CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE AREA

Political socialization maintains, transforms and sometimes creates the new political culture of a nation. The purpose of political socialization is to transmit the political culture from an old generation to a new one. But a question arises, is this notion applicable to a colonial country which struggles for her independence where the alien government always tries to infuse her own political culture into the indigenous political culture of the governed country?

The answer is obviously in the negative. The country which struggles for her independence, political socialization is always undertaken for abolishing the alien-imposed and anti-indigenous political culture introduced earlier by the alien authority and emphasis is given on creating a new political structure in which new socio-political values are embodied. In other words, political socialization in the country which struggles for her independence is undertaken to create a new political culture of her own.

The eighteenth century Bengal was characterized by unstable Governments, conspiracies, assassinations, revolts were the significant features of the political system and the people did, in fact, remain in a state of indifference. As a matter of fact, they did not inquire into the process of functioning of the political system. "Even in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was hardly any sign of political consciousness in the
country. So it is obvious that in the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth century, there was very low political ethos or what might be called parochial political culture where the people had little cognition of the political system, much less of the affective and evaluative orientations towards the political system.

The latent political socialization process took place instead of manifest political socialization in the first half of the nineteenth century Bengal through various forms of socio-economic and religious reforms and movements where the people had been awakened to acquire real social values and thereby they become socially advanced groups which later on helped them to be injected with the ideas and values of politics.

So, in the first half of the nineteenth century 'the politically relevant aspects' were developed which helped the people to acquire specific political learning in later periods.

Socializing agents can be defined as "resource mediators or resource administrators." Thus we can say that political news, views, values, ideas and attitudes are obviously the resources. From this perspective, it is our main aim to find out who administered and mediated them for the Bengali rural populace in the pre-independence period.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the British authority and the indigenous landed gentry acted as the agents of political socialization. The content of political socialization was fully British in nature.
As zamindars and landlords were the product of the British authority, they were always looked after by the British government for the protection of its interests and rights. This treatment was absent in the case of the common people as they had the possibility to act as the awakening force which afterwards might jeopardise the British interests.

One aspect of this socialization process was to make common people subservient to the British authority and its laws. Another aspect was the maintenance of vested interests in the villages.

The village people had been socialized to obey the rules and customs of the village community composed of vested interests like zamindars, money-lenders, etc., which were the agents of the British authority for the exploitation of the village people. So, the direct obedience to the foreign authority and its rules and regulations were the subjects dealt with by the village intelligentsia in the process of political socialization. In other words, the policy of collaboration rather than conflict was followed and the idea of collaboration was injected into the minds of the village people. Such type of political socialization can be termed latent political socialization, that is, they had been socialized to show subservience directly to the village community's customs, rules and regulations and through it to the British rules and regulations. Thus zamindars, money-lenders, etc., the peculiar products cum agents of the British political authority played their collaborationist role with the alien authority in the country,
The British sponsored educational institutions successfully played their part in the process of turning the students into Anglicized Indians and thereby prepared them to play collaboratory political roles. The role of the Christian Missionaries cannot be overlooked in this respect, especially in tribal areas, e.g., the Christian Missionaries of tribal areas in Mymansingh did, in fact, seek to inject the British values to the tribals and even converted them into Christianity. The British Government left no stone unturned to conduct the education in schools and other educational institutions in their interest, as the school operates both manifest and latent form of transmission of ideas, and the school generates respect and awe for the government and stresses the structure rather than the dynamics of government.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no exactly politicized environment in India as a whole of which rural Bengal was a part. The politicized environment includes "The family interest in politics, school influence on the child's political orientation or the membership of such associations where politics is generally discussed". Whatever socialization was done, was in the interest of the ruling authority.

The British authority wanted to create a support base for the political system. The Bengali intelligentsia also believed in the necessity of persistence of British Indian political system. This spirit of collaboration is evident in the writings of Prasannha Kumar Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen. Especially Keshab Chandra Sen pleaded to unite with England for the glory of India.
and the glory of England. Even Ram Mohan Roy thought highly of 'English sense of Justice'. He heartily accepted the British rule in India as a necessary weapon to abolish social evils in India as well as in Bengal. However, he did not rule out the vision of an independent Indian society in the future.

Though the Bengali intellectuals themselves had been socialized into the western political ideas like liberty, freedom, equality, democracy, nationalism and patriotism, they did not spread these among the masses rather they worked with British and accepted British defined roles and values in order to protect their interests as they were the representatives of the vested interests and the landed gentry who were the products of the British authority. So though they advocated love for the country, did not correspondingly want to defy the British defined roles and values prescribed for them by the latter. Myron Weiner is of opinion that in the nineteenth century the British sought to induct Indian into collaborationist roles.

The various social reform movements brought to the fore values which aroused political consciousness among the people. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Social Reform Conference and in the later period, All India Depressed Classes Association, All India Depressed Classes Federation, All India Harijan Sangha — all these took part in the process of socializing the people of all castes into liberatarian values of politics like democracy, equality, freedom, justice and thereby to make them conscious in all spheres of life. These social reform movements provided the
masses with the inspiration to fight against the deep-rooted social problems.

The intelligentsia of Bengal was influenced by the nationalist ideas of Europe and international events. The American War of Independence, the great French Revolution, the Greek war of Independence and the struggle of Italians for independence and the unification stirred the imagination of the enlightened Bengali intelligentsia who afterwards devoted themselves in the process of spreading and inculcating the values of freedom and liberty and independence into the minds of the people.

Intellectuals like Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and Akshoy Kumar Dutta, possessed radical ideas who advocated socio-economic reforms for the toiling masses in order to make them conscious. Akshoy Kumar Dutta, wrote a series of articles in Tattvabodhini Patrika "On the 'conditions of the Village Folk' and these articles were devoted to a scathing criticism of the oppressive conduct of the landlords."

So we can say that the intellectuals of Bengal tried to socialize the masses of Bengal into political ideas through the process of social reforms and thereby they followed the path of latent political socialization.

The Indian Association (1876) as a socializing agent played a successful role as the content of political socialization was attractive to the common people in the rural agricultural areas. The Indian Association wanted to create a strong public opinion
throughout the country through a comprehensive and active programme of launching mass socialization to public movements. A uniform pattern of political socialization was undertaken in order to create a common political feeling both in the Hindus and Muslims.

The unification of the intellectuals and the common people and to take them on a common platform was the content inherent within the political socialization programme. Its intention was to socialize the agricultural masses of the rural areas into politics. "The Association expressed deep concern for the 'vast agricultural community of Bengal' which constituted the basis and foundation of the whole social fabric."

Vivekananda wanted the toiling masses to take part in the process of emancipating the mother land. He asked his followers to infuse the values of patriotism among the toiling masses. So, he said that "forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers ..."

The works and the speeches of Vivekananda had an enormous impact on the minds of the young generation. His successful visit at Chicago and his credit to uphold the position of India in the world environment had a tremendous and fruitful effect in the minds of the Bengali intelligentsia who were further inspired by the spirit of nationalism, self-help and independence.

However, the writings, massages, and speeches of the intellectuals did not reach the common masses and these were
circulated only in the intellectual environment and thereby became fruitless in respect of evoking the general masses' consciousness. The lack of mass media in the then period and the prevalence of mass illiteracy and above all the reluctance of the young intellectuals to carry out these ideals were responsible for this state of affairs.

Although it may be said that in the first part of the nineteenth century the British and the Indians played the collaborative political roles, in the second part of the said century an evaluative spirit generated among the Indians as well as among the Bengalees due to the origin of the spirit of nationalism. The rural people of Bengal had also been uplifted from the parochial state of cultural environment through several reforms movements.

The British authority wanted that the rural masses should remain politically inert. But these developments had been effecting changes in their attitude "... Nothing is more unreal in modern times than the hypothesis of the political inertness of the rural people". The fact of participation of the rural masses in such movements as indigo, swadeshi, and boycott, non-co-operation, civil disobedience and quit India sufficiently proves the above-mentioned statement.

Therefore in the pre-independence era, there were two principal socializing agents — one was the British and the vested interests which wanted to create and maintain support base for the existing political system and the other was the nationalists who wanted to condemn that political system through the
process of evaluation. Both the agents had taken recourse to political socialization process because it is the process through which people learn the ways in which to support or condemn the political system 15.

In Nadia district Chougacha, Boragacha, Gobindapur, Ashannagar, Bansberia, Santipur, Khalboyalia, Maliapota, Meherpur, Nischintipur, Sikharpur, Loknathpur, Kachikata, etc., were the remarkable places where the indigo cultivators launched their fights against the English indigo planters who were under the patronage of the English rule 16.

In 1860 the 'Indigo Association' in a memorandum to the Government alleged that the ryots were gradually becoming too much rebellious. The evidences which were found in the memorandum clearly supports the statement that a revolt took place throughout Nadia 17.

Though the indigo rebellion had its economic aspects, its inherent political aspects cannot be overlooked. The political knowledge of the people increased through the processes undertaken to articulate their economic interests.

In course of struggle the indigo peasants gathered political knowledge relating to the functioning of the governmental institutions. It was a protest, though apparently against the English indigo planters, indirectly, it was against the English rulers and their administration.

Bengal. He was very happy to find out that the peasantry "have at least felt their power and have on occasions exerted it ..."18.

In the nineteenth century Bengal a prolonged mass peasant agitation took place and the two major events in the then period were the indigo risings (1860) and the Pabna rent agitation (1873)\textsuperscript{19}.

"The peasant actions constituted not only a challenge to the Zemindari system or to the system of indigo plantation, it was also a challenge to the colonial order\textsuperscript{20}.

The political senses like right against exploitation and the establishment of justice were conveyed to the rural folk through such media available at the time as songs, tales, stories and popular works like sabha, samities, baihaks, speeches.

Political orientations of the masses did find expression more prominently with the prompt expression of the nationalist ideas and sentiments during the first decade of the twentieth century. The swadeshi and boycott movements presented before them a spirit of political evaluation. In spite of mass illiteracy and ignorance during the first decade of the twentieth century mass involvement in swadeshi and boycott movement was found in Bengal due to large scale infusion of patriotic ideas and these ideas made the rural masses to follow two ideals like swadeshi and boycott.

Greenstein is of opinion that political socialization may have either a stabilizing influence or may serve as a potential source of change\textsuperscript{21}.

Following Greenstein let us discuss to what extent the process of political socialization provided a potential source of
change respect to political culture though illiteracy was an all pervasive phenomenon throughout Bengal in that period.

According to the census of India 1901 only 10% of the people were literate while literacy in English constituted 0.9% only.

In Bengal people's involvement in the swadeshi politics was due to the spread of nationalist sentiments by several institutions, and literacy associations. Several journals like Sanjibani, Bangadarshan, etc., institutions like Swadeshi Bhandar, Brati Samiti, Bandemataram Sampradaya, Sanatan Sampradaya, etc., urged the countrymen to buy swadeshi goods and boycott foreign goods. These associations advised for the people's unity and asked the people to promote and propagate swadeshi ideas and values. Besides these, public meetings, processions, picketings, bonfire of foreign goods, patriotic songs and fiery speeches kept the spirit of nationalism living and burning and actuated the rural people to be involved in politics.

However before the commencement of swadeshi and boycott movement nationalist ideas and sentiments were found in the writings of poet Iswar Chandra Gupta who was born in Kancharapara of the then Nadia district. Iswar Chandra Gupta was first to inculcate the values of patriotism through his writings like 'Matribhasa', 'Swadeshi', 'Bharat Santaner Prati', etc. In the first part of the nineteenth century we do find him to depict in his poems the motherland and mother tongue as the real mother of ours.
Tarapada Bandopadhyay the great nationalist and intellectual of Nadia district conducted the boycott movement in Krishnanagar. He convened a public meeting at the Krishnanagar Town Hall in 1905 by which was addressed Surendranath Banerjee and others. At this meeting a large number of rural people attended and took the oath of swadeshi. The religious sentiments of the people were exploited in the swadeshi or economic boycott movement. The Pandits of Nava-dwip also vehemently supported the boycott movement relating to foreign salt and sugar. In Nadia district the people firmly followed the boycott oath in practice from dusk to dawn. The people of different castes of this district were afraid of using foreign sugar because they might be boycotted by their respective castemen.

It can be said that neither general education nor political teaching is important. Political activities and actions are the most effective weapon to socialize the general masses into the political ideas, beliefs, and values. In other words, effective and ethical political action rather than the political education is the most useful instrument to inculcate political values into the minds of the people. The people of Bengal obtained education in political values through the participation in swadeshi politics during swadeshi and boycott movement in Bengal. This fact amply proves the statement of Almond and Powell:

"A great war or a depression can constitute a severe political trauma for millions of individuals who may be involved or involvement in a mass movement for independence such as the nationalist struggles which are prominent in the histories of many
ex-colonial nations, can provide a learning experience which shapes orientations of large segments of the population. Through participation of such movements, these groups acquire new conceptions of the role of politics in their lives and new goals for which they may strive.24

With the growth of staunch nationalist spirit, an evaluative spirit was found among the nationalists relating to the British defined political roles and values and the functional process of the British Indian political system. With the establishment of the Indian National Congress the nationalists received an organised force for the expression of their demands and for the training of the people of the country for carrying on movement although at this stage it was limited to the urban areas and urban and educated section of the people.

The nationalists soon became divided into two groups, one group known as the moderates believed in the British political culture and the use of constitutional means for reaching the goals. The other group known as militants wanted to emphasize indigenous political culture and tried to secure their demands through aggressive means.

The task of political socialization by the moderates took place through public debates, propaganda, demonstrations mass applications and deputations. The moderates followed the policy of persuasion and socialized the people to follow the constitutional means to achieve political freedom. The people had been socialized to evolve their political impulses to adopt political
education and liberal values of politics imported from the West. However, 'extra strong pushes' were necessary to socialize the illiterate people and generate the people's reasons or impulses regarding patriotism and democratic process to achieve freedom.

On the contrary, the extremists socialized the people in a quite different way. They believed in extremism and violent agitation, which according to them, were essential to remove the British political structure from the soil of India. So, they totally differed from moderates who believed in constitutional agitation for the fulfilment of their demands.

Moreover, Bengali militants had been infused with the political spirit and inspiration by the writings of Bengali intelle-
gentsia. In Bengal, Aurobindo, the great Mother-worshipper of the twentieth century, "wanted to throw the whole country into convulsions of energy. Bankim founded the basis of a neo-Hindu Indian Nationalism by effecting an identification of the country which is the subject-matter of patriotic concern with the worship of the image of Goddess, obviously the subject matter of religion ..."25.

They sought to rejuvenate the national spirit by referring to the Hindu scriptures. Vivekananda wanted to make the religion an "instrument for galvanizing the social, economic and political structure of India"26.

It can be said beyond doubt that some of the creeds of revolutionary action, i.e., political dacoity and murder were implemented in the district of Nadia. For example, political dacoity took place at Raita in 1908, Haludbari in 1909 (now in
Bangladesh), Pragpur in 1915\(^{27}\), and Sibpur in 1915\(^{28}\). (All these are the villages of Nadia district).

These dacoities took place in order to provide funds for the revolutionaries. The rural people of Nadia district clearly understood this fact. A great enthusiasm could be marked in Nadia district during the Chittagong armoury raid of 18th April, 1930.

The terrorists of this district really stirred the whole district in support of the Chittagong incident of throwing bombs at mid-night all on a sudden over several government buildings, especially in the bungalow of the superintendent of police at Krishnanagar, on Kotwali thana building and on the house of an inspector of the district intelligence branch.

The enlightened women of Nadia district used to help the terrorists. Pamphlets were written by the women voicing protest against torture inflicted on the political prisoners at Andaman and other Jails\(^{29}\).

Besides, religious revivalism, the political ideas and activities of Aurobindo and other Bengali militant nationalists, and the past glory of indigo rebellion injected the political revolutionary spirit among the younger militant nationalists of Krishnanagar group. There was a secret link between the Bengali militant nationalists and the Krishnanagar group.

Several types of voluntary groups had been formed in Nadia district in order to evoke political consciousness and values of patriotism. As for example, Kazi Nazrul Islam formed a volunteer
group and whose songs, embodied strong patriotic values, were sung in order to arouse political enthusiasm among the people through parades and route marches.

Another group named 'Subhas Sena' was engaged in spreading political ideas of Netaji Subhas Bose among the people of Nadia district.

Besides the revolutionary organisations mentioned earlier, other organisations in Nadia district did inject revolutionary ideals to the students and the youngs (e.g., Jatindra Smriti Pathagar, Sabuj Sangha, Tarun Sangha, 'Desh Bandhu Library' of Ranaghat, 'Public Library' of Santipur and other organisations of Muragachha and Sashanpara, Kumarkahi, Harinagarayanpur of Nadia district).

However, neither the moderates nor the militants did undertake the task of mass political socialization. In Bengal the lower caste Hindu and the Muslim still lacked general education much less English education. Moreover, they did not have any opportunity to be involved in governmental structures and functions from which they could easily have the political knowledge, ideas and values.

As a matter of fact the Muslim Community of Bengal emerged as another agent of political socialization. It can not be denied that the image of motherland in the shape of divine Mother was one of the factors which led to the birth of communalism of India. Moreover, "The role of imperialism in dividing the Hindus and the Muslims and economic cause has been powerful agents of communalism in India."
Both the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal lived in two water-tight compartments relating to culture. Both of them inherited "cultural tradition" and the socio-economic structural limitations. Both the British authority and mullah section of the Muslim community headed to remember the fundamental difference in respect of culture and socio-economic condition to make a clear bifurcation between the Hindus and the Muslims.

So there was no uniformity in the inculcation of the spirit of nationalism as well as there had been absence of secularisation of nationalism.

It was Gandhiji who launched a secular political movement. For this purpose, he took the Khilafat issue as a means of cementing Hindu-Muslim Unity. He followed the 'change of heart' theory in course of his political socialization process. The ultimate object behind his socialization was the use of reasons over uncontrolled passions. Gandhiji tried to socialize the people in the process of explaining his "religious philosophical conception, preached by him with eloquence and akin in certain respects to older schools of Indian speculative thought but more closely related to Tolstoy, Thoreau and Emerson, which had their vogue and influence during Gandhiji's earlier years in the West and in the formation of thought."

Though non-co-operation movement gained fierce force elsewhere "It was not at first greeted with adequate enthusiasm in Bengal. Bengal had already passed through an experience of economic boycott and political organisation of both kinds, constitutional and non-constitutional."
So at the outset, Gandhiji's process of political socialization obtained 'Lukewarm response' in Bengal. Moreover, Gandhiji was not able to socialize the Bengali militant nationalist to follow his ideals like non-violence, negotiation and moderation while they still believed in terrorism and violent politics which according to them were the only way to achieve freedom. Even he could not attract the westernized urban intellectuals of Bengal.

Later he was quite successful in socializing the rural people of Bengal into his political ideals, beliefs and values. Despite initial reluctance, the politically oriented Bengali middle class actively participated in non-co-operation movement. New leaders had been socialized to accept Gandhian values of politics while some of the revolutionaries also let themselves to be plunged into the enthusiasm of non-co-operation movement because they recognised in the Gandhian movement a suitable opportunity for giving form to the discontent of the rural masses. His ultimate purpose was to socialize the depressed classes and sections of the population into politics. The village people of Bengal accepted the Gandhian non-violent politics based on the doctrines of Vaisnavism which manifestly injected the principle of ahimsa to politics.

Gandhiji wanted to impart political education through some practical political programmes. Being inspired by his ideals and ideology, a new band of non-violent political workers sacrificed themselves in distant villages in Hooghly, Burdwan, Rajshahi, Dacca and elsewhere and continued to work in constructive programmes as
suggested by Gandhiji. This shows that Gandhiji's process of political socialization of the rural ignorant masses of Bengal was to create political orientations through political involvement.

The rural people were simple, pure, kind-hearted and their religious attitude made them perfect and solicitous. They were thereby imbued into the values of non-violent politics through passive resistance rather than the values of violent politics through active resistance or the cult of bomb.

Real involvement of the masses was, however, found in the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movements. The infusion of collaboratory values by the British got a serious setback for the second time in Bengal. The masses, on the other hand, were encouraged more prominently to accept idea of non-collaboration with British. Through the policy of Satyagraha, people of Bengal took part in strikes, struggles, street demonstrations, picketings, conferences. The values of non-co-operation had been inculcated in the lower stratum of society. It created a storm of unrest which blew successfully over the villages of Bengal. "Even the women of the lower strata, in spite of the handicap of illiteracy and poverty were steadily growing conscious of their rights. Thousands of women of the working class and peasantry took part in the strikes, struggles, street demonstrations, and conferences..."36

The No-Tax campaign in 1921 Midnapore under the leadership of Birendranath Sasmal may be cited as an appropriate example of participation of the rural masses in the non-co-operation movement. Several lakhs of people refused to pay chowkidari taxes in a common oath. The result was that the movable and immovable properties of
theirs had been concatenated but there was none to carry on such properties and ultimately none was found to buy properties in Midnapore when the latter were proposed to sell. The villagers had been frightened with the help of the armed forces and military but none bent down. The result was that the government was compelled to stop the function of Union Board in Midnapore because the Union Board could not run without the Chowkidari Tax.

The people of Nadia district did also respond to the politics of non-violent non-co-operation. They accepted the values of passive resistance. Some enlightened persons rejected government posts, some lawyers boycotted the courts. Not only that Khadder and Charka became popular in Nadia in order to achieve self-reliance side by side with Bengal. Local leaders like Bijoy Lal Chattopadhyay and Dr. Someshwar Choudhuri conducted an agitation against the foreign indigo planters in several places of Nadia district like Refaitpur, Bheraraara, Alloar Darga, etc., in 1924-25. The span of agitation was from Nadia to Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh). Public meetings were held at night and lectures relating to non-violent non-co-operation were delivered where ten to fifteen thousands of people used to assemble. The indigo plants of the English Indigo planters did lie in the fields, these were not brought to the indigo factories. Meetings, baithaks, discussions, processions, demonstrations were the processes through which the values of non-co-operation movement were brought to the rural masses of Nadia.

The students of Nadia district began to boycott schools, and colleges, national educational system was established. The
picketings in liquor, foreign cloth shops and the propaganda of charka and khadder began from Krishnanagar to Kustia, Meherpur, Chuyadanga, Ranaghat, Santipur, Navadweep and then to interior villages. The national educational institutions like "Garabini Cottage" of Krishnanagar and the "National School" of Sadhanapore were established in order to reject the British sponsored values and to stamp, on the other hand, the perfect ideals of nationalism on the minds of students. During non-co-operation movement the rural masses of Nadia undertook the boycott of foreign goods, cotton cultivation and dissemination of the Charka cult, abstination from intoxicating articles, cessation of litigation, etc. 37.

The rural masses of Nadia district supported the satyagrahis to disobey the salt law. Inspite of governmental prohibitory orders, the people of towns like Krishnanagar, Kustia, Meherpur, Navadweep, Ranaghat, Shantipur, etc., as well as the people of the villages, like Muragacha, Dharmada, Bathuyadahari, Devagram, Palashi, Mazdia, Chuyadanga, Alamdanga, Khoksha, etc., took part in civil disobedience movement through picketings, demonstrations and disobeyed the Salt-law day after day 38.

A more serious mass involvement in the civil disobedience movement can be found in the Nadia district which took place in 1932-1933. Apart from the meetings, processions, picketings, certain other occurrences in this movement were remarkable. These have been stated below:
(1) The women for the first time in Nadia with their processions took part in civil disobedience movement and were imprisoned.

(2) Inspite of police escort and 144 prohibitory orders "Pataka Satyagraha" by the masses was held within the compound of "Zila Court".

(3) Inspite of prohibitory orders political conference of the masses relating to No-Tax campaign strategy were held in Tehatta and Bara Andulia of Nadia district.

(4) No-Tax campaign was started in the Chanderghat village of Tehatta police station. Thousands of people took part in rural areas of this district to paralyse the British administrative machinery.

The students, the youth, the Congress workers, the women helped the rural masses to understand the values of Gandhian politics. The task of "Hindu-Muslim unity", "abolition of untouchability", were enforced. The college students used to sing national songs through processions throughout the villages in order to awake the village people from political lethargy. Both in urban and rural areas, fiery political lectures were delivered to encourage the people to be involved in politics.

Besides the enlightened women of Krishnanagar, the women of Kustia, Bathuyadahari, Goyaribazar, Hanskhali and many places took part in the process of political socialization of rural women. They inspired their to take part in the then non-violent political movement.

Several women organisations were formed in order to spread the political education relating to Satyagraha, (e.g., the
organisations of Krishnanagar, Krishnagunj, Ranaghat, Chakdaha, Navadweep, Shantipur, Taherpur, Haringhata, Majdia, were such types. Though these organisations were entrusted with social works, Gandhian political ideas and values were circulated from these organisations to the rural women of the villages.

The observance of historically significant days of national importance like 'Rajbandi Dibash' or 'Independence day' and the wide propaganda of those days to the masses did also contribute to evoke political orientations of the rural masses of Nadia district.

Not only that, the Gandhian process of political socialization did also affect the adibashies, i.e., scheduled tribes of hill areas like Mymensingh and Jalpaiguri. In Mymensing, the Hajong, the Dalu, the Coach, the Banai, the Hadi, the Garo, had been inspired by the Gandhian ideals like 'the abolition of untouchability' and 'Swaraj'. Although they did not understand the depth of Gandhian political philosophy, at least they understood that Gandhi wanted to establish 'Swaraj' and the denunciation of the foreign government and the abandonment of foreign goods were necessary in this respect. They had also sacrificed much in the non-co-operation movement, civil disobedience movement and the post-war agrarian movements.

Mass awakening, the consequence of mass-political socialization, was in fact found, during the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movements in Bengal under the leadership of Gandhi. Gandhi used to travel throughout the country. He came to several villages of Bengal and taught the inherent values of non-co-operation movement. He himself used Charka before holding
public meetings and speeches in the rural area in order to enthuse the people. He himself followed the principles of his political socialization programme which proved essential to impart political education to the illiterate and ignorant rural masses of Bengal.

The people of Bengal had been exposed to different types of agencies in respect of socialization to politics. Thus they had been subjected to a variety of new and changing pressures. In the non-co-operation movement and its subsequent years the political socialization process, acted as a continuing political apprenticeship for the masses rather than a training ground for the political culture. As the people had been exposed to the various combinations of differentially interacted agencies, political socialization did not run in continuous and uniform process.

It is contended that in the nineteenth century, as well as up to the first two decades of the present century, the rural peasantry of Bengal had no direct political orientation relating to the political system. It is only partly true because the sporadic movements launched by them were inseparably connected with the policies of colonial government. It is the merging of these two forces, the agrarian (anti-feudal) and the political (anti-colonial) that brought about an unprecedented crisis in the rural society.

In the post war years, though the force of the communists was growing rapidly, its real influence remained operative in the scattered pockets. Not only that the communists were running under the 1942 regulation still then. The communists could not
enter into the principal centres of peasant rebellion though poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers of low caste or tribal origin still provided combustible materials.

The Kisan Sabha where the communists were preponderent wanted to socialize the peasantry against two-fold oppressions — feudal and colonial. The Kisan Sabha with its volunteers waving the red flag marched from village to village in order to encourage the peasants into the revolutionary ideals.

The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal is the best illustrative example of the agrarian-cum-political movement. It was the movement of bargadars against many feudalistic exploitations supported by the British political power. Through this movement, they wished to get rid of their serf-like condition.

The peasants were supported by the common people of the villages and the Hindu and the Muslim peasants fought unitedly in this movement.

The Communist party had done much in the process of infusing revolutionary spirit into the hearts of adibashies (i.e., scheduled tribes) of the hill areas, especially of Jalpaiguri and Mymensingh. The Hajong, the Delu the Coach, the Banai, the Hadi, the Garo had sacrificed much in the violent struggle against the Zemindars and Landlords in order to abolish the Tanka, Nanakar, Vioali, Khamar customs which had been taken recourse to by the latter from the medieval period.

However, the left forces in Bengal could not make a significant success in the process of infusing the masses with
their ideologies. The Principal reason behind this may be, as mentioned by Marcus F. Franda, that leftist ideals and values had not been properly understood by agents themselves. The author in his book, 'Radical Politics in Bengal' is of the opinion that "very few members of the older generation of Marxist scholars in Bengal have ever studied Marx himself in depth, and most of them confess to great difficulty in getting through, 'Das Kapital' or other highly theoretical works ..." He also argues that in the thirties "Forward Block, the R.S.P. the other Marxist Left Groups were simply bhadralok parties and warring factions among them indicated the confusion that prevailed among the bhadralok about how they might use Marxism to capture political power."  

The Communists of Nadia district although attempted to spread the left ideals and ideology, ultimately joined hands with congress and acted jointly in the process of socializing the masses into the idea of overthowing the British imperialism. The ideologies of the left parties were not clearly understood by the village masses because of their ignorance and illiteracy. Both left and non-left forces, however, organised jointly Kisan conferences in several places of Nadia district, (e.g., Harinarayanpur, Bagula, Darshana) in order to awake the rural peasants and create political enthusiasm among them.

The rural populace in West Bengal thus had gathered political ideas, beliefs and values or politically relevant social values mediated through various agencies of society. The various political parties, nationalistic associations and philanthropic
individuals through the public meetings, demonstrations, processions, picketings, haratals, baithaks, leaflets, national songs, slogans, folk songs, dramas and literatures relating to patriotism and direct and indirect political persuasion to individuals inducted the rural populace into the respective political ideals, beliefs, and values as other mass-media had very little influence on the rural population.

In rural Bengal, especially in Nadia district, the role of the family as well as educational institutions in the preindependence era was not at all important as compared to western countries.

However, the rural populace gathered political knowledge and developed political orientations through the participation in the movements either against the indigenous feudalism or against the British imperialism. "All revolution is an extra-ordinary process of education .... Revolution and education are same thing". 46

This observation is obviously applicable to the case of Bengal peasantry.
References


12. Ibid., P. 273.


17. Ibid., P. 83.


19. Ibid., It has been taken from the introduction of the editor, P. XIX.

20. Ibid., From the introduction of the editor, P. XXI.


29. Ibid., P. 71.


37. Ibid., PP. 131-133.

38. Ibid., PP. 153-155.

39. Ibid., PP. 169-180.

40. Ibid., PP. 160-162.

41. Ibid., P. 211.

42. Dutta, R.C., The Peasantry of Bengal, edited by N. Kaviraj with an introduction. It has been taken from the introduction of the editor, Op.cit., P. XIV.


45. Ibid., P. 28.