Preface

The study of political socialization has become one of the most sensitive areas in the field of social science research in the Western World since the post second World War intellectual revolution in the study of political science in the U.S.A.

This intellectual wave of the West touched the social scientists of the developing countries much later. Thus, obviously, the Afro-Asian Countries are still lagging far behind the Western World. Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, immoral practices, etc., have affected their little industrial progress and feeble communication system. The Afro-Asian Countries are mainly agricultural countries where the rural people are still cloaked with the garment of traditionality.

Moreover, after a prolonged subjugation by the imperialist forces, these new-born developing countries of Africa and Asia are in a difficult position to cope with the severe socio-economic, politico-administrative and cultural-religious problems which are emerging from their political system and posing threat to the system's persistence. These countries are in a transitional phase where an incessant in-fighting is going on between the forces of traditionality and modernity. The instillation of democratic norms and values is urgently required. So the researches on political socialization should be given greater importance for the persistence of their political systems.

But the case of India is an exceptional one which has successfully crushed all the serious challenges which arose and
posed threat to her political system immediately after independence.
Now Indian democracy is trying to be one of the most enriched demo-
cracies in the world by defeating all the serious dangers and promo-
ting democratic ideals and building up strong democratic institu-
tions. But the rate of progress is not a satisfactory one because
she faces acute communal, religious and secessional problems from
time to time. It is true that a developing country like India
needs strong inculcation of democratic values and ideals to avoid
such compulsions and strains which arise in her political system
and to enable the citizens to discharge their fundamental duties
and thereby to strengthen democracy.

So being inspired by the example of the western social
scientists, the Indian counterparts, too, are trying their best
to find out a definite guide line for their younger generations
by which the latter could be imbibiéd democratic norms and values.

The study of political socialization in the rural areas
remains almost unexplored in our country although the political
socialization process provides a generation of essential teachings of
democratic norms and values which, in turn, promote the stability
of the political system. Not only the bulk of the population live
in the rural areas, these areas constitute the basis of the coun-
try's economy. With the introduction of universal adult franchise,
the rural areas are of vital importance both politically and econo-
merically. For this reason the rural areas have been selected for
the present study.
India is an agricultural country. West Bengal is one of the most important states where agriculture forms an important component of her economy. We selected Nadia district of West Bengal as an area of case study because Nadia is situated in the central part of West Bengal connecting North Bengal and South Bengal. It is the most politically sensitive border district where the people from Bangladesh exert pressure on the political process after their immigration to this district crossing the border illegally. Moreover, the role of the ultra leftist forces is conspicuous in this district. The extra-revolutionary forces create fear-psychosis from time to time. Thus it is one of the most politically sensitive areas of West Bengal. Finally, this district has witnessed the birth of Lord Srikrishna Chaitanya and possesses a long history of spiritual and cultural enlightenment.

The heartening feature revealed in course of the investigation is that the illiterate, ignorant, poverty-stricken rural masses without obtaining the specific knowledge of politics, political ideals and ideologies are enthusiastic about the political system and party-politics.

Various age groups are observed in this study. The source and depth of their political knowledge have been measured on the basis of some questionnaires. The mass media structure is very weak in the rural areas, especially, the impact of T.V. on the political socialization process is almost nil. Besides the family, school and mass media which are the important agents in the western countries, a conspicuous role of other agents like political parties
and their several networks and organisations, local administrative structures, day-to-day political happenings and events, local elites, interest groups etc. has been noted by the researchers while conducting study on political socialization in the rural areas of the developing countries and this experience has been corroborated in the present study also. What is more interesting in this connection is this that participation in any type of political affair, is itself a political learning process, especially, for the economically and educationally backward rural masses. Why and how do they get involved into the political process - these two aspects have got emphasis in this study.

Anomic behaviour now-a-days is gradually becoming an inseparable part of the democratic set up, especially, in the transitional cum developing political societies. How it can be checked in the soil of democracy has been discussed carefully.

After some theoretical considerations of the matter, their validation has been sought to be made through empirical research. For this purpose five (5) blocks in the district of Nadia have been selected — Haringhata and Chakdaha in the south and Karimpur, Tahatta and Chapra in the north of this longitudinal district. Originally, it was intended to examine one hundred (100) families in each block but due to the adverse socio-political situation only seventy five (75) families, twenty five (25) in each block have been interviewed in the three northern blocks.

This is due to non-co-operation on the part of the rural people as political terrorism is a leading phenomenon in the
northern parts of Nadia. People suffer from fear-psychosis because of politics of terror which is deeply ingrained in the soil of Nadia. The Naxalite factions which still believe in annihilation are active enough (although these are not viable forces). Due to reign of terror, P.R. Dashmunshi, the then President of W.B.P.C. C.(I), urged the left front led state government to declare this district as politically disturbed area (The Statesman, 5th August, 1986).

This fact made the rural people of these blocks (Karimpur, Tehatta and Chapra) to be complex and sceptical about the political investigation in spite of the clarification to the former, the nature, purpose and objective of such investigation and the present study and assurance to maintain the secrecy of the fact-findings and the showing of identity card as well.

On the contrary, the people of southern blocks are really co-operative and fully enthusiastic and with their help, two hundred twenty five (225) families in Haringhata and two hundred (200) families in Chakdaha have been surveyed. Thus structured interviews have been conducted in five hundred (500) families.

Greater emphasis has been given on the impact of economic factors on the socialization process in this study. Because in the rural areas of the developing countries this factor is of crucial importance. How political socialization goes on in the socio-economically backward rural areas of West Bengal is the vital issue of our present study.
In short, the present work consists of seven chapters with an introduction which covers:

a) some facts about population in West Bengal;

b) profile of Nadia district;

c) information about the sample;

d) literature review;

e) methodology.

i) The first chapter covers the theory of political socialization in which we have tried to bring to light the differences in the pattern of political socialization that take place in different types of countries—developed, developing, independent, colonial, etc.—and the relative importance of agencies in the urban and the rural areas, although, the role of agencies of political socialization in the rural areas of socio-economically backward, underdeveloped and developing countries deserves our attention the most.

ii) Chapter II: Historical background of political socialization of the area contains the origin, nature and extent of political socialization in the pre-independence era.

iii) Chapter III: Socio-economic condition and political socialization comprises a sketch on rural income of West Bengal and Nadia. Besides this, it includes the discussion of activity status, co-operative movement, banking institutions, etc., of West Bengal. Moreover, it contains demographic features, distribution of working force and the pattern of agricultural land holdings, etc., of Nadia and the functional process of local self-government in respect of socio-
economic programmes implementation, etc., of West Bengal as well as of Nadia. In this chapter, we have used data published by governmental authorities to depict the socio-economic picture of West Bengal and Nadia district.

Under the context of that economic condition we have tried to analyse the existing trends of political socialization in the rural West Bengal including Nadia. This chapter is an analytical study based on secondary data.

iv) Chapter IV relates to the problem of different age groups and political socialization. In this chapter we have tried to indicate the nature and the sources of political knowledge of different age groups belonging to different income groups. We have tried to find out how do the rural people get inducted into political milieu as well as their extent of socialization into politics. Both the literate and illiterate children (6 - 10), pre adults (11 - 18) adults (19 - 24) and late adults (25 and above) have been presented with the separate questionnaires on political socialization in this respect. We have tried to identify the important agents of political socialization in our rural areas and their relative importance.

v) Chapter V: Political socialization and political participation discusses the participatory attitudes of the rural householders (both educated and uneducated) belonging to different income groups. In this chapter we have pointed out how both the conventional and unconventional participation help the rural masses to acquire some political ideas.
vi) Chapter VI: Anomic behaviour and political socialization deals with the problems of anomic behaviour in politics. The different opinions of the householders (both literate and illiterate) belonging to different income groups in respect of the justification of anomic behaviour in politics have been sought to be studied. We have also tried to suggest the ways of its eradication.

vii) Chapter VII relates to the concluding observations which have been drawn on the basis of facts and it has been suggested that defects from the political system should be removed through the appropriate process of political socialization as well as the adoption of measures for economic betterment.

However it is worthwhile to mention in this respect that although survey based data have been given primary importance in this study still some theoretical considerations and the on-the-spot comments, statements of the rural respondents and some observations during interview have also been taken into consideration.

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