Evolution of Pannalal Dasgupta’s Ideas and Activities

Introduction

Throughout history, militant political activists have changed their political tactics under compulsions of contemporary politics. In most such cases, they hold on to their political visions. The general trend has been to move away from their initial militant path and to adopt the peaceful path, from revolution to re-construction, from class to people, and in some cases from the cities to villages. Pannalal Dasgupta (1908-1999) was one of those violent revolutionaries-turned-peaceful social re-constructionists whose life stories would open a gateway to the interesting study of transformation of the breed of radical political protagonists into votaries of peaceful change. From this perspective, this research focuses on the ideas and activities of late Pannalal Dasgupta.

Pannalal Dasgupta was a well-known figure to the students of Bengal radicalism for his direct involvement in extreme leftist politics. Though in the beginning of his career he was a leading figure in left radicalism in Bengal (later West Bengal), both before and after India’s independence, he shunned the path of armed struggle later and adopted the line of peaceful social reconstruction programme. Since this metamorphosis in his life corresponds to similar others in contemporary time who having failed in their radical political mission turned towards peaceful social
reconstruction, this thesis on Pannalal Dasgupta's life may be reckoned as a study of this group of failed radical leaders. They sought to emancipate people from prolong exploitation and privation initially through violent struggle against imperialism and semi-capitalist regimes that came into being in these countries after decolonization. In a sense this radicalism was peculiar to certain kind of leadership in the third world as it emanated from the inner sense of impatience for rapid development from colonial scourge and post-colonial backwardness. But failure of their radical political programmes later induced them to introspect and assess the way of struggle. This led them to take recourse to a qualitatively different, peaceful path of public action. Thus, failed radicals later sought to realize their ideal and commitment to human emancipation and development of people. This was indeed a new chapter of struggle on their part to get involved in peaceful social reconstruction work to liberate people from the constraints lying in the way for their self-reliant development. Although people like Pannalal Dasgupta thus switched over to this new line and pursued the goal of building a non-exploitative social order with sustained endeavour for over 30 years, this has been neglected in academic researches. The latter has not accorded sufficient space to the study on the life and activities of failed radicals and their transformation once they were out of politics. That is to say, unlike Gandhi, Nehru and similar others\(^1\) who have received enough place in academic analyses for

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\(^1\) For example, there is no dearth of writing on prominent figures in Indian politics like Subhas Chandra Bose (Subhas: A Political Biography by Sitanshu Das, Rupa, New Delhi, 2011, His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas
their role in mainstream Indian politics, there is a discernible lack of interest in failed radical leaders like Kansari Halder, Charu Majumdar etc. among the researchers on contemporary socio-political history of India. The distinct dimension in PD’s case also lies in the fact that among failed radicals, figures like Kansari Halder, Charu Majumdar did not move away from ultra-leftist orientation of their ideas to adopt the diametrically opposite line of constructive intervention in rural society basically under the influence of Gandhi’s ideas of peaceful change, which PD did.

As such, this attempt to study Pannalal Dasgupta’s ideas and activities does not simply seek to provide a historical reconstruction of his life story in order to explore crucial transformation of his thought. Rather, it shows how third world radical revolutionaries like him were denied political and academic importance.

There is no denying the fact that Pannalal Dasgupta’s ideas concerning village reconstruction in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Dandakaranya region of Orissa since late 1960s have not been appreciated, notwithstanding the value of critical insights of his experience and vision that these provide. While mainstream discourses on rural reconstruction were often confined to exercises like planning, allocation of funds to agencies like panchayats and implementation of government
sponsored programmes for community welfare, he emphasized the necessity of refashioning rural social relationships keeping in view the basic needs and harmony of interests of the members of local community. Despite his sincerity and much laboured efforts, why his later ideas did not win considerable mass support has not been subjected to any thorough academic study. Hence, an in-depth study of the life-story of Pannalal Dasgupta and shift in his approach from armed revolution to non-violent reconstruction is significant also from the viewpoint of making a critique of his changed ideas in later life.

Historically authors like Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, David M. Laushey and others have shown that in the political current of Bengal many revolutionaries, particularly the younger sections belonging to both the Jugantar and Anushilan camps were eager for militant action, “but they had no clear conception of how to proceed.” Although many revolutionaries joined Gandhi-led Non-Co-operation movement; “they were sharply divided and wavering on whether to join or remain out of the Congress...” The sudden withdrawal of the 1920-22 Non-Co-operation movement following the events in Chauri Chura in 1922, and increasingly cautious attitude of elder revolutionary leaders in organizing new overt actions

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2 Majumdar, Satyendra Narayan, *In Search of A Revolutionary Ideology and A Revolutionary Programme*, PPH, New Delhi, 1979
3 Laushey, David M, *Bengal Terrorism & the Marxist Left*, Firma K L Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975
"made the younger activists restive and disillusioned." On the other hand, the inspiration of the successful Russian revolution and "the militant anti-imperialism of Marxism" combined to attract many young revolutionaries and gradually led them to the Marxist line of organizing revolutionary struggle from the 1930s. Mere acts of violence were deprecated and emphasis was put on mobilization of the toiling masses to form an egalitarian society through revolutionary action. This metamorphosis of revolutionaries was mediated by many other factors viz. the spread of communist propaganda through historic trials like Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-1933), circulation of communist literature in jails, formation of debate and discussion groups among the detainees in various prisons and detention camps and increasing strength of the workers' movement in the country. All these influenced a number of revolutionaries in India by ushering in a new orientation among them. But confusion was alive among the revolutionaries due to their continuous inner divisions, different angles of leftist interpretations of national and international issues and the ways of application of Marxism in practice. During this period of ideological transformation the nationalist revolutionaries in Bengal who later adopted radical, armed communist path of struggle were not free from certain contradictions. This became evident from the gulf between their propagation of the avowed line of mass struggle and their practical activities.

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7 Laushey, p-vi
oriented to armed revolution in very limited areas. This alienated them from the mainstream of national politics.

Pannalal Dasgupta was one of them as his political ideas acquired left revolutionary leaning at that time. Police reports about him in the early 1930s specifically referred to shift in his thinking from militant nationalist plank towards launching 'economic struggle' (no definite illustration of forms of such struggle however found in police record) against the colonial power. It may be noted here that this change in his political and economic views with time could be better understood if we think in terms of several phases: The National Revolutionary Phase (1920-1937), followed by the Marxist Phase (1938-1951) and finally his transition to the Gandhian path (1952-1999). This division of phases is based on his principal agenda distinguishing each particular phase. It also seeks to represent the evolution of his political thinking and of modes of intervention in political and social situations.

But seen in the generalized backdrop of state repression coupled with organizational failures causing frustration among the rank of these radical politicians in the colonial and post-colonial countries like India, the above conceptual framework seems to go beyond the individual, viz. Pannalal Dasgupta, to showcase the pattern of negotiation and reconciliation through which these leaders had to pass through after withdrawal from extremist politics. His life experience thus assumes theoretical importance to shed light on similar discourses.
on failed radicals, their forsaking of violence and new turns in life in pursuit of
their fundamental goal of human emancipation.

The main thrust of this study is to get to this larger perspective and to reconstruct
the narrative based on the evolution and transformation of Pannalal Dasgupta’s
thought and activities. His ideas acquired ultra-left orientation in the late 1940s
which is crucial for understanding the split in Revolutionary Communist Party of
India in 1948 leading to Dum Dum Basirhat insurgency action under his
leadership on 26 February 1949. Although it was but a flicker of armed rising
which fell through in the face of state’s counter operation, the event as
masterminded by Pannalal Dasgupta left an indelible mark on the left insurgency
(in which mainly Communist Party of India and also a few left parties like faction
of Revolutionary Communist Party of India were involved) at the fag-end of
1940s in post-independent India. This does not, however, mean that later left
insurgents in West Bengal, the Naxalites in the late 1960s for example, were
oblivious of Dum Dum Basirhat action. But they were critical to his ideas
primarily because he did not think from the point of organizing a radical peasant
movement and also because he later changed his path to intervene in state
sponsored bodies to create a new society in village. Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury
for example, said about the occasion in the late 1960s when Pannalal Dasgupta
came to his college in Birbhum to appeal the students to co-operate with the state
government in its agricultural programme. As a Naxalite activist what
Roychowdhury then replied was that ‘they were ready to work with the government, but would the crops so produced be allowed to go to the granaries of the poor peasants?’ This made Pannalal upset and the meeting ended in a fiasco. This shows how his changed avocation was cynically perceived by the Naxalite students in West Bengal. Despite his honesty of purpose and quest to refashion his revolutionary energy after Dum Dum-Basirhat, he was misjudged for his flexibility in choosing the Gandhian path of village re-construction. His tragedy was that he was a misunderstood figure in West Bengal for his changed outlook and swing away from Marxist inspired political struggle towards village development activities after 1962.

This leads us to the study of his long span of imprisonment from 1951 to August 1962 that brought new realizations in him. Extensive study and exchange of his views with scholarly persons contributed to bring about a radical change in his perception of politics and society in independent India. Critical of the Indian leaders of left political spectrum for their negative attitude to Gandhi, Pannalal Dasgupta’s magnum opus Gandhi Gabeshana represents his attempt to understand Gandhi’s thoughts and works from Marxist point of view. After

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9 See Dasgupta, Pannalal, Gandhi Gabesana, second imprint, Nabapatra Prakashani, Kolkata, 1999.
coming out of prison in 1962, he concentrated his attention to activities like editing the Bengali weekly *Compass* and peaceful social reconstruction through state and also by exploring the path of non-governmental initiatives based on Gandhian ideas of non-violence and the socialistic impetus to collective action.

Thus, in contrast to his earlier political programme to bring change from above through political leadership, interrogating and assailing the newly independent Indian state, Pannalal Dasgupta's ideas and activities in post-1962 period consisted of peaceful experiments at the grass root level in rural areas. The heart of his idea of rural reconstruction was clearly evident in his call of 'one village one family'. It signified that he intended to develop a co-operative compact village society instead of the prevailing one torn by conflicts and exploitation. It is this process of transformation and evolution of Pannalal Dasgupta's views and activities that provide us with fascinating insights not only into the dynamics and perspective of his thinking, but also into the study of his time and of important events of past decades that paved the way for the new synthesis in his views in later phase. This synthesis took place within the framework of his socialist outlook and his later realization in the efficacy of Gandhi's ideas.

This study, thus, throws light on historical circumstances in the late 1940s that bred left militancy in India and also goes into a wider discussion of the changed scenario during the 1950s, with a new set of issues like food problem in West Bengal, problems of refugee settlement and rehabilitation in the nineteen-sixties.
and seventies. It does so by reflecting on Pannalal Dasgupta’s activist role and
tireless interventions in pursuit of solutions of those problems in his times. He
never abandoned his overarching concern with human emancipation. His life
struggle was located very much within the matrix of late-colonial and
post-colonial changes in India.

Research Questions:

The main question that guides this research is: How to explain Pannalal
Dasgupta’s contingent transformation from a militant activist to a peaceful
re-constructionist role? In other words, what were the circumstances that led
him from revolutionary extremism to become a champion of the cause of
peaceful social transformation? Since this question is relevant for many others
like him, it carries with it a broader question of limits of militant activism.

Subsumed under this broad question, is a set of derived questions like:

a) What were the influences that moulded his initial political thought
process?

b) What were his various political activities in the early militant phase?

c) What was the state response to such activities?

d) How did he use the period of his imprisonment during 1930s to
reconstruct his political goal?
e) What were his various political activities during 1940s for the purpose of ushering in socialist revolution in India?

f) How did he justify his political line of ‘immediate revolutionary strike’ on the Indian state in 1948?

g) Why did his efforts at communist insurgency in Dum Dum-Basirhat in 1949 fail?

h) Was his incarceration in 1950s an opportunity for introspection?

i) Why did he turn to Gandhi’s thought and practice? Was he in full conformity with Gandhi’s ideas? What was his intellectual tendency during the 1950s?

j) What were his activities towards reconstruction from late 1960s till mid-nineteen nineties? What would distinguish them?

k) Did he revise his attitude to the state from initial anarchist rejection to accepting the state in India from the 1960s as a useful instrument of social transformation?

l) How far were his mission and interventions successful in bringing about desired transformation in society?

This dissertation seeks to address these vital questions. It may be noted that no study on the ideas and activities of Pannalal Dasgupta has been taken up from
A Brief Survey of Literature:

It needs to be mentioned here that there is dearth of data on his early life activities and his involvement in political activities in the 1920s and 1930s. Even during 1940s, most of his writings on radical revolutionary line were seized by police because they were proscribed and most of them were lost during his long fugitive life. However, some of his pamphlets written under various pseudonyms have been identified in police file and some of his writings during 1940s, later reproduced in the form of a volume of his collected work\(^{10}\), have evinced rich political content.

There are only handful of writings on Pannalal Dasgupta by some of his associates like Prafulla Gupta, Niren Dasgupta and those which were published in news papers. Prafulla Gupta's writing *Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta* was published long ago in 1953. Obviously, it was concerned with his role in the freedom struggle and revolutionary movements but did not provide an account of transformation of his ideas that occurred during his imprisonment in the 1950s.

\(^{10}\) See Dasgupta, Pannalal, *collected work* in Bengali entitled *Rachana Samagraha*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Kolkata, 1999. This anthology includes *Chetana Prerona Sanghay*, *Samajtantrik Biplob Aji Noi Keno*, *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dharc*, *Gram Deshe Raj Kara*, *Nau Bidroha* and *Jailer Chithi*. 
Niren Dasgupta’s recent writing on Pannalal Dasgupta published in 2000\(^\text{11}\) though presents a more holistic picture of his ideas and activities is incomplete for lack of analytical perspective to offer explanatory reasoning underneath his shifts. The same applies to Monoranjan Sadhukhan’s writing on Pannalal Dasgupta in bare skeletal form found in a typed script signed by him. We can locate an entry on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* edited by S P Sen\(^\text{12}\). Besides, Dr. Amiya Ghosh’s book on national revolutionary movements in Birbhum contains sundry references on his role in the 1930s, but its compass is limited in terms of period and coverage of his activities. The same can be said of Durga Banerjee’s book *Swadhinata samajtantra O Ganatantrer Sangrame Birbhum*\(^\text{13}\) (i.e. *Freedom Struggle and Progressive Democratic Movement in Birbhum*) and Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury’s *Birbhumer Prekshapatra Rajnaitik Andolan : Satchallish Theke Sottar Ebang Age Pare*\(^\text{14}\) (i.e. *Political Movements in Birbhum: Nineteen Forty-seven—Nineteen Seventy, Before and After*, published in three parts) which are written from the subjective angle of personal experiences to focus on the history of political movements in Birbhum.

\(^{11}\) See Dasgupta, Niren, *Bishoy Pannalal Dasgupta*, Shreebhumi publisher, Kolkata, 2000


district.

Since Pannalal Dasgupta drew close to Saumyendranath Tagore's group 'the Communist League of India' in the late 1930s, party documents like resolutions adopted in various conferences of the RCPI served as guidelines for its members. It may be noted here that a collection of more than thirty articles of Saumyendranath Tagore including a good number of political resolutions of RCPI was published in two volumes of *Against the Stream* under the editorship of Sudarshan Chattopadhyay, a leading theoretician of RCPI. These bound volumes of writings of Saumyendranath Tagore encapsulate the political thought of the leadership of RCPI till the split in the party in 1948 following sharp division and irreconcilable differences of political views between these two leaders.

Important discussion on the political thought of Saumyendranath Tagore, his role as the ideologue in the RCPI shaping its line of activities and his differences with Pannalal Dasgupta are part of the study in Manjula Basu's *Saumyendranath Karme O Manone* (i.e. *Saumyendranath Tagore in his ideas and activities*). This book was reviewed by late Amlan Datta, a friend of Pannalal Dasgupta in *Desh*, a Bengali magazine dated 2 June 2008.

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Some publications of the State Planning Board of West Bengal regarding Comprehensive Area Development Programme (in short, CADP) with which Pannalal Dasgupta was actively associated from the early 1970s till 1977 show his approach to rural development through schemes of modernization of agriculture and implementation of projects.

Above all, the official reports obtained from archival documents like police files and different issues of *Compass* also throw light on critical aspects of his political career and his post-incarceration thought. Police files, in particular, reveal minute details of the political direction of his ideas and activities in the late 1940s and responses of the Indian state at that time. It deserves special mention that there are more than twenty police files of Intelligence Branch in the West Bengal Government Archive, particularly on the Dum Dum-Basirhat armed raid on 26 February 1949 by the RCPI splinter group led by Pannalal Dasgupta. These relate to different case diaries, supplementary case diaries, of different stages of investigations, report on the proceedings of the cases etc. Even more important, we find the verdicts of Honorary Judge R. K. Duttagupta, of the First Tribunal and N. K. Ghosh of the Second Tribunal in the said police files. Thus, we get an exhaustive account of the events and views of the Court corroborated by factual evidences. On the other hand, old *Compass* files carry a number of Pannalal Dasgupta's own writings, which are mostly related to the ideas of his later life from 1964 onward when he self-consciously took up the path of social...
Chapter Design:

For the purpose of analysis the present study on the evolution of Pannalal Dasgupta's ideas and activities has been designed into following six chapters including conclusion:

The first chapter deals with his childhood socialization, education and the impact of contemporary political milieu on his mind. Since he was brought up in the age of revolutionary extremism within the fold of nationalist liberation struggle the discussion included in this chapter reveals how this current of contemporary politics in Bengal led to his emotional attachment with the patriotic elements during his school life in Faridpur which had been an important base of revolutionary activities. Yet there was a tension underlying his political aspirations in early life. The analysis in this chapter brings out the formative stage of his upbringing in family and orientation to politics.

The second chapter deals with his ideas and activities during 1920-1937. In course of this period he joined the secret revolutionary group led by Niranjan Sen at Barisal and began taking part in violent activities in the pursuit of national liberation. His youthful association with this stream of political activities culminated in the Mechua Bazar Bomb Case (1929) in which he was arrested and kept in detention till 1937. This chapter locates the development of
his interest in Marx's ideas of revolutionary communism and seeks to find out the probable factors that led him to embrace Marxism. Yet, the distinct mark of his political thinking was evident in his meeting with Gandhi when acting incognito. He also argued in a letter dated 20/11/1949 published in the volume of his collected writings that radical Marxists required learning from Gandhian techniques of struggle in the interest of radical revolutionary struggle. All these come under the purview of discussion included in this chapter.

During 1938-51 phase designated in this monograph as Marxist phase of his political career, the development of his thought along Marxist line and his observations on the conditions for revolution in India have been delineated. In this chapter three the details of his ideas and activities within this time frame have been further sub-divided into two sub-phases, first, his association with Saumyendranath Tagore's group 'Communist League of India' (CLI) that was subsequently rechristened as Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI) from early 1940s. And second, the formation of a break-away group by him after the fourth conference of RCPI in 1948 till his arrest in 1951. The polemics on the issue of launching revolutionary strike soon after India's independence from colonial rule that led to the split in RCPI have been thoroughly dealt in this section with reference to the literature put forward by him and Saumyendranath Tagore. The culminating point of this phase was Dum-Dum-Basirhat uprising in February 1949, which ultimately failed with the
arrest of most of the activists of his group. By the middle of 1951 Pannalal Dasgupta himself was arrested. The defeat of this radical political design left a decisive impact on his subsequent ideas and activities which have been reviewed here to make a critical assessment of the said programme. Though ending in failure, it was the phase of culmination of Pannalal Dasgupta’s revolutionary political ideas as evident in the booklet called *Chetana Prerona O Sanghat* (i.e. *Consciousness, Inspiration and Conflict*, published in 1948). The essence of his argument was to highlight the importance of mass revolution to put an end to the existing social structure and the state which served the needs of the vested interests.

The fourth chapter analyses his crucial transformation during his prolonged imprisonment and soul-searching. In course of eleven long years (i.e. July 1951-August 1962) of incarceration his political thought underwent radical transformation. Discussion in this chapter has highlighted those factors like his reading of Gandhian literature, exchange of views with scholars like Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose which brought sea change in his political ideas and led him to espouse a philosophy of constructive intervention in rural society to realize his fundamental objective of human well-being. All these were evident from his prison writings during 1950s. Hence his contemporary writing namely *Gandhi Gabesana* and *Gram Deshe Kaj Kara* have been analysed to understand the distinct turn of his thinking from 1952 onwards.
The fifth chapter (1963-1999) focuses on PD’s varied ideas and diverse activities ranging from efforts at national integration to the institutionalization of rural development initiatives through Tagore Society for Rural Development, a voluntary organization founded by him\textsuperscript{17}. Though peaceful road which he now adopted to create a harmonious village society was a Gandhian agenda, he was equally influenced by the ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and his Sriniketan Institute of Rural Reconstruction. Hence attempts have been made in this part to relate Tagore’s views to those of Pannalal Dasgupta regarding re-organization of rural life by encouraging self-initiative of village folk and through the implementation of co-operative programmes.

It is true that Pannalal’s political career was not that prominent except for the Dum Dum-Basirhat action that he had planned and conducted. Even after release from prison in August 1962, he did not join RCPI, nor did he found any new political party. Rather he chose to move alone. But, in contrast to his revised stance, in 1969 he contested from Bolpur constituency as an independent candidate and won the election. However, in his contemporary writings in \textit{Compass} one could discern his unambiguous political support in favour of the leftist coalition for its role in political movements in the state. Whether this was renewal of his interest in politics or use of political channel to

\textsuperscript{17} The Tagore Society for Rural Development was founded in 1969 to help village reconstruction and self-help projects such as digging and cleaning ponds, building of dharmagola (literally, community grain banks cum service centre) and many other activities according to the needs of the people of the area. PD was the founder chairman of the society.
accomplish the task of social reconstruction, has been analysed in this chapter.

Thus, in unfolding the gamut of Pannalal Dasgupta’s ideas and activities, this monograph intends mainly to focus on the formative influences on his mind, his political and economic ideas and activities in the context of his time; it also seeks to analyse the process through which he sought to fulfil his mission to uphold an alternative model, a model of small ‘co-operative socialistic society’ in contrast to existing market-oriented exploitative capitalist order. In the concluding chapter not only his shifting ideas and activities have been summarized but they have been reviewed also. In a nutshell, it provides us with a brief estimate of his chequered career, complex of ideas, diverse activities and their limitations. Treading one’s way through these is to appreciate his contribution to Indian political thought.

**Research Methods:**

In this study textual and contextual sources have been interpreted towards reconstruction of the political and post-political life story of Pannalal Dasgupta. This has been done to elaborate upon two aspects—to retain his subjectivity, because he needs to be analyzed with reference to his crucial humanist or value commitment to the task of uplifting the poor and the distressed people, and simultaneously to stress on the historical circumstances that fashioned his service centre) and many other activities according to the needs of the people of the area. PD was the founder chairman of the society.
orientation to politics and ironically circumscribed his activism also. While doing this the existing literature on Indian political leaders has provided with important clues.

Keeping in focus the crucial question of transformation of Pannalal Dasgupta's ideas and activities, a blend of historical method, sources of available data of the period which lay in resource books, government records etc., have been examined along with his own writings as well as writings on him by his contemporaries and associates for the purpose of obtaining insights into the dynamic process of his life. Interviews with knowledgeable persons helped the researcher to fill up gaps in recorded data, for example in police files. Further, the interviewees provided their valuable reflections on the events and the key protagonist, Pannalal Dasgupta. The information received from each of them, was verified either from literary source like books or documents or through another in-depth interview with other knowledgeable persons. All the interviewees were either veteran RCPI comrades or Pannalal Dasgupta's colleagues in Tagore Society. Their views have been useful since important inferences could be drawn from them, or clues which they provided have aided interpretation. The interview questions for these persons were open-ended. All the interviews were in informal conversation mode facilitating free reminiscing about their past association with Pannalal Dasgupta. His own interviews published in contemporary newspapers and journals were themselves rich and
authentic source of knowledge of his observations on his own thinking and activities and on political developments in Bengal. This research has also made use of comparative method for comparing Pannalal Dasgupta's ideas and activities with Gandhi. A brief comparison of his line of thinking with Rabindranath Tagore regarding socio-economic re-modeling of rural society has also been appended and incorporated in this research.

The nature of data used in this study:

The primary sources used in this study are: (1) the various writings of Pannalal Dasgupta written both in Bengali and in English. His preeminent work *Gandhi Gabesana* was given due attention. This great oeuvre of his writings comprises a huge mass of literature ranging from articles, contraband pamphlets and booklets written under different assumed names to his letters, and writings in personal diaries. His long analytical writings like *Bharate Samyavadi Andoloner Dhara* (i.e. *currents of communist movements in India*), *Panchayet*, the paper of the RCPI faction, where he wrote two important disquisitions in defence of his position, his statements in law courts during trials, his editorials in *Compass*, a little magazine which he launched from 1964 etc; (2) His letters to Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose written from Alipore Central Jail which were published in Sajanikanta Das edited *Sanibarer Chithi*, and his own hand-written script

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¹⁸ The first letter of PD to Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose was published in *Sanibarer Chithi* in the month *Pous* according to Bengali Calender year 1359, p-244-248 and Professor Bose's reply was published in the same
Parikalpana Rupayane Rajnitir Bhumika (role of politics in the implementation of plans, year unstated) which contains his ideas on Comprehensive Area Development Programme; (3) a collection of intercepted letters written both by Pannalal Dasgupta and those addressed to him by his comrades retained in different files of Intelligence Branch (IB) of Police department under Home (Political Section), Government of West Bengal have been used. These IB files kept under the custody of the State Archives Branch of the Government of West Bengal and also a few files of Secret Branch (SB) of Calcutta police placed under the care of Police Museum at Kolkata have been consulted for data. These dossiers replete with notes, reports, official correspondences, interviews of deponents etc. provide important information on his radical political programmes (4) the editorials in various issues of Compass written by Pannalal Dasgupta have been translated in English and is used as important source of primary data particularly for analysing his ideas and activities since February 1964. For example, Compass published the report of his visit in the Northeast India,\(^1\) his writings on the food movement,\(^2\) on the struggle of the masses in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) etc. Similarly, Compass discussed the

\(^1\) Writings on his visit in Assam and Nagaland were serially published in Compass from 30 July 1966 onwards under the Title Naga Bhumir Pahare Pahare (i.e. In the hills of Nagaland).

\(^2\) Pannalal Dasgupta wrote several critical editorials in Compass on food movement in West Bengal in 1966. These were published between February and May 1966.
achievements of Tagore Society and also its failure to create widespread awakening at the grass root level. All these furnish important clue to understand Pannalal Dasgupta’s thinking and critical self-reflections; (5) old newspapers, particularly those issues which published the reports of Dum Dum-Basirhat insurgency action and daily case proceedings, (6) interviews with some of his close associates both in the RCPI as well as those who joined him later during the phase of his engagement in rural reconstruction, and finally (7) Some of his personal diaries have been seen also to comprehend his mental disposition for the purpose of the present study.

The sources of secondary data used in this study are: (1) various writings on Pannalal Dasgupta by some of his political comrades like Prafulla Gupta, Niren Dasgupta, Ashok Biswas, (2) Dr. Amiyo Ghosh’s book on national revolutionary movements in Birbhum, Durga Banerjee and Bharat Jyoti Roychowdhury’s books have also provided important data used in the present study to discuss his activities in the context of late 1930s and 1940s; (3) It may be noted here that RCPI party documents constitute a major source of data for the study of his political line. This is crucial to understand and analyze his later shift to ultra-leftist stance of ushering in an immediate communist revolution in India, (4) Necessary data and vital insights have also been derived from a good number of books on left movement in India authored by scholars like L P

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Sinha, Horace Williamson, Satyabrata Roychowdhury, Md. Abdullah Rosul et al. (5) the Comprehensive Area Development Programme (CADP) Bill and some publications of the State Planning Board of West Bengal regarding CADP, and (6) Different reports and project histories published by Tagore Society have provided important information for this study.

24 Roychowdhury, Satyabrata, *Leftist Movements in India* (1919-1947), South Asia Books, Columbia, USA; 1977