CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of this study is to find out the nature and roots of the political socialization process in the rural soil of West Bengal with special reference to Nadia district. For this purpose we have taken into account some theoretical considerations as well as the results of empirical enquiry.

The political socialization process taking place in the economically and educationally backward rural areas depicted in this study, indicates, in its turn, the nature and techniques of such process (of political socialization) in the rural areas of the developing political systems. These are undoubtedly different in some respects from those of the developed political systems.

In the first chapter we have pointed out that different patterns take place in the political socialization process in different political systems like colonial, underdeveloped, developing and developed.

In the urban areas of the developed political systems, like the U.S.A., the U.K., etc., the family, mass-media, peer groups play the significant role. These may hardly be found to play the same role in the socio-economically and educationally backward and poverty stricken rural societies of the developing and under-developed political systems of the Third World. Thus universal laws of political socialization do not exist.
Henceforth, the study of political socialization requires greater attention from the social scientists of the developing countries.

We admit that a case study of some specific rural areas of a developing political system cannot represent the entire rural areas of different political systems. Still, this study can indicate some general trends, at least.

The process of political socialization does not always perform the task of maintaining the system's persistence. On the contrary, a system's over-all and complete change can be accomplished by it. The second chapter of this study reflects the same. It is obvious that the political socialization process is not always a conservative one, rather it is progressive in its character. Moreover, some radical change can be accommodated within the system without jeopardizing the system's basic structure if proper socialization policy is adopted in this respect.

We have pointed out in the second chapter of this study, how before independence the then illiterate and poor Indian masses gathered political knowledge through continuous political activities without having theoretical knowledge of politics. Thus we have tried to establish how political activities like mass struggle for independence can impart political knowledge and values to the poor, illiterate masses.

Although economic condition is not the only determinant of the nature of our social life, it is undoubtedly, the most important one like any other developing society. Taking it into consideration, we have tried to find out in the next place how
the people belonging to different economic strata get inducted into politics and the nature and intensity of their political orientation as well as the importance of the various socializing agents in the rural areas of our developing political society.

As regards political socialization process to different age groups belonging to different income strata, we have discussed several factors.

With respect to the children (6-10 age group) who are the primary school students we have come to the following conclusion that children belonging to high income group possess comparatively greater political knowledge than the children belonging to the middle and low income groups to whom the school is more important agent of political socialization than the family. But family casts more important influence on the former group. The peer group plays no role in the process of political socialization of this age group.

The mass media play the least important role in the process of political socialization to this age group. On the contrary, the surrounding political institutions and activities and symbols like political parties, meetings, processions, wall paintings, flag and festoons, etc., have greater impact on the children of all income groups. This is especially true for the children who have little or no education at all.

Thus we can indicate that although family plays an important role to the children of high income group, the school, the surrounding political institutions and environment play the
pioneering role in political socialization process to the children of middle and low income groups of the rural areas of the developing political systems.

The preadults (11-18 age group) include both school-goers and non-school-goers in this study. The school plays the more important role than the family to preadults belonging to the middle and low income groups whereas to preadults belonging to high income groups both the family and the school are important and they get more media facilities than the preadults of other income groups. The teachers, the fellow-students are important to the school-going preadults of all income groups. The surrounding political environment and institutions have an unquestionable impact on both school-going and non-school-going preadults belonging to all income groups.

Most of the preadults belonging to high income group hold early political attitudes and they are more interested in having the news of the central government. On the contrary, less than 50% preadults of both middle and low income groups hold early political attitudes and they are more interested in getting news of the state and local governments than the national government.

So it is contended that the preadults of high income group are more interested in politics than the preadults of other income groups as the former are in an advanced position both economically and educationally in the rural areas of the developing political systems.
Political institutions and environment are important to all preadults irrespective of their economic and academic status.

In respect of this age group, the influence of peer groups and mass media are not as powerful as are found in the western stable and developed political systems.

As regards adults (19-24 age group), we have come to know that the adults of high income group are more concerned with politics. The mass media news facilities are more available to them. They are in a dominant position in politics. They act as brain-trust group rather than manual workers unlike the adults of the middle and low income groups. They exert more influence on the decision-making process as compared to the adults of other income groups.

The adults of this income group have greater faith in the liberal democratic system. On this issue only, the middle income group hold the same opinion with the high income group. But the adults of the low income group have a different view. Regarding the country's general progress, the middle and low income groups hold negative view unlike the adults of high income group.

From this we assume that because of scant opportunity for higher education, the preadults of low income group cannot comprehend the defects of the authoritarian regime. They, simply, believe that this type of administration can solve the socio-economic distress with stern and effective step. Their suffering and distress have caused them to think in such manner.
However one thing is clear that the rural masses are not parochial. They can express their opinion without any hesitation either in the negative or in the positive.

The late adulthood political socialization is as important as early childhood socialization in politics. So we have taken this age group (25 and above) besides householders' group in order to know their political orientation. It is seen that the depth of political knowledge are more discernible among the people of high economic status group than the people of other economic groups. This is due to their comparatively satisfactory socio-economic position.

Although there is lack of ideological acquaintance on the part of the most of the people of other economic groups (middle and low), this does not mean that they are quite ignorant in politics. On the contrary, they are conscious enough and hold opinion about their country's total progress and about the functional process and efficiency of the local self-government, i.e., Panchayati Raj Institution.

The national and secular political parties have almost broken down the caste, religious and ethnic barriers from the Indian society. Moreover, the introduction of political democracy and the universal adult suffrage have mostly prevented communal politics to take deep roots in the soil of India as well as in West Bengal, although its trace has clearly been manifested in our study to which the people of high income group is more inclined than the people of other income groups.
Usually the vested interests belong to the wealthy class and these vested interests are also dominant in various religious and ethnic groups. In order to preserve their interests they (vested interests) always try to implant the seeds of communal politics among the people of various income levels. These vested interests are active in the rural areas of West Bengal too. Although their existence does not pose any serious threat to the effective functioning of democracy, these are necessarily to be rooted out.

Another interesting point to be noted is that the left ideologies are as preferable to the people of low income group as the right ideologies to the people of high income group whereas the people of middle income group remain in between the two or prefer both, and they are most susceptible to change their early political affiliation as compared to the people belonging to other income groups.

Political socialization prepares people for participation in politics. On the contrary, participation in political activities, too, renders people the opportunity for gathering political knowledge. And in our poor and illiterate rural society political participation is quite effective in this regard.

The lack of acquaintance with different ideologies as well as absence of theoretical knowledge in politics and general education do not prohibit the common people from taking part in political process like attending political meetings, rallies, demonstrations, discussions, campaigns, etc.
The rural people of West Bengal are either member or supporter or sympathiser of one political party or other. Besides this, most of them are found to take part in the para political institutions and other interest groups and this has led them to acquire the knowledge of exerting influence on the decision-making process.

Most of the rural people of West Bengal are not only always involved in the peaceful political process, they are also found to take part in the conflicting political situation, which, in turn, renders political knowledge.

The participation in voting process is a significant phenomenon in the rural society of West Bengal which has provided political education to them.

In the rural society of West Bengal, the sample survey shows that the people of high and low income groups are more persistent in their early voting preference than the people belonging to middle income group who are rather floating voters and thus constitute the determinant factor either for right or left block coming to power.

With regard to anomic behaviour, it is found that peaceful democratic process is not so preferable to the people of low income group. This is due to their extreme frustration and dissatisfaction with the present liberal democratic administration which is rather fruitful to the influential group in the society. They think that the governmental authority is more susceptible to the abnormal anomic behaviour. However, the people of middle
income group do not prefer peaceful democratic process of interest articulation and movements to the same the people of high income group.

The people of high income group are of opinion that the effective and fruitful political socialization can only eradicate the anomic political behaviour while most of the people belonging to middle and low income groups hold rather different opinions. They suggest other measures like socio-economic reforms, spread of general and moral education, etc., along with the effective process of political socialization for eradicating the anomic behaviour in politics. A radical change in the socio-economic structure is never supported by the rural elites who are socio-economically in a higher position. It is supposed to hamper their interests and thereby to curb their dominating capacity and influence on socio-political structure. These elites even do not heartily want to get implemented plans, projects relating to rural welfare which are launched by the charitable organisations.

The fundamental point to be noted is that the pattern of socio-economic conditions largely determines the pattern and nature of political socialization in the rural areas which require further study by the social scientists.

From these, the conclusion is drawn that the rural people in West Bengal are not politically inactive, although people belonging to the high income group are politically more conscious.
Lastly, it may be pointed out that political socialization process should follow such a pattern in every political system that every member of it can mingle in the mainstream of national life and achieve the fundamental or basic values of Aristotle's idea of "good life". Every member of a political system irrespective of his religion, race, sex, caste, place of birth should be treated equally in every aspect of socio-economic, politico-cultural and religious spheres of human life. Equality, liberty, justice, universal brotherhood, love and respect for each other, can remove agressive attitude of one group against another within a political system and this in its turn is required to abolish the idea of separatism.

Man lives within a political system in order to realise good life and if a state fails to fulfil the basic conditions of good life, dissatisfaction arises which leads to disjunctive political socialization. It generates divergent political views among different human groups based on religion, race, caste, etc., and this finally leads to in-fightings, riots, arson and revolution causing blood shed and claiming innocent lives. So, the major hurdles to good life, specially, the poor economic condition, should be removed as far as possible.

In order to avoid human suffering and making stable political systems and strengthening peaceful international society of all human beings, along with the attempts at the
removal of the defects in the society, general and moral education as well as political education should be spread. Fruitful and effective pattern of political socialization process is, therefore, indispensable for achieving these ends.