youth fell into politics. Many regional political parties began to exploit these discontented youth against the Government. There emerged the Naxalites and other radical groups comprising of these unemployed youths. Besides such Naxal violence during this time, the Congress Government also faced defeat in many of the states, for the first time in the 1967 elections. Earlier the Congress ruled both the Centre and the states but in 1967, it lost many of its states to other political parties like in Kerala, W. Bengal, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam.

⁹ S.C. Ghosh, *op.cit.*, P.115.

In this background the National Policy on Education was introduced in 1968 which called for a radical reconstruction of education. According to it, this was essential for the economic and cultural development of the country, for national integration and for realizing the ideal of a socialist society. The policy laid down a common structure of education throughout the country and introduced the 10+2+3 system. A common scheme of studies was laid down for boys and girls in the school curricula, Science and Maths were incorporated as compulsory subjects and work experience was assigned a place of importance. The education policy examined the question of development of languages in great details. A start was also made in restructuring of courses at the under graduate level.

The 1968 policy by itself was a good beginning but a major portion of it could not be implemented due to the lack of will power, funds and initiative. It was taken up half-heartedly and its implementation was carried out in a casual manner. However a start was made and some implementation was going on for about a decade, but for the fall of the Congress Government at the Centre in 1977 which led to the first National Policy on Education come to a halt¹⁰.

In 1979 the Janata Government formulated its own policy, known as the Janata Government's policy on Education. It was formulated in 1979 and in 1980 the government fell at the Centre and thus the policy came to an end. This policy aimed at cherishing the ideals of freedom, equality and social justice. Gandhiji's educational ideas were remembered. Community service, moral education, curricula programs and

¹⁰ R.S.Pandey , National Policy of Education in India , P.129.

lives and teachings of the national leaders were to be included in the curriculum. According to the Janata leaders, the education system had to be reorganized. It had to aim at the development of personality and character. The elementary school curriculum had to include language, history, arithmetic, elementary science, cultural values and physical education. Provisions for mid-day meals, free textbooks, stationary and uniform were to be made. Regional language was to be the medium of instruction. A common school system was proposed with the neighborhood school plan¹¹.

The Janata Government's policy laid a great emphasis on adult education. Programs like Revised Minimum Needs Programme(RMNP) were started. Rural areas were especially taken up. Diversification of curriculum and lightening of academic load were emphasis in the secondary education. Vocationalization for self-employment was stressed. Regarding higher education, the three-years degree course providing option for two years pass and three years honours was highlighted. Other schemes emphasised were internal evaluation system, credit system, textbooks, pre-school education, education for the handicapped, minorities and teacher education.

The salient feature of the implementation was the adult education programme. Several adult education centres were opened. But in the other spheres, the policy was not implemented properly as by that time the Janata Government was busy fighting for its survival.

¹¹ Ibid , P.130.

Here it has to be noted that the Janata Government tried to initiate their own policy in education after coming to power. This was basically to create a lasting impression on the electorate and gain respect. But this endeavor could not succeed as the Government toppled within a year. With the coming back of the Congress, the 1968 NPE remained the basic framework for all governmental action, till the introduction of the New Education Policy in 1986¹².

The period between 1980-84 was marked by a slow progress in education. In 1984, there was a sudden change in the political leadership, caused by the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Consequently Rajiv Gandhi was elected the P.M of India, both by the Congress Party and the electorate on 31st December 1984. The young leadership of India, represented by Rajiv Gandhi thought of bringing rapid political, economic and cultural changes through the agency of education. He expressed the hope that India would enter the 21st C as an industrially developed country. According to him this could be possible only if the education system in the country could be geared to meet the new needs and requirements. Hence a new education policy was accordingly considered vital to modernize the educational system. Rajiv Gandhi himself took personal interest in the development of an uniform education system for the whole country. A proposed boost was to be given to the Computer technology to take India to the 21st C¹³.

The rhetorics of the new leadership did convince the masses but the underlying reason for pursuing the introduction of a new education policy was however another one. The

¹² S. C. Ghosh, op.cit, P. 112.

¹³ S. R. Sharma, Education in India, P. 293.

Centre at this time was facing tremendous pressure from different regional parties, each clamoring for the creation of separate states for them. These were Uttarakhand in U.P, Gorkhaland in W.Bengal and Jharkhand in parts of Bihar, W.Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. All this posed a serious challenge to the Centre. Above all, was the demand made by the Khalistanis for a separate state in Punjab, fully independent from India. The disturbances in the different parts of the country made it very clear that the youth of India had no patriotic feelings for their motherland, no sense of national identity and were falling fast into the clutches of the disruptive and disintegrating forces. The Government had to concentrate all its resources to save the nation from breaking up. It was realized that maybe the education system was not effective to be able to develop feelings of national development and patriotism in the young minds. Hence after a nationwide debate, Rajiv Gandhi's government formulated the New Education Policy in 1986 and a programme of Action.

The document on National Policy of Education 1986 observed " India's political and social life is passing through a phase which poses the danger of erosion to long accepted values. The goals of secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics are coming under strain-----, rural-urban disparities have to be removed and determined measures are taken to promote diversification and dispersal of employment opportunities. The growth of our population needs to be brought down significantly over the coming decades-----. Besides a variety of new challenges and social needs makes it imperative for the Government to formulate and implement a New Education Policy for the country. Nothing short of this. will meet the situation."¹⁴ 4) The

¹⁴ National Policy on Education , 1986 , P P 2-3

Programme of Action echoed the same sentiment stating “ Time is of essence and unless we act now, we stand in the danger of once again missing the opportunity of education reform, so critical, not only for the development of our nation but for our very survival¹⁵ . The above clearly proves again that there was a political motivation behind incorporating a new education policy, in order to gain mass support in the face of challenging pressures.

Unlike the 1968 policy, the New Education Policy was not preceded by the appointment of an expert commission on the subject. The proposals were formulated by the concerned Ministry officials under the guidance of the ruling party, immediately after it came to power in Jan 1985. It was ready by Aug 1985, then submitted to politicians, academicians and administrators for discussion. The final policy emerged in 1986 and put into action soon after.

The NPE 1986 pointed out the essential characteristics of a national system of education, providing opportunities for equal access to education to all, irrespective of class, caste, creed or sex and areas including backward hilly and desert regions. It envisaged a common educational structure like 10+2+3, a common core in the curricular programme at some level, an understanding of the diverse socio-cultural systems of the people, while motivating the younger generation for international cooperation and peaceful coexistence¹⁶ . The whole nation was asked to pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age-group. The policy sought to organize programmes on adult education linked with national goals.

¹⁵ Programme of Action , Government of India , P.IV.

¹⁶ MHRD , Government of India , National Policy on Education , 1986 , P.3 et seq.

It envisaged a new thrust in elementary education as (a) universal enrollment and retention upto fourteen years (b) attempt to substantially improve the quality of education. Another focus was on the non-formal system so that by 1990 all children upto 11 years would have five years of schooling and by 1995, all children upto 14 years would be provided free and compulsory education. In Secondary education, vocational education was to be kept as distinct stream to prepare students for a variety of occupations. In higher education the new Policy stated the need to protect universities and colleges from disintegration. The document made a series of observations on cultural perspectives, language, books and libraries, media and educational technology. It proposed to recast the examination system and provide a better deal to the teachers.

Although the NPE was passed by an overwhelming majority, there were some misgivings about it. According to some, it tried to relegate Sanskrit to the background by not including it in the Three-Language Formula. Others criticised it as being anti-people¹⁷. Also the NPE 1986 was marked by its stress on the role of the central government in the sphere of education. This was not liked by the states and led to ideological differences between the Centre and the State governments which resulted in problems of implementation.

However by the time the new policy finally took off, the government fell at the Centre and for some time, no one bothered about education. After the change of government

¹⁷ R.S.Pandey, op.cit, P.130.

in 1989, the National Front Government again took up the issue of education. According to them, efforts had to be made to make education more egalitarian and purposeful for the common man. When on May 7th, 1990 the new government announced the appointment of the 17 member Ramamurthi Committee with Acharya Ramamurthi as its chairman, to “review the National Policy of Education 1986”, there arose questions as to why a review was being taken up before the end of the stipulated five years period.

The reason for this as given by the National Front Government was that “despite efforts at social and economic development since the attainment of independence, a majority of our people continue to remain deprived of education. It is a matter of grave concern that our people who comprise 50% of the worlds illiterate and large sections of our children have to go without acceptable levels of primary education.

The government accords highest priority to education, both as a human right and as a means for bringing about transformation towards a more humane and enlightened society----- The National Policy of Education needs to be reviewed to evolve a framework which would enable the country to move towards this perspective of education¹⁸”

On Sept 7th 1990, Acharya Ramamirthi released the perspective paper on education. In sum the Ramamurthi review Committee report calls for a rethinking and reflection on education in India. The major shifts in terms of emphasis from the NPE1986 were five-

¹⁸ Report of the Committee for Review of National Policy on Education , 1986 , P.370.

fold : elementary education facilities for one and all, redesigning of adult education, larger allocations for education, social relevance of education and the decentralized grass-roots management of education with the crucial roles of the teachers and community.

The Ramamurthi report expressed its opinion in favour of the common school system and its disapproval of the elite Navodaya Vidyalayas. According to its view this scheme has proved very costly and can only cater to a microscopic minority of the total school population. The report laid more emphasis on work orientation in education and inculcation of moral and spiritual values. It viewed that the outlay on primary education needed to be hiked significantly. This would increase the quality of education in government, local body and aided schools, transforming them into neighbourhood schools. Special allocations were earmarked for the improvement of school systems in backward areas, urban slums, tribal areas, hilly tracts, deserts, coastal belts and islands¹⁹.

The 17 member committee called for ensuring instruction for all in the medium of the mothertongue at the primary level. It recommended the restructuring of UGC, selectiveness in admissions in Universities and training programmes for newly appointed teachers. The common school system was decided to be implemented within ten years. It was also imperative to identify the elitist aberrations that have crept into

¹⁹ R.S.Pandey , Op.cit , P.131.

the educational system. The committee thus endorsed some points, suggested modifications on certain issues and rejected some ideas as expressed in the NPE1986.

Acharya Ramamurthi Committee submitted its final report on 26th Dec 1990, but soon after that the National Front Government had to resign. The minority Government under the leadership of Shri Chandrashekhar continued at the Centre. The report of the review committee was kept in the cold storage. One point of criticism against this Committee was that it consisted of 17 members but none of them belonged to the discipline of education. If there had been an educationist, matters would have been viewed differently.

The point here that has to be analysed that NPE 1986 was evolved after a nationwide debate during the Prime-ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and was continuation and improvement of the previous policy of education of 1968. Hence the review of the NPE 1986 was more of a political exercise by the National Front Government, consisting of elements of the Janata Party, the Lok Dal, Telegu Desam Party, the DMK and AGP of Assam and the Communist Parties of India, to negate the items in the 1986 policy which did not suit their interests. However within a short time after the submission of the Ramamurthi Committee report, the National Front Government fell and the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi returned to power. Consequently the governmental interest at the national level welcomed back the 1986 policy. And the people of India continue to suffer for want of stabilization and consistency in the Education Policy of the country.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

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It is clear from the preceding chapters that education occupies an important place in the agenda of a political party. India being a democratic country, government changes periodically and the party that holds the spectre at the Centre also rules the education policy of the country. Thus whenever there is a change of government, there is likely to be a change in the education policy. This has happened in the country since 1977. A changing policy regarding education cannot bring any substantial gains and the people are most affected by this. It is necessary therefore to take a very realistic view of the situation and look out for beneficial areas in education and make them unchangeable through legislation.

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