Pannalal Dasgupta, the revolutionary activist of Bengal (later West Bengal) was born in the Kuarpur village of Palang police station located in Faridpur district (now in Bangladesh) in 1908. Though not much publicised, Pannalal Dasgupta's political career was as interesting for its radical underpinnings as were his changed complex of ideas and activities at a later stage related to peaceful rural re-construction. Here discussion is focused on to unravel systematically those primary factors which were not only confined to the formative period of his upbringing from childhood to early youth, but also left indelible impact insofar as his life is concerned and thus, contributed to the making of Pannalal Dasgupta. These were related to his family background including the caste he hailed from and its putative effect on his mind, condition of his family after early demise of his father, the role of his widow mother, his student life in village, specially the reading habit that extended his interest to both indigenous and foreign proscribed literature, his upbringing in a politically turbulent milieu surcharged by Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) and the activities of different revolutionary groups. Through these the main object has been to prepare the perspective

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1 According to Ananda Sen (Bolpur), who knew Pannalal Dasgupta closely, Pannalal's elder brother Chunilal Dasgupta used to mention 1908 as the birth year of Pannalal Dasgupta. According to the history sheet of Pannalal Dasgupta in the IB File 316/28, he was born in 1907.
Chapter I
Making of Pannalal (1908-1919)

Pannalal Dasgupta, the revolutionary activist of Bengal (later West Bengal) was born in the Kuarpur village of Palang police station located in Faridpur district (now in Bangladesh) in 1908.1 Though not much publicised, Pannalal Dasgupta’s political career was as interesting for its radical underpinnings as were his changed complex of ideas and activities at a later stage related to peaceful rural re-construction. Here discussion is focused on to unravel systematically those primary factors which were not only confined to the formative period of his upbringing from childhood to early youth, but also left indelible impact insofar as his life is concerned and thus, contributed to the making of Pannalal Dasgupta. These were related to his family background including the caste he hailed from and its putative effect on his mind, condition of his family after early demise of his father, the role of his widow mother, his student life in village, specially the reading habit that extended his interest to both indigenous and foreign proscribed literature, his upbringing in a politically turbulent milieu surcharged by Gandhi’s Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) and the activities of different revolutionary groups. Through these the main object has been to prepare the perspective

1 According to Ananda Sen (Bolpur), who knew Pannalal Dasgupta closely, Pannalal’s elder brother Chunilal Dasgupta used to mention 1908 as the birth year of Pananlal Dasgupta. According to the history sheet of Pananlal Dasgupta in the IB File 316/28, he was born in 1907.
in which to put his ideas and activities as they evolved over a long period of time and lent radical orientation to his activities and in the formation of his thought.

Pannalal Dasgupta’s birth synchronized with a time specially marked in the history of India’s freedom struggle for the bombing attempt on Kingsford, the then District magistrate of Muzaffarpur by Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose. It served as a pattern for the upcoming revolutionary activities throughout India and introduced amongst the youth a new weapon they could henceforth use against the foreign rule and its administrative machinery. This depicted the brewing revolutionary situation in which Pannalal Dasgupta’s childhood years were spent.

Pannalal Dasgupta (hereafter PD) lost his father Benodelal at his childhood. Benodelal Dasgupta, according to Ananda Sen, a close associate of PD for many years, was a railway overseer. Consequent upon the death of Benodelal, it became the responsibility of PD’s grandfather Apurbalal Dasgupta to look after his daughter-in-law, Giribala along with her two sons namely Chunilal and Pannalal. According to Manoranjan Sadhukhan, PD was brought up in the village under the guidance of his grandfather, who was a physician with

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2 This view was supported by Tapan Dasgupta, the elder son of Chunilal Dasgupta. However, some others subscribed to the view that PD’s father Benodelal Dasgupta had passed away even before his birth. According to Ananda Sen and Subodh Mitra, however, Pannalal Dasgupta lost his father at the age of one and half years.

abounding compassion for the poor villagers. Besides, Apurbalal Dasgupta was a liberal and idealist social worker. His character deeply influenced PD\(^4\). In the absence of data on PD’s childhood socialization, help of information has been taken from the biographical source of Promode Dasgupta (1910-1982). He was PD’s cousin cum childhood companion under the same joint family. It is learnt that Apurbalal taught Promode patriotic songs and also trained him in physical culture, swimming and drama. Bankim Chandra’s *Bande Mataram* and Sarat Chandra’s plays were popular at that time, especially among the school boys.\(^5\) From these we can infer that the milieu of the family in which PD had grown up was permeated with patriotic culture. This naturally made deep impact on PD at his formative period of upbringing, and probably instilled in him an approach toward self-less service to the country.

The family in which he was born was one of Baidyas (Hindu medical caste). Besides, his grandfather was an eminent physician. His upbringing in such a family enabled him to acquire working knowledge of medicine, especially that of homoeopath treatment. Miss Sumita Dutta, a close assistant of PD from late 1960s to early 1990s, told this researcher that Dasguptas constituted the caste of Baidyas, which had an underlying


effect on PD. At the same time, however, Miss Dutta was of the view that in those days homoeopathic treatment was popular among the poor villagers due to easy availability of these medicines and their cheaper cost. So, in addition to caste background of his family, it may be argued that PD used medical knowledge which he had learnt from his grandfather for getting close to the masses in the countryside. It became evident in 1936-37 that he gained considerable popularity among the poor villagers as a homoeopathic doctor during his internment in village domicile in Birbhum. Even during his engagement in rural reconstruction works towards later part of his life this medical knowledge helped him to forge close ties with village folks all around.

His mother namely Giribala Dasgupta left deep impact on his character also. In the words of Subodh Mitra, "saisabe pannalaler upor mar provab sabcheye bési chilo." However, PD recorded in one of his personal diaries that his relation with his mother was not very communicative. It shows that rarely they had any discussion on family matters or other issues as his mother was an introvert lady. But it could also be possible that his mother did not wish to disclose her mental agony and plight of

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6 Interview with Miss Sumita Dutta, a close assistant of PD. The interview was taken at Belgachia villa, Kolkata dated 25/10/2003. The view of Miss Dutta has been cross-checked and found valid on findings from the statements of others, who knew PD closely.


9 It was written by Pananlal Dasgupta himself in one of his unpublished personal diaries of 1984. There he said, 'amar sange amar mayer samporkota chilo berabor nirob'. Courtesy Rupak Banerjee of Amar Kutir Society, Kolkata Office.
the family to her younger son (i.e. PD) to avoid undue stress hang on his
tender mind. Still her personality had a firmness which influenced PD a
lot. In 1984 PD wrote in one of his personal diaries, “At the time of my
imprisonment for second time\textsuperscript{10} mother perhaps had begun to crumble
which she never did earlier.”\textsuperscript{11} It shows that Giribala Dasgupta carried
immense mental strength for which she could not be moved easily. It
encouraged PD to move forward firmly in life.

Before delving deep into a detailed discussion of various political
influences on PD during the formative stage, it seems pertinent to look at
the political background of the period in pre-independence India because
it provided the very context in which his thought had evolved.

Monoranjan Sadhukhan, one of his close associates has mentioned in \textit{A
Short Life-Sketch of Pannalal Dasgupta} “The period of his adolescence
was the period when the country was in ferment, struggling against
British imperialism. Many clandestine revolutionary organizations had
grown up and the sensational activities of revolutionaries had fired the
idealism of the new generation to which Dasgupta belonged.”\textsuperscript{12} Later PD
himself acknowledged in the introduction of the collected volume of his
writings in Bengali (\textit{Rachana Sangraha}), ‘\textit{Sei kishore boyose rajnitir hate

\textsuperscript{10} PD was kept imprisoned for the second time from 1951-1962.
\textsuperscript{11} This diary was collected from the possession of Mr. Rupak Banejee, a staff of Amar Kutir Society,
having acquitances of PD.
\textsuperscript{12} Sadhukhan, Manoranjan, \textit{A Short Life-Sketch of Pannalal Dasgupta}, 14\textsuperscript{th} March 1985, p-1. This is a
typed script bearing the signature of Manoranjan Sadhukhan which authenticates it.
khari hoyechilo’, meaning his first training in politics had commenced when he was in teens. Historically, it was a time of vigorous nationalist outburst keyed up to a high pitch by different struggles in India and abroad. On one hand, the non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) was launched under Gandhi’s (1869-1948) leadership in a backdrop of deep shock caused by the massacre at Jallianwallah Bagh in 1919. On the other hand secret revolutionary groups or organizations which openly advocated acts of violence against the British regime in India had also begun to sprout and their branches got spread in various parts of Bengal after the announcement of the partition of Bengal in 1905. Since the character of these two streams of nationalist movement was quite different, they influenced PD’s life and activities at an early age in different ways.

First, in his family a political milieu prevailed which was deeply influenced by the Gandhi-led movement. “In tune with the spirit of Non-Cooperation Movement”, PD’s uncle “Motilal Dasgupta, though in government service, started spinning charka and wearing khadi garments.”¹³ Although these means of political struggle were more in the nature of constructive works meant for attaining the goal of village swaraj

or self-rule\textsuperscript{14}, it showed extensive popularity of the non-violent programme. It was so not only in the larger public arena where it came to be closely associated with the struggle for national political liberation, but the idea percolated to the domain of individual families as well. From this it was obvious that PD’s interest in this aspect of India’s nationalist movement was roused and mediated primarily through the support which this movement had generated among the guardians of his family.

Moreover, when Gandhi entered the national political domain with his programme of non-violent non-cooperation, the nature of India’s nationalist movement underwent a notable transformation with the introduction of mass movement. The impact of Gandhi’s vanguard role in India from common men to intelligentsia was so powerful that probably moved PD also, because he was a product of the said period. Yet, it was not all that could explain the complex process of his induction into active politics at his teens. Gandhi-led nationalist movements lacked in fiery appeal of violent nationalist enterprises. Besides, it is important to keep in mind that except selected pockets of Gandhi’s influence and activities of the Khadi group, pro-Gandhi sentiment was relatively weak in Bengal due to the predominance of Chittaranjan Das (1870 -1925). It has been pertinently mentioned by eminent historian Tapan Raychaudhuri that

\textsuperscript{14} As Rudrangshu Mukherjee has interpreted, in Gandhi’s philosophy, swaraj for the nation did not mean merely political independence from British rule. Swaraj, for Gandhi, was something more substantive involving the freedom of each individual to regulate their own lives. Gandhi certainly did not want British rule to be replaced by another form of rule where Western institutions of governance and civil society would be run by Indians instead of white men.\textsuperscript{[Abinash Chandra Dutta Memorial Lecture, CU, 2009]}
“with Das’s death Bengal had no charismatic nationalist leader until the emergence of Subhash Chandra Bose. Gandhi never won total acceptance among the Bengali bhadralok.”\textsuperscript{15} It partly explains why the political propensity among significant sections of youth in Bengal in the first half of the twentieth century was markedly different from that of Gandhian mode of political action. “The general admiration for revolutionary violence also stood in the way of complete acceptance of the Gandhian ideology.”\textsuperscript{16} Since the dream of national independence and revolutionary efforts to achieve it had become integral to the aspirations of the Bengali youth, like many young boys, PD too seemed to look beyond the Gandhi\'an movements and began to gravitate toward national revolutionary politics.

Second, PD’s political awareness during the first two decades of the twentieth century also began simultaneously with his exposure to the growth of revolutionary extremism in Bengal, its leading figures, their charismatic appeal, stories of daring acts of these groups at an early period of his life, and the impact of the soil of his native town where he was born. East Bengal (now Bangladesh) at that time being the birthplace of a number of noted revolutionaries namely Surya Sen (1893-1934) hailing from Noapara, Nabin Sen (1847-1909) and their bold activities had generated great inspiration among the Bengali youth. That

\textsuperscript{15} Address by Prof. Tapan Raychaudhuri at Calcutta University on 11\textsuperscript{TH} September 2009, p-14.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid
PD was no exception gets corroborated from snippets of his write-ups. In the introduction of his *Rachana Sangraha* he admitted to have spent the heydays of his youth among the votaries of nationalist revolution. In his words, ‘Swadhinata andoloner somoy nana dal upodaler sange amar samparko chilo. Smaraniya anek rajnaitik netar sannidhe esechi. Kach theke anekke dekher sujog hoyeche’¹⁷ (i.e. I had rapport with many parties and factions during freedom struggle. I came in proximity with many celebrated political leaders. I also got the scope to see many of them from close quarter.)

Moreover, during the First World War (1914-1918) the revolutionary struggle in the then east Bengal began to assume a form of adventurism through events like sudden armed raid in government arsenal to seize arms and ammunition, capturing an area and waging war on the British. All these were meant to rouse excitement among the masses. Colonial oppression was exploited for the dissemination of nationalist ideas in terroristic line and youth was seized with the spirit to do something for ameliorating the misery of the motherland. In September 1915 the historic armed confrontation under the leadership of Jatindra Nath Mukhopadhyay (1880-1915) at Balasore with the British authority may be considered to be the culmination of this phase. This psycho-historic

¹⁷ PD’s collected writings in Bengali (*Pannalal Dasgupta Rachana Sangraha*), 1999, Kolkata, see introduction.
context might have aroused enthusiasm in PD's mind about the revolutionary struggle of the day.

According to the account provided by Ananda Sen, who knew PD, during PD's childhood days in village the influence of the revolutionary group acting as a gang of dacoits led by Purna Das (1889-1956) was quite formidable. It was because at that time this group had a very strong base in Faridpur, especially in Madaripur. Besides, these revolutionary groups, in order to augment organizational strength, had been engaged in secret competition for enlisting new young members from amongst school and college going students. 'Before recruitment, the youth were put through a strenuous course of training and they were admitted to such secret societies after a ceremonial initiation. PD also came in touch with such groups in this way.'¹⁸

Besides, PD's own youthful interest might have a role in directing him to revolutionary outfits in spite of the objective conditions of his family. No doubt, economic dependence of his widow mother on PD's grand-father and uncle was not conducive to give free hand to PD to join such group. Yet, the economic consideration or the prospect of sufferings in freedom struggle, it seems, did not make much dent on his mind because suffering in those days was rather a badge of honour for the political workers. This apart, his association with many revolutionary activists was important in

the sense that it influenced his mental make-up so much that his entry into national revolutionary struggle and later in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class could be said to have initiated through this period of preparation and political orientation during his student life. So, this phase might be characterized as a kind of preliminary training in the praxis of revolutionary politics providing PD with an impetus to join revolutionary struggle.

On analysis, it also becomes clear that PD’s contact with the armed revolutionary groups at his childhood happened because of his malleable young age. It was one of the important factors implanting romantic vision of revolutionary struggle for freedom in him. It is what A. K. Mukhopadhyay tends to suggest, though in general fashion, “the aims and objects of terrorism appealed in theircrudeness to the immature student and throughout the history of the movement we find that the great bulk of terrorists has been drawn from schools and colleges....in nearly every case it is certain that they imbibed the principles of terrorism in their student days.”¹⁹ Therefore, in his young age it was like natural inclination that led him to empathise with the patriotic elements at large and to display his mettle through practice of violence as a part of revolutionary groups. At the same time the ideological fillip also touched and gradually shaped his mind. Following Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar,

we could say that radical nationalism was the foundation ideology of national revolutionaries operating in the first two decades of the twentieth century in India. Mazumdar observed, “During those years Bengal, Maharastra and Punjab were the strongest bases of radical nationalism. It was on the soil of radical nationalism that the revolutionary movements arose and developed.”20

A point to be noted here is that the pre-condition to maintain contact with secret revolutionary groups was to take an oath of confidentiality and keep practising secrecy. The observance of this norm was essential for the survival of the revolutionary organizations in the face of state repression. The colonial administration in India restricted the very space of their functioning and also the flow of discourse that were sympathetic to this type of activities. As a rule, there was a commonly pursued inhibition about raising at home any issue related to secret discussion of revolutionary groups. This being the situation in which PD had grown up was likely to instill in him a culture of secrecy. It probably induced him later to organize movements against the exploitative forces in society viz. the feudal landlords, the British and the ruling bourgeois class in newly independent Indian state clandestinely. This surreptitiousness developed in him sort of conspiratorial habit, which affected his relationship with

20 Mazumdar, Satyendra Narayan, In Search of A Revolutionary Ideology and A Revolutionary Programme, PPH, New Delhi, 1979, p-5.
some of his comrades. This created grounds of misunderstanding between the two.\(^\text{21}\)

According to Sumita Dutta, although PD engaged some of his old political colleagues in rural reconstruction works since late 1960s, he was apprehensive that they could subvert the purpose of peaceful change he was working for. It was due to their involvement in radical communist action. Hiranmoy Ganguly (1919-1969)\(^\text{22}\) for example, had a tendency to collect arms for future action.\(^\text{23}\) Besides, PD was also alarmed by the engagement of his group members in multiple events of gang robberies both before and after the armed attack at Dum Dum-Basirhat area. As per Shyamali Khastagir, who was intimately associated with PD’s activities during 1990s, the latter was afraid of deviation from the radical political ideal of establishing communism after failure of the Dum Dum Basirhat action. This gave rise to an apprehension that perhaps some of his group members were acting under material greed. This created a mental hitch

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\(^\text{21}\) Biresh Bhattacharya who actively participated in the historic communist uprising by the R.C.P.I group led by PD at DumDum Basirhat region of West Bengal on 26\(^{\text{th}}\) February, 1949 expressed this view to the researcher in an interview dated 1/06/2008.

\(^\text{22}\) Hiranmoy Ganguly was an active, energetic and sincere comrade of R.C.P.I group led by PD. Till his death in allegedly murderous police firing on 5\(^{\text{th}}\) September, 1969, which was during the tenure of second united front government in West Bengal, he was involved in preparing grounds for revolutionary communist insurrection. This distanced him both from the faction of R.C.P.I led by Sudhin Kumar that espoused parliamentary democracy and also PD, who turned towards village reconstruction after failure of the communist uprising at Dum Dum Basirhat in February 1949. It was this transformation of PD which evoked critical reaction among many of his old party comrades. Hiranmoy Ganguly was one of them as he in his diary snubbed PD for these reformist activities (See p-55 of Hiranmoy Ganguly’s diary published posthumously on behalf of the state committee, R.C.P.I).

\(^\text{23}\) Opinion expressed by Miss Sumita Dutta in an interview with the researcher at Kolkata, dated 25.10.2003.
between PD and some of his party comrades during later part of his life.  

Although aforesaid views of Shyamali Khastagir with regard to the deviation might be contested because there was no proof that his comrades acted under material interest.

This, however, indicate that PD had certain apprehensions that crept into his nature in course of his functioning in revolutionary groups. But this secrecy and apprension born of it came in the way of his organizational work at later phase of life as well as his desire to develop mass contact.

His ideas about India’s freedom struggle grew also out of his habit of reading books. It can be seen as a by-product of his young enquiring mind, a propensity inhering in most of children having natural fondness towards heroic acts and emulation thereof. But his keen interest in books at a young age indicated a dimension of his nature. Several points can be deduced from it. First, the curiosity of reading beyond text books probably brought in him a maturity at a young age. As a result, although he was a village boy, his outlook was not merely confined to the level of village surroundings but it was drawn towards the history of the country and the external world at large. Secondly, by invoking Roland Barthes’s conceptualizations about reading methodologies we can say that when

24 My interview with Shyamali Khastagir dated 26/11/2003. She died on 15.8.2011. She was an active social worker based in Shantiniketan in Birbhum district of West Bengal and took sincere interest in PD’s constructive works in village throughout 1990s. Though she was in close touch with the ideas and activities of PD at the concluding part of his life, she came to know about the history of PD’s early life due to her direct association with PD for quite some time.
readers go through books it becomes a different exercise. The readers
work in a different time-zone reflecting on things which in the
intervening period of time have altered necessitating interpretation based
on the perspective and the socio-cultural space of readers. Likewise PD’s
reading habit might have engendered new ideas in him, because the way
of thinking about anti-colonial nationalism was changing and it went
beyond territorial or catographic form. Thus reading became an
instrument that kept him vibrant through newer ideas. This also had
considerable impact on his activities at different times in course of his
life. In the words of Niren Dasgupta, “Reading was a pleasure to him
which lasted till the last days of his life.”25 Even the present researcher
personally saw a fairly good collection of books in the house of Sumita
Dutta where PD used to stay intermittently during 1970s and 1980s. It not
only showed PD’s diverse interest but also his search for updating
knowledge.

But more significantly there was a dialectical correlation between
materials he read and activities in which he was engaged and vice versa.

It was obvious from his propensity to action. This action orientation in
him would not have been possible had he accorded priority to reading
literature alone. His search for knowledge and acquisition of ideas went

25 Dasgupta, Niren, Bishoy: Pannalal Dasgupta, Sribhumi, Kolkata, 2000, p-10. Niren Dasgupta was
an active member of the faction of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India led by PD which took
part in the armed rising at Dum Dum-Basirhat area of West Bengal on 26th February, 1949.
hand in hand with the propensity for direct action—the realm of practical
test in which lay the real strength of ideas. So, the impression of PD as a
well-read person is to be juxtaposed with his participation in
revolutionary activities and later his switch over to social reconstruction
works.

Police report confirms that PD was a young man deeply immersed in
revolutionary literature. According to it, he had read John Reed’s *Ten
Days that shook the World*, Dan Breen’s *My Fight for Irish Freedom* and
host of other books on Irish and Russian revolution. All these proved
what Gangadhar Adhikari, an eminent Marxist scholar spoke of the
ideology of the national revolutionaries in the article *The Development of
Ideology of National Revolutionaries*. To quote Gangadhar Adhikari,
“Politics and ideology of the national revolutionaries in this first phase
was further moulded or influenced by the ideas of the French revolution
or the actions of the Irish struggle for independence and the progressive
ideas of the Left-wing of the International working class movement in
Europe and America.” Police report reveals on the basis of PD’s
confession that he had read the life of Sun Yet Sen and many more
literature on the nationalist struggle in China. Thus, during his student
life, PD acquired first-hand knowledge about contemporary political

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26IB File 316-28, Part-I.
scenario of Bengal and also about the nature and course of revolutionary movements abroad. Accounts provided by Prafulla Gupta in a booklet entitled *Pannalal Dasgupta* testified that all the teachers of the village school liked him for his studious nature. The age when boys usually loved spending time behind sports and amusements, he had made friendship with books, said Prafulla Gupta.28

The habit of reading books consequently helped widen his mental horizon. It created a keen interest in him towards anti-colonial radicalism.

As regards his social background, PD hailed from a stratum, which ranked towards lower echelons in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Yet caste factor, as we found, had no direct bearing on his socialization and orientation to politics. This separation from caste prejudice might be attributed to the liberal temperament prevailing in his family, although he lived in traditional village setting. In as much as this mould of his mind was linked with his educational background, it might be argued that his education had an important role to neutralise casteist influence in his mind at a growing up stage.

28Gupta, Prafulla, *Pannalal Dasgupta*, Bolpur, p-2, year of publication not mentioned. However, this pamphlet is assumed to be published around 1969 at the time of PD’s election campaign as an independent candidate supported by the left parties to West Bengal Legislative Assembly from Bolpur constituency. Prafulla Gupta was a freedom fighter turned RCPI activist. He was a close associate of PD for a long time and participated in Dum Dum-Basirhat uprising masterminded by PD in February 1949. After release from jail, Prafulla Gupta became engaged in journalism and came to be associated with Bengali news papers namely the *Jugantar* and *Basumati*. He also wrote a number of pieces on PD. See Prof. Bisan Gupta’s article *Biplabi Prafulla Gupta* in *Swadhinata Sangrame Murshidabad* edited by Kalyan K. Das, 2008, p37-9.
However, some of his veteran associates differed from the above view. According to Robi Ray, a member of PD’s group in Revolutionary Communist Party of India, during 1970s and 1980s PD was found in a number of occasions to be surrounded by his own castemen. It revealed an underlying casteist bias in PD’s mind. However, there is not enough data to cross-verify how far such complaint was real. Dipta Bhanu Mitra, a young member of the central Committee of RCPI divulged in course of interview with this researcher that Tarapada Gupta who brought PD to Saumyendranath Tagore’s group was also a man of Baidya caste to which PD belonged. This adduced inherent caste solidarity among these members. However, the above-mentioned contention seems debatable on the basis of the finding that Tarapada Gupta sided with Saumyendranath Tagore after the split in RCPI in 1948. On the other hand, PD’s own political clique within RCPI consisted of persons of different castes. Hence, the present researcher has a strong feeling that caste background did not become a determining factor in PD’s political activities. Rather an important factor for appreciating the strength of his character was his expertise in outdoor sports and his in-born leadership qualities. Shakti Bhattacharya, one of PD’s close associates during 1980s

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39 Personal opinion expressed by Robi Ray in an open-ended interview with the researcher dated 22/3/2011.
30 It was a fact that Tarapada Gupta of Berhampore brought PD to Saumyendranath Tagore's group. It was also stated by Prof. Manjula Basu in his book *Saumyendranath Tagore: Karme O Manone*, Tagore Research Institute, Kolkata, 2007, p-150. The explanation of caste was given by Mr. Dipto Bhanu Mitra, a senior comrade and member of Central Committee of R.C.P.I. It, however, was his personal view.
and 1990s opined this in a commemorative piece of writing.\textsuperscript{31} It provides with a vital clue to the understanding of PD’s role in later political activities.

PD was brought up in a joint family. He, his senior brother Chunilal Dasgupta, cousin cum childhood companion Promode Dasgupta (1910-1982)\textsuperscript{32}, his two brothers and their five sisters all lived together. PD’s father died at a very early stage of his life. On the other, his uncle (Promode Dasgupta’s father) Motilal Dasgupta was employed in a transferable job. He was by profession a doctor while his wife Charubala Devi had a failing health.\textsuperscript{33} Consequently it put the load of domestic work largely on PD’s mother Giribala Dasgupta. This caused some loosening of control which was one of the probable factors providing PD with an opportunity to move out furtively and know about the activities of secret revolutionary societies operating locally. Some other impetus might be at work in his family disposing him towards the political activities of the day. Here comes the role of PD’s grand father which has been already mentioned. Thus, his exposure to politics at an early stage of life could be comprehended from the situation of the family in which he was born and brought up, its pro-nationalist sympathy, the politically intense milieu of

\cite{PannalalDasguptaSmarane} dated 28\textsuperscript{th} January, 1999, published by Shakti Bhattacharya on behalf of Compass and Tagore Society for Rural Development on the occasion of condolence meeting after PD’s demise on 11.01.1999.

\cite{SinghEncyclopaedia} (the entry on Promode Dasgupta, p-403).
the period and more directly his growing affinity with local revolutionary groups. Otherwise, it would have been difficult for him to come in close proximity with different revolutionary organizations at an early age. Later in his writings on his visit in Bangladesh, especially his native village Kuarpur he recalled that he used to visit many such revolutionary organizations like Sankar Math in Barisal and regularly participated in the morning discussions with the revolutionaries. Undoubtedly the element of idealism and heroism associated with the feats of such revolutionary groups had attracted him during childhood. This encouraged him even to visit Chittagong to meet revolutionary leader Surya Sen (1893-1934) once in his boyhood. His elder brother Chunilal Dasgupta being a few years senior to PD could not effectively guard and prevent him from getting swayed into the realm of revolutionary politics.

However, during his early student life in village he could not afford to work like an enlisted whole-time cadre of any revolutionary group. The reasons were not far to seek. It was due to his vulnerable family conditions—father’s death, domestic indigence, concerns and expectations of his widow mother regarding career of her sons and PD’s young immature age. All these constraints combined to create indirect pressure on him first to build up his career through study in some

34 *Ek Jhalak Bangladesh* by Pannalal Dasgupta published in six instalments. Year of publication not found.
35 PD’s self admission in his travelogue entitled *Ek Jhalak Bangladesh* (i.e. *Bangladesh at a glimpse*).
36 According to Ananda Sen, Chunilal Dasgupta was four years senior to PD.
vocational stream. This perhaps accounts for the talk in his family of getting him admitted in agriculture, even though he matriculated in the first division from Domsar High School.\textsuperscript{37} It revealed poor economic conditions of the family for which his career option became considerably constrained.

In the family PD's grandfather Apurbalal Dasgupta had taken up as his duty to maintain the immediate dependents of Benodelal Dasgupta (PD's father). Besides, while studying in Broja Mohan College at Barisal, PD used to stay at the government quarters of his uncle Motilal Dasgupta. It pointed to the cooperative nature of the family. Economic weakness of the family did not cause an adverse impact on him at initial years of his life. On the contrary, as mentioned by Prafulla Gupta in \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta}, PD was brought up under affection and love of his mother, grandfather, and uncle.\textsuperscript{38} In all probability this love and latitude that PD received from the elders seemed to have provided him with a stimulus to take interest in the currents of national liberation movements developing in India.

It indicated that his future political course of actions was largely predetermined in his early youth. PD never intended to be a careerist (as emerged from snippets of his recollections found scattered in his different

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Pannalal Dasgupta Smarone} (i.e. in commemoration of Pannalal Dasgupta) published by Shakti Bhattacharya on behalf of \textit{Compass} & Tagore Society for Rural Development on 28\textsuperscript{th} January, 1999.

\textsuperscript{38} Gupta, Prafulla, \textit{Comrade Pannalal Dasgupta}, 1953, Kolkata, p-4.
writings), though he had a promising prologue to start with as a meritorious student. If he wished he could have established himself professionally. But idealism of his young mind plausibly led him to accept daring challenges. The typical consideration of career prospect was naturally far less impressive to him than the growing inner urge to join freedom struggle. Therefore, in 1927 approximately at the age of eighteen when he took admission in Braja Mohan College in Barisal for pursuing higher study, it was a political decision on his part in the deeper sense. It was because the urge to join the activities of revolutionary groups was uppermost in his mind, which probably influenced his decision in favour of moving to Barisal. Henceforth, his thoughts and activities began to take on political form which may be discerned as the beginning of a distinct phase in the unfolding trajectory of his eventful life.

In a nutshell, PD’s upbringing during the politically intense period showed how his interest in politics, specially his leaning towards prevalent current of revolutionary nationalist struggle in India was gradually crystallized. Judged from the perspective of the precarious conditions of the family after death of his father, his association with the secret revolutionary groups from his school days was unlikely. It transpired from analysis that multiple factors like his young age, his reading habit and indirect encouragement that he had received from his
family gave him scope in different ways during this formative period of his life to veer towards the political fold. It appeared from above that the period of his childhood socialization and upbringing were very crucial for understanding the evolving trajectory of his growing attraction to join revolutionary politics in Bengal. However, the political orientation that was developed in him in course of this period disposed him to clandestine operation associated with the revolutionary terrorist groups. We would now discuss his ideas and activities related to violent nationalist persuasion during 1920s.