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**DECENTRALIZATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE UPAZILA ADMINISTRATION**

BY

MD. NURUL ISLAM

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
POLITICAL SCIENCE

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

OTTAWA, ONTARIO

APRIL, 1991

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE UPAZILA ADMINISTRATION

submitted by
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of decentralization for rural development in Third World Countries (TWCs) is now coming under detailed scrutiny. This has been warranted by the limited success experienced by the TWCs in their various efforts at decentralization. Scholars interested in this field now widely share the view that a meaningful understanding of the successes and failures of decentralization attempts in these countries must be analyzed in the context of their socio-historical backgrounds. This dissertation examines the nature, problems and prospects of decentralization in a TWC, Bangladesh, from such a perspective.

Despite attempts at decentralization in Bangladesh, the system has remained centralized. The central government controls the regions through selected groups of people and the field administration. In the absence of competent organizations in the civil society, the centre has always found it easier to assert its control. Regions have developed a dependency on the centre for initiative and drive for development.

The upazila scheme in Bangladesh, a logical continuation of earlier administrative reforms, is meant to be a forum for generating a new dynamism in the neglected countryside of Bangladesh. Though centrally recruited officials continue to remain at the local levels and get involved in local affairs, the scheme has provided for civilian supremacy at the upazila level, for the first time in Bangladesh's history.

This democratization will be meaningful if upazilas can succeed in achieving the long-needed participation of the local people in developmental matters, thereby reducing their heavy dependency on the centre. A gradual reduction in the scale of dependence on the centrally recruited field officials is also necessary, if local democracy is to succeed meaningfully. However, given the level of consciousness and preparedness, this may take some time. In addition, upazilas have to fulfill an economic mission: commercialization of agriculture, a factor so important for a progressive transformation of the Bangladesh villages. It is our conclusion that despite many shortcomings the upazila scheme has the promise to lead the country to a new era.

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Finally, I remain responsible for any omissions of fact, and any errors in analysis or comments made in this study.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years decentralization, as a philosophy and a strategy, has achieved tremendous importance all over the world, especially in the Third World Countries (TWCs). Though it is not true to claim that the demand for decentralization is of recent origin, certainly it became a matter of major concern after the emergence of modern nation-states and with the growth of the complexities of governance. Plato and Aristotle did not have much reason to worry about the areal or functional division of power for the Greek city-states.¹ Even "When division of states' powers - constitutionalism - was urged and justified by seventeenth and eighteenth century political scientists, the emphasis was on a division among ruling bodies at the seat of government."²

The question of healthy intergovernmental relations gradually arose with the expansion of state activities. Traditionally, the state used to perform mainly three functions: defence, public works and internal administration. Since the eighteenth century onwards, the public works function has expanded progressively and gained tremendous importance. The mandate of the state has expanded further with the coming of the idea of the welfare state. In most of Europe, the state gradually engaged itself in regulating and afterwards providing such basic services as transportation, education, health care and irrigation.³

Nowadays, growing state intervention in the socio-economic life of societies has become a common feature world-wide. In the present TWCs, the state has become actively engaged in the regulation and maintenance of

infrastructure and the promotion of various functions, for example, in the societal sphere, health and family planning, education and social welfare, and in the economic sphere, the production, ownership, and regulation of goods and services through public sector enterprises, industrial licenses, private controls and planning.⁴

Rural development is a sector where the state has become involved on a massive scale in the TWCs, mainly because of changed socio-political perceptions of governments and international aid-giving agencies. The concept of development has drawn the attention of scholars from diverse academic disciplines and become very much a multi-disciplinary subject matter. Development thinking in the era immediately after World War II was predominantly economic in orientation. "Development seen as economic growth, measured by aggregative instruments such as product or income per capita became the gospel of planners and policymakers in the poor countries during the 50s and early 60s."⁵ Development thinking, however, underwent significant changes in later years. Development is no longer perceived in economic terms alone. The idea of the satisfaction of basic human needs has become an important consideration in later development thinking.⁶ The Basic Needs Approach, in the main, emphasizes agriculture, rural development and people's participation.

In the contemporary developing countries, it has almost become an article

of faith that the implementation of the BN Approach needs decentralization. Since the 1970s, decentralization has become tremendously popular in these countries. Rightly or wrongly, most TWCs have been trying to ride on the decentralization band-wagon. But decentralization as a concept and as a method, is not at all simple. It may mean many things to many people.

Instead of entering into a semantic debate, I would like to rely on a well-recognized typology of decentralization for the purposes of this study. Dennis Rondinelli and G. S. Cheema, two prominent students of decentralization, introduced a four-fold classificatory scheme. The four types are: deconcentration, delegation to semi-autonomous or parastatal agencies, devolution, and transfer of functions from public to nongovernmental institutions. Deconcentration refers to a process where redistribution of administrative responsibilities takes place from the central government to the local areas, but only within the jurisdiction of the central government. In the case of the delegation to semi-autonomous or parastatal organizations the redistribution of functions is to bodies outside the central government administration. Devolution is a special kind of decentralization where the central government relinquishes some of its functions and creates new units of government which are not under the direct control of the central government. In a devolutionary situation, local government units enjoy more autonomy from the central government and have a clear legal basis. Finally, decentralization may also take place in the form of transference of functions from government

to nongovernmental organizations, and is also called privatization.⁷ This classificatory scheme is highly useful for an adequate understanding of the various decentralization measures adopted by different regimes, as well as by different nation states, with regard to various development programmes.

Whatever might be the form, often the objectives of decentralization are: improved planning in the sense that decentralization allows local variations and needs to be taken into account, improved evaluation of the plan cycle and more public participation. The benefits accrued from decentralization, as claimed by its advocates, range from social to political and economic.⁸ But various decentralization measures undertaken by developing countries have more or less failed to achieve these objectives satisfactorily.⁹ Given this situation, TWCs can not escape from asking the basic questions: Is there something wrong with decentralization strategies? Or is decentralization a misplaced priority? In any case, it is important to identify the forces which are acting at cross purposes.

In his analysis of the Asian case of decentralization, Friedman observes:

Throughout Asia, local government leaders are perceived as lower-level bureaucrats - recipients of communications, implementers of policies devised elsewhere, supporters of "higher" authorities. In short, the implementing of policy decisions relies primarily on "classical" technocrats and instructed delegation. Local governments are permitted technical and administrative authorities to implement - as in the cases of rural credit, revenue raising, and infrastructure building - but never the political authority to create ideas suited to their local environments, supported by the power of the central government.¹⁰

Friedman concludes that some kind of "local government entrepreneurship" instead of "bureaucratic entrepreneurship" is what is needed in developing countries. This lack of 'local government entrepreneurship' has also been pointed to by many others. Diana Conyers, another prominent student of decentralization, for example, notes: "The majority of the decentralization programmes are seen as attempts to decentralize the national government - a subtle but significant distinction."¹¹

Bangladesh is not immune from the global decentralization wave. The reasons are many. A country like Bangladesh, where rural areas are inhabited by more than 80% of the total population and where more than 50% of the GDP comes from the agricultural sector, the issue of decentralization and rural development can hardly be ignored. Successive political regimes in Bangladesh have duly recognized the need for the development of rural areas. Each of the regimes devoted some attention to the promotion of rural development through popular participation. These were, in effect, attempts towards realising a cherished goal of the constitution, which Bangladesh adopted immediately after her independence from Pakistan in 1971. Article 16 of the constitution stated:

The state shall adopt effective measures to bring about a radical transformation in the rural areas through the promotion of an agricultural revolution, provision of rural electrification, and the development of cottage and other industries, and the improvement of education, community and public health, in these areas, so as progressively to remove the disparity in the standards of living between the urban and the rural areas.¹²

The framers of the constitution understood clearly and recognized that

disparities between the urban and rural sectors in Bangladesh, a product of centuries of neglect and exploitation, could not be remedied easily without progressive measures in favour of rural areas. They also seem to have understood that in a country where agriculture is the main source of employment and income, rural development is impossible without agrarian reforms. The constitution makers believed that the promotion of locally elected bodies may be a good avenue for the cause of rural development and their envisioned model seems to be a participatory one, which would include the underprivileged sections of the rural society. Article 9 of the constitution states:

The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers, and women.¹³

The constitution, provisions of which we have referred to above, was adopted during the time of Sheikh Mujib, regarded as the father of the nation. Mujib's greatest achievement is perhaps the adoption of a constitution for the new nation within a short span of time. In the last days of his short stay in power, he took some drastic measures to reorganize the administrative structure of the country within a socialist framework; rapid transformation of the countryside was one of the objectives. Ziaur Rahman, who came to power after Mujib, introduced some major reorganizations, with respect to the administrative structure, for the promotion of rural development. However, the reorganization measures, undertaken by both Mujib and Zia, did not last long

and were abandoned with their fall from power.

The military government, which came to power in March 1982, under the leadership of H. M. Ershad, showed a similar interest in rural development. Immediately after coming to power, Ershad appointed a committee in April, 1982 to recommend measures to reorganize the administrative system of the country. The committee proposed several measures to promote local government and rural development. One was that the administrative units should be reorganized with added emphasis on the thana, a unit of administration located below the district level. According to the committee, the thana (later renamed upazila by the government) should be the hub of rural development in Bangladesh. The committee also proposed elected local bodies for all levels of local government, including the upazila. Another proposal was for the reduction of levels of administration in order to make the decision-making process speedier.

Previously, the administrative units outside the centre, in descending order, were: (1) division, (2) district, (3) subdivision, (4) thana, (5) union, and (6) village. The committee proposed that subdivisions as units be promoted to districts; and subdivision as a unit of administration should cease to exist under the new arrangement. This proposal of the committee is unique in the sense that it signalled a marked departure from the previous administrative organization so far prevailing in the subcontinent. The recommendation of the committee for the upgrading of the thana and the attaching of emphasis on that level was also

novel. A comparison of the previous organization and the new arrangement, as adopted by the government, will be helpful in understanding the scenario better.

Let us show it diagrammatically:

<u>Previous</u>	<u>Present</u>
centre	centre
division	division
district	district
subdivision	
<u>thana</u>	<u>upazila</u>
village	village

The main purpose of this reorganization, it was claimed, was to bring administration closer to the people, and thus to make communication flow easier and speedier. The regime's intended purpose may be sincere but the task of realising this humble goal is not at all simple. Many of the problems are indeed formidable. For example, the reorganization measures aim to hand over the control of local affairs to local representatives, giving the centre's field administration a supportive role. This may prove to be a complicated task. Public officials in that region of the world never worked under the control of local representatives before. Involved are many complicated issues which may inhibit the development of a mutual working relationship. Moreover, how can talented public servants be attracted to the rural areas? Is it possible to

dismantle the field administration altogether? Some scholars have proposed that Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) can make an important contribution to the development of rural areas in developing countries, if given the proper scope.¹⁴ How far is this proposal applicable in the case of Bangladesh?

The introduction of the upazila scheme in Bangladesh has brought all these issues to the forefront. Government planners, social thinkers, intellectuals and also some foreign observers have devoted attention to the questions of why attempted decentralization measures have failed to produce the rural development intended, and what would be a viable strategy for rural development. Our main aim in this thesis is to try to answer these questions more fully by making a detailed study of the creation and working of the upazila scheme. It has to be mentioned here that we have viewed the upazila scheme mainly as a strategy for rural development. We have also assumed that any strategy for development, be it rural or otherwise, can be fashioned and implemented more meaningfully, if related to its socio-historical background as well as to present realities. Therefore, before embarking upon the task of examining the suitability of the upazila scheme, an attempt has been made to set the issue in relation to its background.

Though this study is not an exercise in theory building, still it is hoped that it will contribute to raw materials needed for theorizing in the new field of decentralization for development, which is yet to take a clear shape. Moreover, Conyers admits, agreeing with V. Subramaniam, that a different kind of

approach is needed to measure the failures and successes of the decentralization programmes of TWCs.¹⁵ It is simply because the constraints confronting the TWCs are different, in many respects, from the ones facing the industrialized countries.

Given the experiences of TWCs in respect of decentralization, this study advances the following major propositions for the Bangladesh case, especially the phenomenon of the upazila administration. Firstly, decentralization measures in Bangladesh show an in-built propensity to deconcentration, more than towards other forms of decentralization. Secondly, the Friedmanian suggestion of promoting "local government entrepreneurship" instead of "bureaucratic entrepreneurship" will not be applicable in the context of Bangladesh, at least for a long time. Or to put it differently, local government can not become the substitute of the field administration in the foreseeable future. Thirdly, the participatory rural development expected of decentralization measures is more ideal than real; it benefits target groups minimally, if at all.

The dissertation has been divided into eight major chapters, along with a chapter of concluding remarks at the end. Chapter I contains the framework of analysis, which includes the theoretical considerations we have relied upon, a short review of the relevant literature along with a justification of the study, and the research method used. Chapter II sets the background to rural development in Bangladesh. The focus of the chapter is on the evolution of the

city-country relationship during the various phases of Indian history, both pre-colonial and colonial. The primary aim of this chapter is to show how the rural areas were neglected during those periods. Chapter III discusses rural development and institution building in Pakistan. Ayub's Basic Democracy System and the Comilla model of rural development, as it evolved through long experimentation, are the main focus of this chapter.

Beginning our study of modern Bangladesh, Chapter IV deals with the evolution of local government and rural development administration in the post-liberation period. The rural development philosophy and strategies of the Mujib and Zia regimes are the main themes of this chapter. In Chapter V we have discussed the emerging role of local government and the civil bureaucracy under the upazila scheme introduced by the Ershad regime. This Chapter also examines the controversial question of military involvement in the local-level administration. Normative issues, as well as the perceptions of the various actors involved at the upazila level, with regard to the involvement of the military in local-level administrative bodies, have received special attention in this chapter. The role perceptions of the various actors were determined by interviews the author had with officials of the upazilas in the Fall of 1988. Interviews were kept confined at the upazila level only; both voting and non-voting members (elected representatives and government officials respectively) were interviewed. Voting members included the upazila chairman, and members of Union Parishads, who are ex-officio members of the Upazila Parishad.

Government officials included, among others, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), the principal staff officer of the Upazila chairman, and other departmental representatives at the Upazila level, for example, Upazila Agricultural Officer, Upazila Education Officer, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer, etc.

Chapter VI is devoted to the problems and possibilities of the role of Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs), especially at the upazila level, in rural development. The main purpose of this chapter is to examine how the state is promoting or discouraging the extension of decentralization measures to the sphere of NGOs. Perceptions of the NGO officials with regard to various aspects of rural development have been surveyed to assess how they view the on-going development efforts pursued by the state. Chapter VII deals with the question of people's participation in development and also the process and major problems of planning and implementation at local levels, especially the upazila level. We have in this Chapter focused on the impact of decentralization measures on the planning and implementation of rural development activities with particular reference to three key sectors: irrigation, health and family planning.

Chapter VIII deals with the ideological apparatuses of the state and their role in rural development, which includes the educational institutions and specialized training institutes like the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Public Administration Training Centre (PATC), etc. The

purpose of this Chapter is to look at three main issues. Are the various actors in rural development adequately socialized to handle their roles? Is there an urban bias in the education and training systems meant for socialization? How have the decentralization measures affected the process of socialization?

Then finally Chapter IX attempts to bring together the main conclusions of the previous Chapters with a view to highlight those Bangladesh experiences that may be of relevance to developing countries seeking administrative reforms for rural development. In this Chapter some attempts have been made to arrive at limited generalizations.

Endnotes:

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10. H. J. Friedman, "Decentralized Development in Asia: Local Political Alternatives," in G. S. Cheema and D. A. Rondinelli (eds.) op. cit., p. 55.

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13.Ibid., p. 5.

14.For example, see Milton J. Esman and U. T. Uphoff, Local Government for Rural Development in Asia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974); Milton J. Esman & U. T. Uphoff, Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984); G. S. Cheema, "Non-Governmental Organizations, The Rural Poor and Regional Development: An Asian Perspective," in R. P. Misra (ed.) Humanizing Development (Hong Kong: Maruzen Asia, 1981).

15.Conyers, op. cit., 107.

Chapter I

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Rural development, as we have mentioned earlier, is a multi-disciplinary field and can be approached from various perspectives. For our purposes here we have relied upon selected aspects of the classical and Marxist political economy, Weberian sociology and Gandhian philosophy, with regard to the question of India's development, especially the dynamics of the city-country relationship. We have also highlighted how modern development theorists have treated the question of the city-country or the rural-urban divide in their various theories and models.

In general, rural development means the development of the countryside or rural areas. The question as to how that development can be achieved has been and still is a matter of controversy. In the main, the rural areas have been characterized as traditional, lacking in dynamism to make any progressive social transformation. Marx had probably gone further than any other and characterized rural peoples as a bunch of idiots.¹ Despite many differences, thinkers of the Western liberal tradition and also Marx considered the cities as the principal actors in the theatre of social change. On this issue, Weber seems to have agreed with both the liberal pluralists and Marx.² It is the romantics,

like M. K. Gandhi, who have taken a contrary view; they have glorified the rural life.³ Whatever might be the controversy, one thing seems certain, that the term 'rural' can convey more meaning if posed against its opposite, the 'urban'. It is the dynamics of the urban-rural relationship which, to a large extent, is responsible for the underdevelopment of rural areas in developing countries. Over time this dynamic has been influenced by numerous variables, including the evolution of the state-civil society relationship, social structure, colonization, etc. Therefore, there is no doubt that rural societies and their problems can be better understood if rural phenomena are set against the broad socio-historical forces which contributed to their development. In this respect, we believe, an analysis of the city-country debate can be a useful tool for understanding the issues concerning rural areas. It is for this reason that we have situated the issue of rural development within the city-country debate.

In order to present the framework within which this study will operate, this chapter has been divided into several sections. The first section focuses on the analytical orientation while the second section contains a review of other studies that are closely relevant to the topic of our investigation, thus leading to a justification of our study. The next section is on the explanation of the research procedure and method used in this study.

A. City-Country and Social Change

Differentiation between city and country became sharper with the growth of civilization. Greek writers, Aristotle for example, treated city and country as a unit. This practice continued through the Hellenistic era to the Roman civilization.⁴ However, over time cities became functionally distinct from the countryside with definite socio-cultural attributes.

In Western social thought after the eighteenth century the importance of cities was recognized; and cities were accorded an important role in many theories of social change. Rapid social change, mainly a product of the industrial revolution, mostly took place in the cities. Technological breakthroughs, organizational skills and increasing capacity to control and exploit the natural environment gave rise to the concept of a distinct society in cities as opposed to the realm of nature in the countryside. "From the eighteenth century onwards, Western liberal and socialist political philosophy has in general been strongly pro-urban."⁵

Liberal political economists, social thinkers and also Karl Marx seem to have shared the view that cities were the locus of progressive social change in occidental societies. They claimed that lack of development of urban centres and also lack of associated developments related to cities, like juridical autonomy, freedom, and trade and commerce, made the oriental societies different from the occidental ones. Therefore, the dynamics of the city-country

relationship was seen in a different light in the context of non-Western societies. Here the dominance of the central regions or cities grew out of the peculiar historical experiences of these societies. Let us now briefly look at how these issues were viewed by thinkers of various theoretical persuasions.

The British Liberal Political Economists and Historians

Adam Smith was one of the first to point out the role of cities in the transition to capitalism in the western context. While Smith was aware of the interdependence of agriculture, industry and trade for the progress of an industrial country, he placed considerable importance on 'the commerce of the towns.' Smith believed that in western countries the mercantile capital of the cities played a vital role in the transformation of the countryside and agriculture. His emphasis on the role of cities in the transformation of the landed society of the country is based on three points. Firstly, towns people were relatively freer than the country-dwellers, who were dominated by landlords. Secondly, monarchical authority provided more juridical freedom to city dwellers, and thirdly, there developed an interdependent division of labour, which was based on specialization. Smith also believed that economic individualism first took shape in urban centres, where profit seeking and risk taking became dominant traits of mercantile groups as against the consumption-centered economic outlook of the country people.⁶

Smith talked about the distinctive historical developments of eastern societies, where the sovereign had the monopoly or near-monopoly over the agricultural surplus. Smith, however, justified the state's involvement in the field of public works, for example, irrigation, in the case of Eastern societies. In short, Smith showed a sympathetic attitude towards the Asiatic system of social and political organization.

Political economists after Adam Smith also paid considerable attention to the Asiatic form of society and economy. James Mill, for example, shared many prevalent views about the orient. His treatment of the orient, especially India, was more exhaustive than Adam Smith's and he also reached a favorable conclusion towards the oriental system. With regard to the issue of oriental despotism, which was a popular theme in nineteenth century political thought, Mill viewed the Indian village organization to be its cause. To Mill, dynastic changes at the state level did not affect the village structure, and the near autonomy of the villages inhibited a sophisticated division of labour from taking place. But interestingly, Mill opted in favour of retaining the village organization and was opposed to the creation of a landed aristocracy on the European lines, based on the system of private property in land. He believed that the appropriation of surplus directly by the state, without intermediaries, would lead to more productivity and result in more benefits to the ryots (cultivators).⁷

John Stuart Mill took a different stand from that of his father and shared

the view that the state appropriation of the agricultural surplus would be an impediment to individual property rights. But he agreed with his father's view that the Asiatic societies were lacking dynamism and an inner logic to change their own system, without intervention by either foreign force or capital. He thereby viewed the colonization of India as a progressive step.⁸

Sir William Jones, a contemporary of the Mills, also agreed with the political economists of his time that the root cause of the problem of oriental societies was that the sovereign was the sole proprietor of the land, and that this gave rise to a relationship of dependence on the throne and undermined the development of individualism. Jones also suggested that the village system of organization was responsible for the static nature of Indian society. Village organization blocked the development of a sophisticated division of labour because of the village's isolation from the rest of the world, and also because of the existence of a hereditary and immutable division of labour. According to Jones, Asiatic societies were dependent on the sovereign and his nobles and the lack of development of urban corporations made the sovereign all powerful and created the environment for despotism.⁹

In medieval Europe, various professional groups emerged and gradually organized themselves into guilds, for example, merchant guilds, craft guilds, etc.; they made a tremendous contribution to the development of their polities.

Merchant guilds were concerned with the maximization of the volume of business, while the craft guilds were mainly concerned with the securing of a fair price for the products of their members, and also to maintain a satisfactory standard of workmanship. "Modern capitalism and socialism grew directly out of a milieu in which guilds were the cells of commercial and industrial life, one dominant mode of socio-economic organization."¹⁰

In the European case, Corporations and also Trade Unions (the nearest equivalents of medieval guilds) arose in response to the ethical and organizational problems of laissez-faire industrialization. Corporations were neither directly controlled by the state, nor did they conform to laissez-faire policies.¹¹ Many scholars, like Jones, as we will see below, argue that in non-European societies, it was the lack of these types of intermediary bodies which resulted in over-powered centres.

Sir Henry S. Maine, who had stayed in India for about seven years (1862-1869), in his capacity as a Law Member in the Viceroy's Council, also had a similar view about the Indian village organizations. Comparing the village organizations of the East and West, he notes that the sovereigns in Eastern societies enjoyed tremendous power in terms of the appropriation of agricultural surpluses, if compared with their western counterparts. He also notes the communal nature of property rights in the Eastern villages, and the passivity and submissiveness of the village folks.¹² These factors, according to Maine, were responsible for the lack of dynamism of the Eastern villages.

City and Country in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century French and German Political Thought

The peculiar historical development of Asiatic societies became a subject of rigorous analysis in French political thought as well. The French physiocrats, who believed that agriculture is the source of all value and capital accumulation, were supportive of the Asiatic system of social and political organization. The practice of the state's intervention in agriculture was one of the main reasons for the physiocrat's attraction towards the oriental system. Moreover, physiocrats were supportive of legal despotism in France.¹³

Montesquieu, who was opposed to the physiocratic ideas, used the concept of oriental despotism to justify his position against absolutism in France. Montesquieu's analysis of the rise of oriental despotism is very significant, because it had a tremendous impact upon later writers. Though influenced by Aristotle, Montesquieu gave a more refined interpretation of the oriental phenomenon. That geography can play a prominent role in shaping the nature of political life of a society became more pronounced in the writings of Montesquieu. In his account, the vastness of empires, in the Asian case, and lack of natural barriers, like mountains and seas, were primarily responsible for the emergence of despotism. Climate also played some role - the cold regions gave rise to strong nations. Non-geographical factors which influenced the emergence of despotism, according to Montesquieu, were laws and religion.¹⁴

That the theme of oriental despotism became popular with the nineteenth

century German political thinkers is evident in the writings of Hegel. In Hegel's opinion, the absence of individual rights and the lack of development of intermediary corporate bodies were responsible for the emergence of oriental despotism. According to Hegel, civilization first arose in the East because of the natural advantage of the use of water resources. The state in the orient emerged as the medium through which irrigation works were provided. Hegel considered the emergence of the state form of mediation in the river valley civilizations of the East as a definite advance in human civilization per se. However, the spirit of civilization soon reached its peak and could not proceed any further. Eventually, the spirit of civilization, or the world spirit, as Hegel calls it, moved from one geographical area to another. In geographical terms, Hegel argues, the world spirit moved from the East to the West in gradual phases. To him, the spirit of civilization started from India and China, but both of them were static and lacked cultural development. The spirit's next movement was to Persia, where civilization was no longer static; hence, Hegel regarded the Persians as the first world-historical people. For Hegel, history is the self-development of the spirit or reason. Viewing history from that angle, Hegel argued that the Persian civilization contributed to the development of the world-spirit, only to a limited extent. Freedom and consciousness, manifestations of the spirit, were very low in Persia. The civilization was characterized by despotism; and only the despot was free. With the coming of the spirit to Greece and later to Rome, the degree of freedom and consciousness increased. But a section of the people

still remained under bondage because slavery, as an institution, prevailed. However, when the spirit moved to the Germanic states, humanity achieved its full manhood in that everyone became free, and that was the final stage of development of the world-spirit.¹⁵

Though he differentiated between the city and the countryside, Hegel was mainly interested in the state form of organization. He argued that it was not the uniqueness of urban development but the unity of the city and country under the state form, which made the oriental societies distinct from the occidental ones. He also held that rural people contributed not rational economic inputs but ethical inputs.¹⁶ It can be mentioned here that Karl Marx, who, it is often said, turned the Hegelian logic upside down, retained many of Hegel's ideas with regard to oriental societies. Marx clearly sustained the Hegelian logic of the role of irrigation in early civilizations. But where Marx disagreed with Hegel was on the role and nature of the state vis-a-vis the civil society.

With this brief introduction, we can now proceed to examine how the city-country relationship and socio-political organizations of the East, particularly India, appeared in the writings of two later outstanding social thinkers - Karl Marx and Max Weber.

Marx and Weber on City-Country and Social Change in India

Rural development, being a multidisciplinary area, can fruitfully draw

upon the insights of both Marx and Weber. Their writings on India in particular have special relevance to the topic of our investigation. Weber differed significantly with Marx on some crucial issues like the role of the state, economy, religion, etc. in societies. Where Marx viewed class as the basis of social stratification, Weber viewed social stratification in terms of various dimensions: class (ownership), power (control), and status (prestige). To Weber, it was power, not class, which is the main determinant of the social stratification system. Weber foresaw that bureaucracy, the legal-rational form of organization, will dominate the societies of the future, and over time class considerations will become mute. Dahrendorf has shown that, in modern capitalist societies, growing separation of control from ownership has led to a situation where the concept of private property ownership has lost a good deal of its explanatory value.¹⁷ Dahrendorf's point, in fact, proves the accuracy of Weber's predictions.

There are several issues on which agreements between Marx and Weber are so conspicuous that they can not be overlooked. The uniqueness of Western civilization and the role of cities in the development of capitalism are two areas where they seem to show major agreements. Both of them followed a comparative method in their effort to theorize about the role of cities and countries, and the emergence of capitalism in general. Some writers argue that Weber had, in fact, modified and elaborated what was already implicit in Marx. We will discuss both thinkers. Let us start with Marx.

Marx, though relying on the nineteenth century developments of Western Europe for his theorizations, was to study non-Western civilizations in order to formulate a universal theory of history and an ambitious science of society, in which class struggle was considered to be the motor of change from one mode of production to another. Marx's emphasis on the role of class struggle is manifest in his various writings. For example, in their widely known work, The Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engels state that "The history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." One can make sense of this argument when one studies European history and societies, but a problem arises when one goes beyond the European boundaries. Asian history indeed makes this kind of generalization difficult and sometimes absurd, of which Marx was not completely unaware. At some places in his writings, Marx observes that Asian societies have no history, at least no known history.¹⁸ Asian societies were static, became stagnant and could not develop by the inner logic of their own systems. Therefore, to Marx, the British take-over of India was a progressive step, but he was aware of its adverse effects too.

He considered both regenerative and destructive effects of colonization. Marx believed that the introduction of railways and the institution of private property in land, etc. would be revolutionary in their effects. By promoting capitalism, they might usher in a new era in the stagnant society of India. It was simultaneously degenerative in the sense that colonization would destroy the indigenous production process and displace the local artisans and craftsmen

from their traditional occupations.¹⁹ Interestingly, Marx's prophesy about the degenerative effects of colonization happens to be true while his augury about the emergence of capitalism and progressive industrial revolution did not emerge in India, at least not during the colonial period.

Though Marx's analyses and observed interpretations about oriental societies, especially India, are penetrating and highly insightful, many of the premises on which his theories are based have come under serious criticisms in recent times. In the light of current research on oriental societies, and on India in particular, many of Marx's assumptions may be seriously doubted. Marx's formulation dealing with the static and stagnant orient is popularly known as the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP). His writings on India clearly demonstrate that he was heavily influenced by nineteenth century European political thought about the orient.

Marx, like most of his contemporaries, assumed the absence of private property in land to be an absolute fact about pre-colonial India, at least in his earlier writings. Many writers argue that Marx in his later years began to realize that the concept of the absence of the private ownership of land in ancient India was not wholly true. This absence of private ownership came under increasing suspicion with the translation, by indologists, of the works of Manu and Narada, two outstanding figures of ancient India.²⁰

Marx argued that in Asiatic societies it was the all- powerful state which was used to extract the agricultural surpluses directly from the peasantry. In

fact, he said, there was no differentiation between a tax and rent, and the two coincided, in the pre-capitalist Asian societies.²¹ But problems arise when Marx admitted that a state structure existed in ancient India, and not only existed, but provided and controlled the conditions of agriculture and irrigation. At the same time he posited that the Asian societies have no history because there existed no classes; in his scheme of things history has been defined as the class struggle. Moreover, Marx assumed the state as a form of class domination. In that case the question can be reasonably raised as to how an instrument of class domination came into existence where there existed no classes. Marx's idea that village organizations have given rise to despotism has also been questioned on logical grounds. At many points of his writings, Marx argued that it is the form of domination in Asia that determined the form of surplus extraction, not vice-versa. Then the question arises, if the form of surplus extraction does not determine the form of domination, how could the village form of organization become the root of despotism? ²² In Asia the form of domination (the landlord state) determined the form of surplus extraction. As the state, in its capacity as sovereign and as landlord, collected the surplus, there was no differentiation between the tax and rent. Therefore, it is the overriding state, a form of political domination, which determined the nature of the surplus extraction. In that case, it is the political domination which is responsible for the lack of differentiation and consequently for the non-emergence of a progressive division of labour. But elsewhere Marx argued

differently and held the village organization responsible for the non-emergence of a systematic division of labour, and hence for the stagnation of India. These problems remain and can not, in fact, be resolved satisfactorily despite the best efforts of Marxist writers.²³ Though Marx's formulations about the Asiatic or oriental societies, based on the information available in the nineteenth century, need to be reexamined and reformulated in the light of the present findings and understandings of ancient Indian history, there is no denying that Marx went to the heart of the problem. Marx's focus on the central role of the state in providing the conditions of agriculture and irrigation in early India is not without substance. Harbans Mukhia notes that the famous Sudarshana Lake in Gujarat, constructed by the Sakas and the Guptas, has a history of 800 years of service to the community. In Orissa, the Nandas constructed and maintained canals for irrigation purposes. This is also evidenced by Magasthene's accounts on India, where he mentions state officials in charge of the distribution of canal water. Many emperors, for example, Firuz Tughlaq in the seventeenth century, undertook similar efforts during the medieval period.²⁴

While admitting that Marx's arguments are not without foundation, Mukhia points to the fact that Marx overlooked individual peasant initiative and gave too much emphasis to the role of the state. He also refers to the fact that in the post-Mauryan period, especially the Gupta period, share cropping and individual farming became commonplace. The sudras²⁵ were transformed into petty producers.²⁶ During the Gupta period, the regions enjoyed so much

autonomy from the centre that some students of ancient Indian history argue that feudalism existed during the Gupta period.²⁷

Marx's argument about the Asian cities that they were princely camps and more centres of consumption by princes and nobles than centres of business and commerce has also been debated extensively. To dispute this Marxian concept, it can be stated that there were many cities in India which grew not as consumption centres of princes and nobles or princely camps, but as religious centres, for example, Madurai in Tamil Nadu, South India, and Vanaras in North India.²⁸

Marx's assumption of the self-sufficiency of Indian villages has also been criticized by contemporary social scientists. Bipan Chandra, who has done extensive research on Marxian theories on Asiatic societies, notes that maybe it is true that Indian villages were relatively self-sufficient, but, to him, European villages were also not very different during the medieval period. He also points to the fact that the assumption of communal ownership in pre-colonial India is misleading; individual ownership existed side by side with communal ownership. The centralized state never did play any extra-ordinary role for the management of irrigation agriculture, as many have led us to believe. He also argues that centralization was never uniform in the history of ancient India. The Mauryan empire, for example, was highly centralized but the Gupta empire was highly decentralized. He also disputes Marx's point that the British take-over of India was a progressive step. According to him, Indian

society prior to the British take-over was a crisis-ridden society; crises were due to contradictory inner forces. Commodity production, based on a cash nexus, in both agriculture and industry, and also the accumulation of huge merchant capital, became the dominant features of the period. He concludes that the system was very much pregnant with change and far from being stagnant.²⁹

Marx's support of India's colonization by the British can be better understood if we put it in the context of his theoretical position with regard to industrialization and the transition to capitalism in particular. In his early writings on the transition to capitalism, Marx placed considerable importance on cities and mercantile capital. In the German Ideology, Marx compared cities with mental labour and the countryside with manual labour and immovable property, dependent on exchange. Marx attributed progressive qualities to cities in the sense that economic, political and cultural functions are highly differentiated in cities, as opposed to agrarian situations.³⁰

In his later works, he revised his previous position and concluded that mere mercantile capital was not enough for transition to capitalism: commodification of labour power was also necessary. Still, Marx is considered by many as pro-industry and anti-agriculture in terms of his theorizations.³¹ If viewed in this context, Marx's comments on the Indian village system should not sound very surprising. Marx considered village organizations, Asiatic villages in particular, as breeding grounds for all kinds of superstition and parochialism. "Moreover, in Marx's account the Asiatic village community was

a fossilized form of one of the earliest and most primitive forms of social organization; within it the principle of individuality had not yet developed, it also perpetuated man's subordination to nature and to tradition which ruled him as a natural force."³² But later, Marx recognized some positive sides of village organization as well, especially the system of mutual defence against exploitation.³³ However, Marx was anti-village both in terms of his assumptions and recommendations.

Let us now look at Indian development as viewed by another outstanding social thinker, Max Weber. We will return to Marx after a discussion of Ghandi's philosophy of village development at the end of this section.

Weber had more data on India at his disposal than did Marx. With the data available to him Weber seems to have grasped the complexities of the land tenure patterns and the village mode of organization better than Marx. He talked about villages where individuals had ownership in land, called ryotwari villages; and where an individual overlord was in charge of tax-farming, called zemindari villages.³⁴ While Weber recognized a variety of forms of property in land, his main concern was to draw a distinction between decentralized personal rights in feudalism and centralized impersonal rights in prebendalism. "In feudalism militarised landlords, united by oaths of mutual responsibility, were organised to protect themselves and their property against external invasion and internal rebellions and uprisings."³⁵ Also, landlords could employ professional warriors in their service. In contrast to the functional autonomy enjoyed by the landlords

in feudalism, the localized power of feudal cavalries was strongly checked by the state army in prebendalism.³⁶ In the case of the prebendalism it was the state which had the rights in land and which controlled the allocation of landed properties in exchange for military service. Hereditary rights in land were either absent or existed along with the depersonalized property of state officials.³⁷

Weber specifically notes the lack of development of cities and burgher associations in India, and generally in oriental countries. He placed exceptional importance on the nature of the evolution of western cities and burgher associations. According to Weber:

...To develop into a city commune, a settlement had to be of the non-agricultural, commercial type, at least to a relative extent, and to be equipped with the following features: (1) a fortification; (2) a market; (3) its own court of law and, at least in part autonomous law; (4) an associated structure and connected therewith, (5) at least partial autonomy and autocephaly which includes administration by authorities in whose appointment the burghers could in some way participate. In the past, such rights almost always took the form of privileges of an "estate" (stand), hence the characteristic of the city in the political definition was the appearance of a distinct "bourgeois" estate.³⁸

Following his own criteria, Weber concludes that Asian cities did not qualify as cities in the real sense. The citizenship status and the independence of burghers were completely lacking in the Asian case.

However, Weber admitted that India made considerable advance in some

rational sciences like mathematics, grammar and philosophy, but still failed to develop capitalist institutions on its own. Weber attributed this failure mainly to what he called a peculiar "Indian spirit." Two important underlying forces which shaped this Indian spirit were: magical tradition and the caste system. The Karma doctrine and the theory of Reincarnation reinforced the idea among the people that one's relative position in society is the outcome of his/her work in the previous birth. Any deviation from the caste rule may result in a still lower position in the next rebirth. According to Weber, the Karma doctrine, grounded in the caste hierarchy, prohibited the development of competition, much needed for the rise of capitalist institutions.³⁹

Breaking with the caste hierarchy was virtually impossible; the doctrine kept all castes in their own confines. Therefore, what happened was the historical reproduction of these structures without adequate social mobility and dynamism. The *Gemeinschaft* mode of organization, as found in Indian villages, did not allow the development of individualism. Weber argues that the Karma doctrine is one of the most consistent systems of theodicy ever found in the history of religions. But its negative aspects outweighed the positive aspects.

At this point we should also consider the views of Mohandas K. Gandhi, the prominent Indian social thinker and activist, who had a distinctive interpretation of the city-country relationship in the context of Indian society. A study of rural development or village development will remain incomplete if it does not take into account the vision of a man who in the first half of the

twentieth century not only created history in India but also became familiar throughout the world.

Gandhi on the Indian Village System

Gandhi saw the impact of colonialism in India, and elsewhere, in his lifetime. His philosophy of rural development, though sounding impractical at first, is not devoid of reality. He wanted a total transformation of the society by emancipating the masses and uplifting human values, however in his own ways. He differed substantially with the crude materialism of western political economy and also of Marxism. He neither agreed with the Marxian interpretation of the class struggle as the motor of change, nor did he approve of western capitalism, which has given rise to a system of ruthless competition for profit. He had a vision of an ideal society, characterized by distributive justice, where there would be class fusion, not class struggle. This is because of his emphasis on moral and ethical issues rather than on the material component of civilization. "Whatever did not contribute to the observance of morality was not worth possessing."⁴⁰ It is against this background that we should try to understand Gandhian thought on economic aspects of society. His economic thought was conditioned by his broader views on humanism and civilization.

"The starting point of Gandhi's reflections on India's economic problem was the contrast between town and country, which had made a deep impression on his mind."⁴¹ Gandhi, like other thinkers, was influenced by dominant

thoughts of his own time; Dadabhai Naoroji's drain theory is one of them.⁴² Naoroji's primary concern was with the drainage of resources from India to Britain, which was, to him, the main reason for India's poverty and underdevelopment; he mentioned the internal drain of resources as well. He spoke of two Indias - one rich and prosperous, and the other poverty-stricken. By the first, he meant the colonial masters and by the second, he referred to the colonial subjects of India. About the second, he says:

This India bled and exploited in every way of their wealth, of their services, of their land, labour and all resources by the foreigners - This India of Indians becomes the poorest country in the world after 150 years of British rule.⁴³

This theme was picked up by Gandhi and found an important place in his economic philosophy. In Gandhi's understanding, villagers were helpless victims of this ruthless exploitation. The exploitation took its worst form during the colonial rule in India. He also argued that towns or cities contributed to the exploitation of villages. In his words:

I regard the growth of the cities an evil thing, unfortunate for mankind and the world, unfortunate for England, and certainly unfortunate for India. The British have exploited India through the cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built.⁴⁴

Gandhi wanted to see an end to this injustice and exploitation. This, he thought, was possible through preserving and promoting village organizations. Therefore, his support for them was unequivocal.

Moreover, in terms of methodology, Gandhi stood in fundamental contrast with Marx and also with the liberal political economists. Unlike Marx, Gandhi gave a different interpretation of the introduction of railways in India. In his opinion, railways made exploitation of the countryside easier, and were responsible for the destruction of the self-sufficiency of villages. Railways also made possible the penetration of foreign goods into remote village areas thereby destroying the indigenous handicrafts. Therefore, he considered the introduction of railways by the British as a trap.⁴⁵

Gandhi's overriding concern was to preserve the village form of organization at all costs, whereas Marx and liberal political economists considered it as a primitive and fossilized form of organization, responsible for the stagnation of Asian societies. The following remark by Gandhi vividly demonstrates how different his approach was from others:

If the village perishes, India will perish too...
We have to make a choice between India of the villages
that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities
which are a creation of foreign domination.⁴⁶

Gandhi had more to say on the system of Indian village organization than any one else we have referred to above. It is because Gandhi had to face the practical issues in a new born country, of which he was a guide and philosopher. Whereas liberal political economists, Marx and Weber dealt with the Indian development at a theoretical level, Gandhi had to go beyond the theoretical domain because he was practically involved with mundane issues

like decentralization, rural development and participation. Gandhi envisioned a model of rural development in which social justice would be the main guiding norm. As mentioned before, he considered the villages as the main focus of development, and wanted villagers to participate in their own affairs in the spirit of self-help and self-reliance. Decentralization occupied a central place in the Gandhian model of rural development. Gandhi rejected the hierarchical form of social and work organizations and in their place advocated autonomous villages, which would be organically linked to the centre by the principle of integration. He called this model of organization the "oceanic circle." The Gandhian concept of decentralization, to be precise, is characterized by four features. They are: firstly, a concern for self-reliance; secondly, villages as the base of decentralization; thirdly, the urge for self-rule and self-control; and fourthly, the image of society as an oceanic circle having no top and bottom.⁴⁷

All of these are lofty as ideals and precious as values to be cherished. But the question arises: Can a single country achieve a topless/bottomless social structure in the real world situation, given the world's existing form of socio-economic systems? Moreover, what would be the role of the field administration in the Gandhian model of rural development? Gandhi seems to have given no attention to it whatsoever. This crucial question deserves closer scrutiny. Yet, at the end of the twentieth century when developing countries are still searching for development alternatives suited to their needs, the Gandhian perspective may provide them an alternative option to consider.

In conclusion, Gandhi presents an altogether different vision of issues related to the Indian villages. The varying opinions we have discussed above can be placed into two streams of thought - Gandhian vs. others. These two fundamentally different streams of ideas bring us to a seminal question: Whether to preserve or to dismantle the village mode of organization. Should the objective of rural development be to attain self-sufficiency for villages or to enmesh them in a dynamic web of relationships through gradual urbanization?

City and Country in Modern Development Theories

This debate concerning the urban and rural sectors entered the development literature somewhat differently after the 1960s. One of the telling reasons for the re-emergence of this old theme was the recurrent failure of the new countries to promote the socio-economic condition of their people. Rene Dumont in his famous study False Start in Africa (1966) argues that the administration in African countries is multiplying rapidly, simply adding to general costs and absorbing a major share of their limited internal resources. The middle classes, in general, are contributing very little to the process of production.⁴⁸ H. J. Mamalakis, in his attempt to analyze the slow growth of the Latin American economies since the 1930s, attributed this failure to sectoral clashes between agriculture and industry. However, he took industry to be the

basic unit of analysis, and argued that it is the clash between and among industrial sectors, not between the class or functional income groups, which is responsible for the slow growth of the Latin American countries.⁴⁹

Though Mamalakis is one of the first among modern development theorists to address the issue of the rural-urban divide and its impact upon development, Michael Lipton's work has become more widely known because of its clarity and comprehensiveness of scope. Lipton explains the persistence of abject poverty in developing countries in terms of the concept of 'urban bias.' The model can be best understood in his own words:

In essence, the urban bias hypothesis is that the main reason why poor people stay poor in developing countries is as follows. Small interlocking urban elites - comprising mainly businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats, trade union leaders and a supporting staff of professionals, academics and intellectuals - can in a modern state substantially control the distribution of resources. In the great majority of developing countries such urban elites spearheaded the fight against the colonizing power. Partly for this reason the urban elites formed, and have since dominated, the institutions of independence - government, political parties, law, civil service, trade unions, education, business organizations, and many more. But the power of the urban elite in a modern state is determined not by its economic role alone, but by its capacity to organize, centralize and control...Rural people while much more numerous than urban people, are also much more dispersed, poor, inarticulate and unorganized...On the whole, rural groups fight each other, locally; nationally they seek to join or to use urban power and income, not to seize that power and income for the rural sector.⁵⁰

According to Lipton, the most important struggle in modern developing

countries is not between classes or between capital and labour, but between sectors, which is responsible for the persistent underdevelopment of these countries. Lipton observes:

The state is acting as an executive committee, but for managing the common affairs not of capitalists but of townspeople: not a bourgeois state but a burghers state. Communist development, like capitalist development, draws from the farm sector into the cash nexus in ways making it dependent on the city; communist states, like capitalist states, in the interests of primitive accumulation in early development, manipulate prices to increase the resource drain out of the villages.⁵¹

Lipton's arguments are stimulating, challenging and appealing, but vulnerable to serious criticisms from different schools. He antagonizes not only Marxists, by challenging class analysis, but also the supporters of dependency analysis, by attaching no importance to the external variables related to the underdevelopment of the TWCs.

Criticisms are directed against Lipton from various angles. T. J. Byres argues that despite Lipton's attempts to reject class analysis, he introduces it in various parts of his own analysis. Another major criticism is that Lipton's own admission of the fact that rural rich benefit from the existing situation in the TWCs, is not in agreement with his own theory. The urban class forms an alliance with the rural rich in order to ensure cheap supplies of food and raw materials. According to Lipton, resource allocation to the sectors of industry and agriculture is highly disproportionate. Higher allocation to the industrial sector is not only inequitable but also inefficient because, according to him, the

capital-output ratio is higher in agriculture than in industry. He also argues that policies in the poor countries get approved not because they are pro-industry, but because they are pro-urban. As Lipton points out:

The 60 to 80% of the people dependent on agriculture are still allocated barely 20% of public resources... So long as the elite's interests, background and sympathies remain predominantly urban, the countryside may get the priority but the city will get the resources.⁵²

Lipton's argument of sectoral bias against agriculture has also been challenged on empirical grounds. Ashok Mitra in his case study of India argues that exactly the opposite has happened in India during the 1960s. According to Mitra, it is not the 'urban bias' but the 'rural bias,' that was responsible for the low growth of the Indian economy during the time period of his study. T. J. Byres also puts forth similar arguments and shows that considerable resource transfer takes place from the urban to the rural sector.⁵³ Recently a Bangladeshi economist also questioned the validity of Lipton's urban bias theory, on empirical grounds, in the context of Bangladesh.⁵⁴ She demonstrates that tax incidence and income differentials between the rural and urban sectors are not as high as is supposed. Moreover, considerable resource transfer takes place from the latter to the former. She concludes that her evidence proves the fact that there are problems in applying the theory universally. Mick Moore also points out that, in some cases, it is not possible to equate 'urban' with 'industrial' and 'rural' with 'agricultural' activities. Referring to a study done by S. P. S. Ho (1982), Moore illustrates this point. In 1930, much of the

manufacturing employment in Taiwan and South Korea was in rural areas. Even in 1970, the share of manufacturing employment remained quite significant in rural areas in the above countries.⁵⁵

As regards industrialization, Lipton is not opposed to it, but he argues that a well-developed agriculture should be the prerequisite to the development of other sectors. He also carefully distances himself from the populists, whom he regards as absolutely anti-industrial, and identifies the nineteenth century English romantic poets, Gandhi and Maine as populists. However, despite his attempts to distance himself, he comes very close to the populists in terms of his theoretical position. Some of his thoughts are close to Gandhi's, if not identical.

The above are the major analytical orientations from which we have drawn insights for the purposes of this study. Reliance on an eclectic approach, as the one we have used, is not only helpful in understanding the related issues better, but also provides the advantage of combining the strong points of several dominant approaches while at the same time minimizing their weaknesses. With this brief prelude, we will now, in the following section, make a short review of the other studies, closely relevant to our topic, along with a justification of this study.

B. Other Studies on the Subject

Two studies, both done in the 70s, have close relevance to our study. The first is E. L. Tepper's Rural Development and Administration in East Pakistan (1970),⁵⁶ and the other is A. F. Raper's Rural Development in Action (1970).⁵⁷ The former study attempts to analyze the pattern of evolution and the nature of the administration at the local levels in the then East Pakistan (present Bangladesh). It focuses on the interactional patterns of government officials and elected representatives at various levels of administration. Tepper noticed the centralizing tendencies of the administrative pattern and expressed cautious optimism about the institution-building efforts which were under way in the Basic Democracies System and the Comilla model of rural development. The second study is more exclusively on the Comilla pattern of rural development. Its treatment of the Comilla model is quite comprehensive but it does not take into account the socio-political implications of various projects experimented with under the model. In other words, the study does not deal with the political environment of the Comilla experiments adequately.

Let me briefly explain the main features of the Comilla model at this point because, as we will see later, it bears close resemblance to the present upazila administration. In the year 1959, an Academy was set up in Comilla by the name East Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (EPARD). The Academy was allotted a thana, named Kotwali, for the purposes of

experimenting with rural development models. The Academy, under the able guidance of Akhter Hameed Khan, a former ICS officer, successfully devised certain institutions, mainly based at the thana level. The institutions - Thana Central Cooperative Association (TCCA), Rural Works Programme (RWP), Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP), and Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) - all taken together came to be known as the Comilla model of rural development.

There are quite a few other works on local administration and rural development in Bangladesh which are related to the topic of our investigation. To begin with, Najmul Abedin's Local Administration and Politics in Modernising Societies: Bangladesh and Pakistan (1972)⁵⁸ is a closely relevant work. Abedin tries to analyze the changing pattern of local administration and government and their relation to politics in the post-liberation Pakistan and Bangladesh with an historical introduction to the evolution of the district administration system. Because his major focus is on district administration, thana administration (upazila in our case) did not get adequate attention. This is more or less the same situation with A. M. M. Shawkat Ali's Field Administration and Rural Development in Bangladesh (1982).⁵⁹ He analyzed the collectorial pattern of administration, which is the same as the district administration, with special reference to the collector's role in rural development. This study, like the previous one, takes note of thana administration only in so far as it relates to the collectorial pattern and nowhere

is it a main focus of attention. Another study which has some close relevance is Ahmed Shafiqul Huque's The Problem of Local Government Reform in Bangladesh: The Failure of Swanirvar Gram Sarkar (1984).⁶⁰ As the title suggests, this study is about Gram Sarkar (village government), practised for a very short period in Bangladesh before the introduction of the upazila scheme. Huque analyses the failure of local government reform efforts with particular focus on the villages, the lowest level of rural administration. His study is closely relevant to ours in the sense of being an examination of grass-roots level administration, although our object of study, the upazila, is not the same. Another study which comes close to ours, in terms of the field and subject matter it addresses, is Shaikh Maqsood Ali et al. Decentralization and People's Participation in Bangladesh (1983).⁶¹ It is one of the most comprehensive studies available to date on this subject. It endeavors to analyze the process and impact of the decentralization measures undertaken by various regimes in the post-liberation Bangladesh. However, as the field research for the study was completed by 1980, the upazila administration did not come under its purview.

In the meantime, several works on the topic have come out. One of them is Yusuf Hyder's Development: The Upazila Way (1986),⁶² which is probably the first significant work on the subject proper. In his capacity as a senior bureaucrat, the author of the book had various occasions to visit 40 upazilas, and make a statistical enquiry in 23 of them. As one of the first attempts in a new field, the book is a commendable exercise. What the author tried to

accomplish in the book can be better expressed in his own words:

I have attempted to show what miracle the Upazila can do in the way of economic growth accompanied by equity within a matter of five years. The secret behind the magic lies in the will of the people to improve their lot by thrift and hard work and by playing their pioneering role in the development process.⁶³

The book contains an impressive description of what the author has experienced from his tours of the newly created upazilas, and what he thinks can be accomplished if common people whole-heartedly cooperate for the implementation of the various programmes under the upazila scheme. What is lacking, however, is a sociological understanding of the problems and prospects of the peoples's participation issue, which he thinks so essential for the success of the upazila scheme. Moreover, a philosophical understanding of structural problems, specifically, with regard to the process of administration and change in the rural areas of Bangladesh is to a major extent absent. The author seems to be aware of this when he says, "I am not an academician and I must admit that this book is not meant to be academic. Hence the academicians may look at it from the users' point of view. The users are the people of the Upazilas and their officials."⁶⁴

Another recently published work is A. M. M. Shawkat Ali's Politics, Development and Upazila (1986).⁶⁵ The author, being the Member Secretary of the Committee on Administrative Reorganization/Reform (1982), has been involved with the upazila administration since its birth, and even before that. The main emphasis of his work is on the politico-administrative problems,

which began to appear after the upazila scheme came into operation. The author takes into account the various complexities of the socio-political process and their bearing on the administrative reform, in particular, and the administrative system, in general. The scope of the book, however, is confined to political actors, that is, government functionaries and public representatives only. The framework of decentralization used in the book precludes the Non-government Organizations (NGO), which many students of decentralization believe could play a significant role in the development of rural areas. Moreover, though the importance of the socialization process has been recognized, the author does not pay adequate attention to the education and training needs of the upazila functionaries.

Another book of relevance and also of interest is M. Faizullah's Development of Local Government in Bangladesh (1987).⁶⁶ The book is a collection of several articles by the author, published in various journals, at different time periods. Of various subjects covered in the book, only a few chapters, dealing with the upazila, are of close relevance to us. The most important part in the discussion on the upazila is the chapter on 'Financial Management of the Upazila Parishad.' While the author elaborately discusses the financial aspect of the upazila administration, discussions on the other dimensions are not at all adequate.

Another recently completed work is a thesis, titled Coordination of BRDB Programmes at Upazila Level in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Three

Selected Upazilas (1987), by Shahnaz Khan.⁶⁷ As the title suggests the thesis deals with only the coordination aspect of the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) at the Upazila level. Therefore, a philosophical understanding of the problems and prospects of the upazila scheme is, by definition, outside the scope of this thesis.

C. Justification of our Study

It is now clear that most of the studies referred to above gave only marginal attention to the thana/upazila administration. Moreover, almost all these studies began their discussion of the historical development of local bodies with the British colonial period (1757-1947), or in some cases the Mughal period (1526-1757). This study will go further back than the British and Mughal periods and will employ a socio-historical approach to explore the politics of rural development and administrative reorganization.

The upazila administration, as an attempt towards building a viable institution for the promotion of local government and rural development, must be scrutinized from a broader perspective for obvious reasons. Firstly, institutionalization is neither an easy task, nor can it be achieved overnight. Therefore, it is desirable that institutionalization takes place in the right area, at the right level and in the right direction. Secondly, frequent changes in major administrative arrangements are too costly for a resource-poor country like

Bangladesh. Therefore, it becomes apparent that recognition of the proper problem and constant evaluations and appraisals of new organizational arrangements are of crucial importance. This dissertation will attempt such an evaluation and appraisal with regard to the upazila administration.

In short, this study will be helpful in several ways. Firstly, it will fill a gap in our knowledge about the current micro-level rural development administration of Bangladesh. Secondly, it will reach some conclusions about the philosophical, socio-economic and political rationale of the upazila administration. Thirdly, it will contribute towards a better understanding of the role of the upazila administration and of its problems and prospects for institutionalization from a broader intellectual horizon. We hope that it will also provide some help to the present and future political architects and policy planners of Bangladesh and to the other LDCs facing similar problems.

D. Research Procedure and Methods

The main approach we have relied upon in this study is socio-historical. Simply stated, the approach calls for a sociologist's historical vision or, conversely, a historian's sociological imagination.⁶⁸ Apart from the socio-historical investigation, some empirical research has also been used.

For collecting the needed information, field research was undertaken during the period of Fall, 1988. The main purpose of the field research was the

collection of government publications, the conducting of opinion surveys of various actors in the field, and observations of the workings of the upazila system. However, the field work did not go as smoothly as I had hoped because of some abnormal circumstances prevailing in the country at that time. The country was hit by one of the worst floods in Bangladesh's history, during the rainy season of 1988. About two-thirds of the country was submerged and one quarter of the total population was rendered homeless.

I encountered some serious difficulties because of this flood situation and its immediate after effects. I left Toronto for Dhaka on September 4th and reached Karachi on 5th September. In Karachi, I learned that flights to Bangladesh had been suspended until the Dhaka airport became fit for landing. There was no alternative but to wait. I saw quite a few people, coming from various places, also stranded like myself. I spent eight days in a hotel nearby the airport, waiting; and finally, left Karachi on the 13th of September in the morning, and reached Dhaka in the afternoon on the same day. However, the situation within the country was equally dreadful. The capital city, where the international airport is located, remained disconnected from the rest of the country except by domestic flights. Airplanes were so few in number that it was almost impossible for the Bangladesh Biman (the only airline in the country) to handle the passenger overload despite the arrangement of some extra flights.

I was a Chittagong-bound passenger; the ticket was bought and confirmed beforehand so that I would not have to face any troubles on the way. But,

unexpected changes occurred; and due to the changes, my flight reservation from Dhaka to Chittagong was cancelled. I was again thrown into an uncertain situation. If I had to wait for the reconfirmation of the flight, it could have taken me days, if not weeks, as hundreds of people were on the waiting list. What I was worried about was that I was losing time from the fixed period I had allocated for the data collection.

I approached the booking office at the airport several times, but to no avail. After all attempts failed, I decided to approach a senior official in the airport, as a last attempt. Fortunately, I got a sympathetic consideration from him. He assured me of possible help, but repeatedly made it clear that there was no guarantee that he could do something on the same day. Here again the option open was to wait, because there was no alternative communication link available at that time. I waited for the whole day inside the airport and finally the good news came. The officials had been able to arrange something for me. Thanks to them, I left for Chittagong as the last passenger of the last flight on that day.

After reaching Chittagong, I was in a position to start my preparatory work. I also got a chance to talk to a few people who could give me some assistance. One of the persons I consulted, before starting the field-work, was a member of the Committee on Administrative Reorganization and Reforms (CARR), which gave the blueprint of the upazila scheme - the topic I was investigating for my dissertation. One of his suggestions was that very much the

same thing that I had planned to do could be done by doing primary research in one upazila only.

I also got some suggestions, especially with regard to the type of perception study to be used, from my friends and colleagues who had close familiarity with the subject. Their opinion was that the best way for me to conduct the perception study would be to use a structured type of questionnaire, instead of an unstructured one as I had planned. The problem with the latter, they argued, would be the low rate of return. They also pointed out that if questions were not put in simple form, with alternative answers, from which to choose one, there was less chance of getting responses from the target groups, especially since the flood situation had added some work load to most upazila level functionaries.

I realized the importance of their points and accepted most of the above suggestions with regard to the research design. Following their suggestions, I made some other changes. Initially, I had a plan to cover all the administrative divisions of the country, namely, Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Khulna. But finally, I had to keep the study limited only to the first two divisions, because to start field work, I had to wait until the situation improved. The communication links, like railways and buses, became operative after the necessary repairs of railway lines, roads and highways, which were damaged by the flood water. Though communication resumed, travelling to remote areas remained very difficult for quite some time. One of the worst effects of the

flood was the pollution of the water supply. The scarcity of safe drinking water and the spread of water-borne diseases like diarrhoea made travelling risky. However, the situation gradually turned better with the passage of time through relentless efforts of the government agencies, the army and non-government organizations, both local and international.

In order to look at the impact of decentralization on rural development, two upazilas, one from each of the two divisions, were chosen for detailed examination. Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used. Collecting data on various aspects of politics and administration in a country like Bangladesh is highly problematic for at least two reasons: the meagerness of published statistics and information for the use of the public, and the tradition of maintaining secrecy. Despite these limitations, an attempt was made to collect as much data as possible.

Because of the meagerness of primary documents, considerable reliance was placed on interviews with concerned officials in the field. These included: government officers of various nation-building departments, placed at the upazila level, elected representatives at that level, and non-government organization officials. Questions covered broad areas like the perception of the various actors about rural development, decentralization and the participatory approach to problem solving. Respondents were specially requested to give their views in the space provided in the questionnaire, or to attach extra sheets, wherever needed.⁶⁹ They were requested to list their own views if the answers

provided in the questionnaire did not reflect their opinion. Some of the respondents filled out the questionnaire on the spot, while the majority preferred to fill it out later, at their convenience.

As indicated earlier, the questionnaire covered various aspects of rural development, including decentralization and participation. The following is an illustrative list of the questions included in the questionnaire and discussed with the respondents wherever possible. How do the government officials view the phenomenon of rural development? What, according to them, should be the role of the field administration for rural development? How do they view the role of the elected representatives and non-government organizations for rural development? What do they think to be the main obstacles for rural development efforts? What kind of problems do they, as civil servants, encounter in performing their duties? Do the local elected representatives create problems for them? If yes, of what kind? and what are some of them? Are there interdepartmental rivalries? If yes, what kind of problems do they cause? What are their recommendations as solutions to these problems? In the upazila scheme, where the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) is supposed to work as the staff officer of the elected upazila chairman, what do the civil servants, including the UNO think about it? Should the UNO have the controlling authority over the other officials representing various departments? Do they think that they have sufficient training to handle affairs of rural development? If not, what kind of training do they think is desirable to accomplish their work

in the field? What do they think about the people's involvement in policy implementation matters? Is the upazila an adequate organizational arrangement for taking administration closer to the people, as claimed? Do they think that the influential civil servants will avoid taking employment at the upazila level? If given a choice to take employment at the upazila or district level, which one would they consider first and why? How do they view team management and what, according to them, is its prospect as an organizational mode at the upazila level? Would they like the military to sit in the decision-making bodies either as voting or non-voting members? What are their reasons for approving or disapproving such proposals?

The elected representatives were asked to give their views about the performance of bureaucracy and the NGOs. And their opinions about the problems and prospects of citizen involvement were also surveyed. Answers to these kinds of questions were helpful in understanding how actors presently operating in the field view each other's role. Cross examinations of various actors revealed some strengths and weaknesses of the newly instituted upazila arrangement. It is hoped that the responses of these direct actors in the field will offer some guidelines for the formulation and implementation of viable strategies, as well as for the improvement of the present strategies and designs.

In addition to the primary sources, all available secondary sources of data were explored. The main sources in this case were: (a) books, (b) journals, (c) government publications, e.g., Five Year Plans, Annual Development Plans,

Committee/Commission Reports, Census Reports, Government Ordinances, and Manuals; and (d) unpublished dissertations.

Endnotes:

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2. Robert J. Holton, Cities, Capitalism and Civilization (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 14.
3. Gandhi is often compared with Ruskin, Goldsmith, and Tolstoy. For a discussion on Gandhi and Tolstoy, see Martin Green, The Challenge of the Mahatmas (N. Y: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), pp. 3-30.
4. R. J. Holton, op. cit., p. 4.
5. Ibid., p. 11.
6. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
7. Marian Sawyer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 30-31.
8. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
9. Ibid., pp. 34-39.
10. Anthony Black, Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought From the 12th Century to the Present (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 11.
11. Ibid., p. 220.
12. See H. S. Maine, Village Communities in the East and West (London: Murray, 1881), Chapter IV, "The Eastern Village Community."
13. Marian Sawyer, op. cit., p. 22.
14. Ibid., pp. 12-16.
15. Rolf Gruner, Philosophies of History: A Critical Essay (London: Gower Publishing, 1985), p. 63.
16. R. J. Holton, op. cit., p. 41.

17.Keith Hoggart and H. Buller, Rural Development: A Geographical Perspective (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 34.

18.For details on this point, see Shlomo Avineri (ed.), Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization (N. Y.: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1968).

19.See Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," in Shlomo Avineri (ed.), op. cit.

20.Many classical Sanskrit works have been translated by Indologists and were published by the MaxMuller Foundation in a series under the title 'Mystery Books of the East.' Another source is Chola land records.

21.H. Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis," in D. Banerjee (ed.) Marxian Theory and Third World (New York: Sage Publications, 1985), p. 126.

22.Ibid., p. 127.

23.Heinz Lubasz, op. cit., p. 126.

24.Harbans Mukhia, "Marx on Pre-colonial India: An Evaluation," in D. Banerjee (ed.), op. cit., p. 176.

25.The lowest caste in the caste hierarchy.

26.Harbans Mukhia "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3, 1985, p. 101.

27.See, for example, R. S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, c. 1000-1500 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1965); R. S. Sharma and D. N. Jha "The Economic History of India Up to A. D. 1200: Trends and Prospects," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 17 (Part I), 1974, pp. 48-80; R. S. Sharma (1985) "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?" Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.12, Nos. 2 & 3, pp. 19-43; D. D. Kosambi (1975) An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975); Buddha Prakash, "A Debated Question: The Genesis and Character of Landed Aristocracy in Ancient India," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 14, 1971, pp. 196-220.

28.See Bardwell Smith and H. B. Reynolds, The City as a Sacred Centre (New York: E. J. Brill, 1987).

29. See Bipan Chandra, "Karl Marx: His Theories of Asian Societies and Colonial Rule," in Marion O'Callaghan (ed.) Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism (UNESCO, 1985).

30. R. J. Holton, op. cit., p. 42.

31. See D. Mitrany, Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951).

32. Quoted in Sawyer, op. cit., p. 63.

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36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., pp. 203-204.

38. Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. Ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (N. Y. : Beelmunter Press, 1968), p. 1226.

39. Andreas Buss, "Max Weber's Contributions to Questions of Development in Modern India," in his (ed.) Max Weber in Asian Studies (London: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 8-27.

40. Gandhi quoted in T. K. Unnithan, Gandhi and Social Change (Jaipur: Rawat, 1979), p. 97.

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42. B. N. Ganguli, Dadabhai Naoroji and the Drain Theory (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965); V. Shamugasundaram, The Drain Theory (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1968).

43. Naoroji quoted in Ganguli (1973) op. cit., p. 183.

44. Gandhi quoted in ibid., p. 187.
45. A. M. Shah, "The Gandhian Approach to Rural Development," Ideas and Action (FAO Bulletin # 125, 1978), p. 3.
46. Gandhi quoted in ibid.
47. Vijay Ranjan Dutta, "Decentralization and Political Development in India: A Gandhian Perspective," Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1985, pp. 1-19.
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52. Michael Lipton, Why Poor People Stay Poor: A Study of Urban Bias in World Development (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1977), pp. 17-18.
53. T. J. Byres, "Of Neo-Populist Pipe-Dreams: Daedalus in the Third World and the Myth of Urban Bias," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1979, pp. 210-244.
54. See Rushidan Rahman, "The Relevance of the Urban Bias Theory in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1988, pp. 1-19.
55. Mick Moore, op. cit., p. 17; also see S. P. S. Ho (1982) "Economic Development and Rural Industry in South Korea and Taiwan," World Development, Vol. 10, 1082, No. 11.
56. E. L. Tepper, Rural Development and Administration in East Pakistan (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1970).

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- 60.Ahmed Shafiqul Huque, The Problem of Local Government Reform in Rural Bangladesh: The Failure of Swanirvar Gram Sarkar (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1984).
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- 62.Yusuf Hyder, Development: The Upazila Way (Dhaka: Dhaka Prokashan, 1986).
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- 65.A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development and Upazila (Dhaka: Centre For Social Studies, 1986).
- 66.M. Faizullah, Development of Local Government in Bangladesh (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1987).
- 67.Shahnaz Khan, Coordination of BRDB Programmes at Upazila Level in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Three Selected Upazilas (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Chittagong, 1987).
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Chapter II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Current events can probably be better understood, if their temporal dimensions are taken into account. A proper understanding of the rural development efforts also necessitates some temporal analyses. Therefore, in the following sections, an attempt has been made to present the historical background to rural development in Bangladesh in order to have a glimpse of how the city-country relationship in India evolved over time.

The Evolution of the City-Country Relationship in India: The Mauryan Period (450-150 B. C.)

Archaeological remains of two cities,¹ discovered in the recent past, bear testimony to the fact that civilization existed in the Indus valley long ago. "Present evidence indicates that these cities were capitals of an empire that flourished between 2500 and 1500 B.C."² In addition to the Indus, the Ganges and other river systems also provided natural trade routes for inland and external commerce. Though India's familiarity with civilization can be traced back to a very ancient period, it is much later that a unified empire under central authority arose. The rise of the first empire, known as the Mauryan empire (450-150 B.C.), is therefore an event of extraordinary importance in the annals of Indian history. The emergence of this vast empire, with Pataliputra (modern Patna) as its capital, not only signified the unification of regions, but

also brought into being huge cities, which made favourable conditions for the promotion of arts and culture. Pataliputra, was developed on a planned basis.¹ That there existed a comprehensive road system, sanitation and gardens etc. has been evidenced by various sources.⁴ Taxilla, a city located in the present-day Pakistan, also became a centre of advanced learning with its schools, buildings, roads, gardens.

During the time of Chandra Gupta (324-400 B. C.), the first emperor of the Maurya dynasty, a comprehensive territorial division existed, which is evidenced by Kautilya's⁵ Arthashastra and the Greek ambassador Megasthenes's⁶ account of India. But it is extremely difficult to project a picture of the city-country relationship from their accounts, because of their preoccupation with the description of royal families, court-nobilities and others, which covered mostly the townlife.

The empire, it seems, had been governed by the officials appointed by the emperor. Many giant irrigation works were undertaken during Chandra Gupta's time. The Sudarsana lake at Girnar is an example. There seems to have existed a regular irrigation department, which looked after the construction and maintenance of canals, reservoirs, and activities related to irrigation.⁷ Chandra Gupta paid considerable attention to the development of roads and the plantation of trees on roadsides. The bulk of the revenue for financing various state projects came from the land revenue, which was fixed at one-sixth of the produce. Merchants also had to pay one-fourth of their profits as revenues. In

addition, the monopoly on salt trade, and the licensing of gambling houses and liquor stores were other important sources of revenue.⁸

Many cities, in addition to Pataliputra, became centres of trade and learning. Among others, Vaisali of the Lichavis, Ujjan, the capital of Avanti, and Banaras and Taxilla were prominent.⁹ Significant differences existed between the life style and standard of living of city-dwellers and of the village folk. Only the richer classes could afford the amenities of city life, such as educational facilities provided in various places of learning, arts, recreations, etc.

Asoka Maurya, the grandson of the Chandragupta Maurya, was a great ruler. As a follower of Buddhist faith, he tried to propagate and implement the humanitarian aspects of Buddhism, for example, by abstaining from killing animals, promoting peace and harmony, etc.; and he made an enormous contribution in this respect. His contributions, however, were more in the field of culture than in the economy. Village people gained very little out of Asoka's various activities, which were concentrated mainly in the cities. Cities, as a matter of fact, became the collection points of taxes and revenues from the rural areas. According to Kirk:

The rural areas with their villages and local market centres witnessed the passage of power but took little part in it. Providing they paid their taxes and utilised their lands to the full, there was little incentive to change. Politics was an urban game and power, prestige, wealth and change resided in the city as the focus of imposed and frequently foreign sovereignty.¹⁰

Though the empire was heavily centralized, and the main reliance for the performance of functions was on the army, the police, the spies and the bureaucracy, the rulers had some concern for the villagers as well. The Mauryan emperors toured rural areas extensively to see the conditions of the rural people and also to supervise provincial and other regional administration.

The Gupta Period (320-550 A. D.)

Developments with regard to city and country took a different shape during the Gupta period. Villagers during this period enjoyed more autonomy from the centre than before and the city administration was also kept relatively free from state intervention.

City-building efforts during the Gupta times, however, were not as impressive as they were during the Maurya period. Probably the Maurya capital of Pataliputra remained the main seat of royal residence till the reign of Samudragupta, but later Ayodha became the central headquarter.¹¹ The successive Gupta capitals of Ujjan and Kanuj never attained the fame of Pataliputra.¹² Historical evidence seems to suggest that a period ranging from the second century to the early Gupta rule was a period of urban decline in the history of ancient India. No Gupta emperor, with the exception of Kumaragupta, issued any copper coins. It is supposed that trade and money economy declined in importance during the Gupta period. One positive aspect of this situation was

that villages received more importance and became the basic units of the economy. Land grants to state officials as well as to Brahmins became a common practice. The Chinese pilgrims who visited India between the fifth and seventh century A. D. indicate that the state during the Gupta period did not maintain any official household registrar for the purpose of collecting land revenues and other dues. The state mostly relied on the intermediary classes for the collection of taxes.¹³

The emphasis on villages, whatever may have been the reasons, became so pronounced a feature during the Gupta times that some students of Indian history have labelled it as a period of Indian feudalism. R. S. Sharma is one of the main advocates of this idea. Ever since the publication of his book, Indian Feudalism, c.300-1200, it has become a subject of lively controversy. What prompted Sharma to characterize the Gupta period as feudal was "...growing subjection of peasants to the blanket authority of the grantees and their ever increasing exploitation in all conceivable forms in the period..."¹⁴ Harbans Mukhia criticises Sharma's approach on two important grounds. Firstly, if the Gupta period is regarded as feudal, how to characterise the period after the fall of the Guptas and before the colonization of India? Sharma certainly won't call it capitalist. If it is neither capitalist nor feudal, how to characterise it? Secondly, the lord-peasant relationship in the pre-colonial India and in medieval Europe was not similar. In the pre-colonial India it was a kind of self-dependent or free peasant production which characterized the system, whereas in medieval

Europe it was the structured dependence of the peasantry upon the lords which was the dominant feature.¹⁵ Even if one does not recognize the Gupta period as feudal, there is no doubt that village organizations received considerable importance, enjoyed more autonomy, and became the mainstay of the economy.

Gupta rulers relied more on the local feudatories for the administration of the empire than did their predecessors. Therefore, a large standing army and an elaborate bureaucracy were not needed during the Gupta period. According to Sharma: "Thus while villages in Mauryan times were managed from above those in Gupta times seem to have been managed from below".¹⁶ The village headman, (gramiyka) was assisted by a local body in the discharge of administrative duties. Local bodies at the village level seem to have enjoyed considerable autonomy.¹⁷

The Delhi Sultanate (1206-1413)

The Delhi sultans boosted mainly an urban economy by constructing minarets,¹⁸ mosques, tombs and gardens, etc., which helped only particular groups of people such as town artisans and craftsmen. Kutb-ud-din, the first sultan of Delhi, laid the foundation of the famous Kutb Minar at Delhi, and he completed its first storey. Later, Iltutmish, perhaps the greatest king of the so called slave dynasty,¹⁹ built the second, third and fourth storeys of the Kutb

Minar. The famous Jami Mosque (now known as Kutb Mosque) was also built by Iltutmish. He undertook some public works for the benefit of the common people as well. But these again benefited urban dwellers more than the villagers. He also had dug a huge reservoir to preserve rain water for the growing population of Delhi. According to the Arab traveller Ibn Batuta, it was about two miles long and one mile broad.²⁰

After the slave dynasty came the Khaljis. Khaljis were also urban-centred like their predecessors. These rulers used the countryside as the supply house of food grains for the urban centres where members of the royal household, nobilities of the courts, merchants and traders lived. Sultan Alauddin Khalji's agrarian policies were so tough that local chiefs never succeeded in accumulating surpluses on a big scale. One of the main purposes of his policies was to keep rebellions in check. The measures used by him were: (1) the land revenue was fixed at one-half of the produce; (2) special privileges enjoyed by the chiefs were abolished; (3) the calculation of charges was done on the basis of standard yields; and (4) an additional tax on grazing lands was also imposed.²¹

The above policies in fact reduced the chiefs to the position of peasants. Alauddin also enforced a strict system of price control in three vital sectors: the food, cloth, and cattle markets.²² Some of the measures used by the sultans were very harsh. According to Barani's²³ description, Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) forced the peasants of the Doab areas to sell food grains to the karavanis

(food merchants). Barani also notes that the sultan used various repressive measures and sometimes threat of punishment to the karavanis just to make sure of the supply of foodgrains from the countryside to the urban centres. Nasiruddin, another writer of the time, while commenting about Sultan Alauddin, mentions that he supported the food merchants by all possible means - loans, expenses for their families, etc. to keep the food supply smooth and certain. Cities in return sent virtually nothing to villages. The relationship was hardly reciprocal, and for the most part benefited the cities.²⁴

The rule of the Khaljis, after the death of Alauddin, continued for about four years. Khusru Khan, the last sultan of the Khalji dynasty was killed by Ghazi Khan Tughlaq, the governor of the Punjab, who ascended the throne in 1321 A. D. under the title of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. He founded Tughlaqabad, which was planned as a fortified city.²⁵ Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq followed a different agrarian strategy from his predecessor. He did not agree with Alauddin's view that local chiefs should be reduced to the economic positions of peasants in order to minimise prospects of rebellion, so he reversed Alauddin's policies. The perquisites of the chiefs were left to them without assessment, and grazing lands were spared of taxation. Thereby he allowed an honorable position to local chiefs. But Ghiyasuddin depended on the provincial governors to make sure that the chiefs could not levy additional revenue from the peasants.

Another significant ruler of this dynasty is Firoz Tughlaq. Firoz

continued with the policies of Ghiysuddin. He founded many irrigation works, some of which were meant for bringing irrigation water to the newly built cities.²⁶ He founded cities like Jaunpur, Fatehabad, Hisson, Firojpur near Badaun and Firojpur near Delhi. Many cities were reconstructed and renamed by Firoz Tughlaq.²⁷

During the Sultanate period, as we have seen, many urban centres were set up and trade and commerce flourished in the cities and urban centres. But the flow of resources from villages to the urban centres continued as before, and the domination of these centres over regions was tightened. The Delhi sultans very successfully used a system of land grants, especially meant for state officials. Members of the bureaucracy who had distinguished records in the service were granted fiefdoms in the countryside, called iqtas. The heads of iqtas were called muqtas. The activities of muqtas were kept under tight control through various mechanisms. The auditing of accounts of muqtas by the central Ministry of Revenue (Diwan-i-Wizarat) was an important check. One of the main purposes of auditing was to prevent overtaxing of peasants. Another major objective of the iqta system was to link the far-flung parts of the empire through an institutionalized mechanism.²⁸

The Mughal Period (1526-1757)

The next major dynasty which ruled India was the Mughal. Babur,

defeating Ibrahim Lodi in 1526, founded the dynasty. Babur and his son Humayuun, who succeeded him after his death, did not get enough time to pay sufficient attention to the public works and the reforms of the internal administration. No significant reforms took place during the reigns of either Babur or Humayuun.²⁹ Humayuun lost his throne to Sher Shah, an Afghan general in 1540 A. D.

Sher Shah's rule (1540-1555) has gone down as an important period in the annals of pre-colonial India. His agrarian policies show a marked variation with the past practices. He fixed the land revenue at one-fourth of the produce, which was payable either in cash or kind.³⁰ And his contributions in the public works sector are enormous, some of which still survive. The Grand Trunk Road, which runs from Sonargaon, East Bengal (present Bangladesh) to the Indus is an example. He also planted trees on both sides of public roads and made Sarais (Rest Houses) and dug wells at suitable intervals for the use of the general public as well as for the troops.³¹

It was during Akbar's reign (1556-1605) that the Mughal empire reached its peak development. The land revenue system was reorganized during his rule. Todar Mall, who became the imperial Diwan (Revenue Minister) devised a subtle system of revenue administration, which became the backbone of the Mughal empire for a long time after Akbar. Under Todar Mall's scheme, the state's demand for land revenue went up.

Of the Mughal emperors, Shah Jahan probably spent more money on

extravagance. But some of his contributions have achieved a reputation as things of superb architectural beauty. The famous Tajmahal, built in memory of his beloved wife Arjumand Ara Begum, also known as Momtaz Mahal, has become one of the seven oldest wonders of the world. Other buildings of architectural beauty like the Moti Masjid of Agra, Jami-Masjid of Delhi, Diwan-i-Am, and Diwan-khas in the Fort of Delhi, and Peacock throne, were also built by Shah Jahan. The Shish Mahal in Lahore, a residence for the empress when she stayed in that city, is another example of the beautiful architecture of Shah Jahan's time. These massive expenditures from the royal treasury meant very little to the poor subjects of the empire, and did not improve their lot.

The codition of the peasantry during the Mughal period is not at all impressive. Despite considerable developments in handloom and textiles, the common people could not afford to buy adequate clothing. The housing condition of peasants was extremely poor. Peasant houses were usually made of mud, and had virtually no furniture except cots and bamboo mats. The diet of the common people was also very simple and consisted of mainly rice, millets and pulses.³²

The rural people were subject to heavy exploitation by tax farmers, known as zamindars and jagirdars. The tax farmers wanted to have maximum benefit out of their positions because their awards were purely temporary and for a fixed time period. A huge quantum of money, about 80% of the surplus revenue, was spent for the maintenance of law and order, expenditures on civil

administration and patronization of artists and scientists. The rest of the surplus was spent by the royal household on various luxury items.³³ Only a small group of people, composed of the emperor and his immediate family, regional governors and a few other officials (mansabdars)³⁴ controlled a vast empire. Cities were the seats of all power, economic, political and military. A rural squirarchy, unlike medieval Europe, was absent.³⁵

Mughal mansabdars were very subtly controlled by the centre; as a result, they were placed in a difficult position to challenge the central authority. Mansabdars rendered valuable military service to the state. Some mansabdars were paid in cash, but most were assigned land-grants, called jagirs. "Jagirs, like iqtas were transferable, and ordinarily no mansabdar held a jagir in one place for more than three to four years."³⁶ This system of rotation did not allow the mansabdars to consolidate their power base, which might threaten the central authority. Moreover, the positions were non-hereditary.

Mansabdars were required to maintain a certain number of troops, elephants and horses approved by the state; and there was also a system of gradation, depending on the number of troops and horses they were required to maintain. Percival Spear, a well known historian on India, concluded that mansabdars formed a part of the Mughal elite system, a part of the bureaucracy, rather than a class of landed gentry, as found in the history of medieval Europe. They were derivative in origin and played a kind of secondary role in the economy and society of the Mughal India.³⁷

Having surveyed the position of the city-country relationship during the Mughal period, we now turn to Bengal, because it was the geographic area of modern Bangladesh. The city-country relationship in ancient and medieval Bengal is very obscure, especially before the Pala and Sena periods. Materials are available on the Pala and the Sena periods, but here again the sources are very minimal. Let us look at the Bengal situation during these periods very briefly.

The Pala and the Sena Periods (752-1162) and (1097-1223)

A period of confusion and anarchy followed the disintegration of the Gupta empire in 550 A.D. However, within two centuries after the fall of the Guptas, several independent kingdoms emerged in different regions, including Bengal. The independent kingdom that came into existence in Bengal was built by the Palas, who ruled over Bengal for about four hundred years. During their rule, the Palas built various urban centres. Towns in Bengal, as elsewhere served a host of functions: commercial, industrial, political, judicial, and military. They were also characterized by their richness and luxury.

The city of Ramavati, founded by king Ramapala was referred to as a city of rows of streets and palaces in Ramacharita. It also possessed 'an immense mass of gems.' Another literary source of the period, the Rajtarangini, refers to the 'wealth of the citizens of Pundravardhana.'³⁸

More or less the same situation existed in Bengal during the Sena period too. The Deopara inscription of king Vijaysena testifies to the glaring contrast of city and country life. Through the grace of Vijaysena, the village dwelling Brahmins achieved a lot of wealth. But their wives needed training by the townspeople in order to recognise "pearls, pieces of emerald, silver coins, jewels and gold from their similarity respectively with seeds of pomegranates and the blooming flowers of the creepers of pumpkin-gourd." ³⁹

A recent study on the economic history of ancient Bengal (c. 400-1200 A.D.), covering the Pala and the Sena dynasties, mention about the affluence of the people.⁴⁰ Though land in the delta was fertile in general, not all lands were under cultivation. Some lands needed artificial irrigation. The state seems to have assisted the villagers in this respect. Various water tanks found in different parts of the northern Bengal - Mahipala, Ramsagar, Pransagar, etc. - were probably dug with the state initiative and were used for irrigation purposes.⁴¹

Of many sources to the state revenue, three were of major importance: the king's share of the produce of the land, tolls and customs duties, and fines and forfeitures levied from wrongdoers.⁴² The first was, of course, the main source, as it was throughout the pre-colonial period.⁴³ What was the exact claim of the state on the land produce is difficult to ascertain because different rates were cited in different sources. Normally, kings were supposed to follow the following principles:

- (1) that taxation should not destroy the substance of the people, but should leave ample margin for their substance;
- (2) that the taxes should be levied by slow, almost imperceptible degrees, and not all in a lump, and
- (3) that they should be levied at the time and place most suited for the subjects.⁴⁴

To what extent the Pala and the Sena rulers followed these principles is hard to predict because of the lack of sufficient proofs. However, there are reports of impositions over and above the customary one-sixth of the grain share.⁴⁵

Bengal under the Muslim Rule (1202-1757)

It was Muhammad Bakhtyar khilji who gave the foundation of the Muslim rule in Bengal by making a sudden raid on Nadiya in 1202 A.D. The then ruler of Bengal, Laksmansena, as a matter of fact, did not give any resistance. The new rulers seem to have got quick acceptance from the people. One reason for this quick acceptance of alien rulers by the local community could be that there was a widespread resentment against the Brahminical aristocracy among the common people.⁴⁶

Since 1226 Bengal remained independent of Delhi, though the suzerainty of Delhi was accepted in nominal terms.⁴⁷ However, from 1227 A.D. for a little over one hundred years Bengal was subordinated to the Delhi Sultanate. From 1338 with the foundation of the Illyas Shahi dynasty, Bengal again

became independent. After the Illyas Shahais (1338-1414; 1437-1486), another major dynasty which ruled Bengal independent of the Delhi Sultanate was the Husain Shahis (1496-1538).⁴⁸

In a study of Husain Shahi Bengal, M. R. Tarafdar comes to a conclusion that considerable resource drain might have taken place from the villages to the towns. He, however, is opposed to the popular practice of dividing the people of a country into producing and consuming classes. According to Tarafdar, producers may be at the same time consumers and consumers can also contribute to production, however indirectly.⁴⁹

It is believed that Bengal before the Mughal rule was administered by the same sort of rules as were practiced in other parts of the Delhi sultanate.

Muslim rulers founded more urban centres than the preceding Senas. In fact, a new phase of urban development started with the Muslim rule in Bengal. In the Husain Shahi Bengal (1459-1538), for example, many mint cities came into existence in addition to the political and commercial centres like Gaud, Pandua, Satgaon, Chittagong and Sonargaon. The mint towns of that period were: Hasinabad, Fathabad, Nusratabad, Muazzamabad, Khalifatabad, Barbakabad, Muhammadabad, Mahmudabad and Muzaffarabad.⁵⁰

The next major dynasty to rule over Bengal was that of the Mughals. The Mughal authority was extended to Bengal in 1576 A. D.; it was the time of the well known Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605). However, the Mughal power met with tough resistance from the Bengal zamindars. Though there were

frequent disturbances, the Mughals succeeded in introducing their system of administration in the newly won subah (province) of Bengal. The land revenue system of the Mughals called Asal Jumma Tumar, devised by Akbar's revenue Minister, Todarmal, came into force in Bengal too and lasted till the days of Murshid Quli Khan, appointed subahdar of Bengal in 1717. Murshid Quli, however, revised the system.

Though the Mughal Subahdar, Mansimha, one of Akbar's famous military commanders, paved the way for the Mughal rule in Bengal, it was not until Jahangir's time (1605-1627) that Bengal came under complete Mughal control.⁵¹ After Jahangir's death in 1627, Bengal remained as a province of the Mughal empire during the rules of Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurangzib (1658-1707). "During this long period Bengal did not have any separate identity, and its history merely forming a part of the history of the Mughal empire, its administration was in line with that in other Subahs."⁵²

After the death of Aurangzib in 1707, the successive Mughal emperors proved to be very weak, and the empire was passing through a turbulent time. In 1717, Murshid Quli Khan, an experienced Diwan and a man of outstanding ability, was appointed the Subahdar of Bengal. He made a tremendous contribution to the land revenue administration of the province. His policies, however, benefited the centre more than the province of Bengal. "Murshid Quli Khan had enhanced the revenue income of the Government with the result that the burden of taxation on the people was greatly increased."⁵³ Mughal

subahdars, including Murshid Quli khan, relied on the zamindars for the collection of the land revenue. During Murshid Quli's time, a new levy called subahdari adwab was imposed on the zamindars.⁵⁴

Though there were tough opposition from the zamindars during the initial phase of the Mughal rule, the Mughals gradually succeeded in neutralizing the major oppositions by coercion and patronage. Over time "the two became partners in the process of economic exploitation."⁵⁵ Despite the apparent success of the Mughals in soliciting the co-operation of the zamindars, the problem did not wither away. As Nurul Hasan puts it:

The Mughal Empire achieved its great power largely because it could secure the collaboration of this class; but the inherent contradictions between a centralized empire and the zamindars were too deep to be resolved. These contradictions within the Mughal Empire contributed to its downfall even before the Western powers were established in the country.⁵⁶

The bulk of the land revenue extracted from the peasant through the zamindars was spent in the urban centres, where Mughal nobility, army and bureaucracy resided. "There is no doubt that some cities were heavily dependent upon Mughal armies and administrative personnel during 17th and 18th centuries. In fact, the mass of troops and officials who accompanied the emperor on the march necessitated the development of a reasonably large travelling city." ⁵⁷

From time to time the Mughal subahdars transferred their capital from one place to another for geo-strategic reasons. The change of course by rivers

was one of the prime considerations. With the Mughal conquest of Bengal, Tanda became the capital of the new subah (province). During the rule of the Mughal emperor Akbar, the capital of the Bengal subah was transferred from Tanda to Rajmahal by the subahdar of Bengal, Raja Mansimha, in 1595. "The primary reason for moving the capital seems to have been that Tanda was a very unhealthy place, and that Rajmahal had better defenses."⁵⁸ Again, for military and political reasons, the capital was shifted to Dacca from Rajmahal in 1608.⁵⁹ Maksudabad (later renamed Murshidabad) became the prime city when the Murshid Quli khan, the Diwan of Bengal, transferred the Diwani from Dacca to that city in 1704.⁶⁰

Therefore, as have seen, many cities came into existence because of the special needs of the ruling class. However, in spite of developments of the urban centres and trade and commerce, rural areas, in general, remained neglected though land revenue provided the lion's share of the state income.

The British Period (1757-1947)

The British got a foothold in Bengal in 1757, and later the whole of India came under their occupation. The British colonial rule of about two hundred years left a tremendous impact on the economy and society of the Indian people. The impact of the British colonialism is mixed in terms of its effect on the growth of cities.

The British colonial rule was urban-centred like its predecessor, the rule of the Mughals. The British concentrated on the urban centres already developed before their take-over and developed them further. The introduction of capitalist production relations had various impacts on the development of cities in India. In addition to their being places of administration and religious seats, more and more cities became places of commerce and trade; and differences between cities and countryside became sharper than before. Urbanization during the British period, though showing an upward trend, was not based on a healthy city-country relationship. Urban centres that grew were based more on commerce than on industry, with a few exceptions like Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur and Hooghly.⁶¹ They remained mostly parasitic on land revenue from the countryside.

The indigenous guilds gradually went out of existence and artisans and craftsmen were displaced from their occupations. The influx of cheap factory products from Britain and discriminatory tariff regulations were mainly responsible for the systematic destruction of India's indigenous industries. The displaced handicraftsmen and artisans could not find jobs in the industrial sector and gradually became agricultural labourers and tenants in the countryside.⁶²

A large part of the national income was drained out of the country. A huge part of the salaries of the British employees, which formed a significant part of the civil expenditure, was remitted to England, and it was not very different for expenditures on the military sector.⁶³ The British were, mainly,

interested in Indian raw materials for their factories in England and also in India. The introduction of railways facilitated the extraction of raw materials in a major way by connecting the far off areas with the trading centres. The improved communication among regions also made it possible for the finance capital to penetrate into the countryside more deeply. Agriculture also came under a commercial network. "But this commercial aspect of Indian agriculture remained limited because of the overall nature of the Indian economy remaining as a colony of British finance capitalism." ⁶⁴

On the socio-cultural front, the British introduced English as the official language, with long term objectives in view. They were in need of people who could interpret between them and their countless subjects. In the words of Macaulay (the main architect of the British-Indian education policy):

It is impossible for us, with our limited means to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. ⁶⁵

In order to do that they set up schools and colleges, mainly in the city areas. An urban-based privileged class gradually emerged who served the interests of their colonial masters with dedication and loyalty and who had been

able to make a fortune for themselves. But this privileged section in the society gradually became conscious of their rights and of exploitation of their economy by the British. This awareness ultimately backfired and a nationalist leadership emerged from the new English-educated privileged class.⁶⁶

The growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy was another important factor which drew a lot of people into the urban centres. Administration, trade and commercial organizations, the legal system, and financial institutions needed a lot of people for the day-to-day operations.

The changes that took place in the village economy are also not very small. Village weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tanners, potters, etc. were hit in various degrees. The bulk of the displaced workers belonging to these professions found their way into the already overpressurized agriculture.⁶⁷

Another important development that took place was the introduction in certain regions of India of a new land-relations system in the countryside, called the 'permanent settlement'. The settlement gave ownership to zamindars, and peasants became tenants. The purpose of this scheme, it was argued, was to create a landed class on the British lines, who in British history played a very progressive role in the transformation of the countryside. Whatever might have been the intention of the British government, the result of the permanent settlement was not at all impressive in the parts of India where it was practiced. The new wealthy class, instead of investing their money in productive sectors, spent the bulk of it in conspicuous consumption, mainly on luxury items

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Considerable disagreements exist among the historians who have studied the impact of the British colonial rule on the Indian economy. India's nationalist historians are highly critical of the British colonial rule and, in some cases, seem to put exaggerated stress on the drainage of resources to Britain; whereas some other historians are more supportive of the British colonial rule and tend to project a different picture. Angus Maddison, who purports to present a more balanced view, argues that the British lessened the tax burden on agriculture and that warlords were turned into landlords. According to his calculation, the top elites enjoyed 8% of the national income whereas the equivalent groups during the Mughal period enjoyed 15%. But, some argue that the British policy of lessening tax on agricultural income during the later periods of their rule was based more on political motives than on economic considerations. Until the nineteenth century the land revenue was the main source of the state's income. However, the government also began taxing consumers to enhance income. The imposition of excise duties on Indian cotton textiles is an example. "This type of taxation was practically similar to a sales tax and was in keeping with the trend of taxing the Indian consumer rather than the foreign trader."⁶⁸

Though many adjustments were made in various sectors of the economy, the common people gained very little. A selected group of people, belonging to the middle class, reaped the main benefits. As Angus Maddison observes:

Thus the main gainers from the British regime (apart from the British) were the so-called 'middle' class of Indian capitalists and professionals and the village squirarchy.⁶⁹

In the discussion above, what we have seen is that the countryside was utterly neglected in both pre-colonial and colonial phases in India. In the case of the former, it was the necessity of maintaining the empire and in many cases the lavishness or extravagance of the rulers, which were responsible for the neglect of the rural areas; and in the case of the latter, the main reasons were the necessity of maintaining law and order and smooth revenue collection. In all cases, it was the urban centres that served the purposes of the rulers better. Though it is not fair to say that there was no concern for the villagers during those periods, it can be reasonably maintained that the concern of the ruling classes for the development of villages, where the majority of the population lived, was anything less than adequate.

This short historical introduction, we hope, will be useful towards understanding the issue of continuity and change with regard to the urban-rural question, in later phases of history in divided India. In the chapter that follows, we will look at how the post-colonial state of Pakistan dealt with the issues of rural development and a balanced city-country relationship.

Endnotes:

1. The two cities are Harappa and Mohenjodaro, situated in the present-day Pakistan.
2. G. Sjöberg, The Preindustrial City: Past and Present (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 40.
3. The normal shape of the cities was square. The roads were built in such a way that troops and chariots could move freely. See William Kirk, "Town and Country Planning in Ancient India According to Kautilya's Arthashastra," Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol. 94, No. 2, 1970, p. 71.
4. Both Indian and non-Indian sources are available. For the best Indian source, see Kautilya, Arthashastra. Tr. by Shamasastri (Mysore: Mysore Printing and Publishing House, 1967); Also see B. N. Puri, India in Classical Greek Accounts (Ahmedabad: New Order, 1966) ; For a good non-Indian source, see George Woodcock, The Greeks in India (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1966).
5. It is widely held that Kautilya, also called Chanakya, was a minister in Chandragupta Maurya's Court. His Arthashastra is a treatise on the art of government.
6. Megasthenes was a Greek writer, who spent a long time in India, during Chandragupta's time. He was a representative of the Syrian king, Seleucus I.
7. K. M. Panikkar, A Survey of Indian History (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 26-27.
8. Ibid., p. 28.
9. Ibid., p. 38.
10. Kirk, op. cit., p. 73.
11. V. A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, 4th ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 170
12. D. D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975), p. 304.

13. Charles Drekmeier, Kingship and Community in Early India (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 181-182.
14. Harbans Mukhia, "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3, 1985, p. 237.
15. Mukhia, op. cit., p. 230; T. J. Byres, "Modes of Production and Non-European Pre-colonial Societies: The Nature and Significance of the Debate," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3, 1985, p. 2.
16. R. S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3, 1985, pp. 300-301.
17. Drekmeier, op. cit., p. 186.
18. Highrise pillars.
19. The early Turkish sultanate of Delhi (1206-1290) is called the slave dynasty, a misleading term. Three sultans of this dynasty were slaves but they became freemen long before they ascended the throne.
20. S. A. Rizvi, The Wonder that was India, Vol. II (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987), p. 211.
21. W. H. Moreland, The Agrarian System of Moslem India (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1968), p. 33.
22. Md. Mohar Ali, A Brief Survey of Muslim Rule in India (Dacca: Mullick Brothers, 1969), pp. 71-74.
23. Ziauddin Barani was a historian of this period.
24. Irfan Habib, "Non-Agricultural Production and Urban Economy," in Tapan Raychaudhri and Irfan Habib (eds.) The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I: c. 1200-1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 83-84.
25. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 212.
26. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
27. Ali, op. cit., p. 95.

- 28.B. N. Puri, History of Indian Administration (Medieval Period), Vol I (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1975), pp. 92-93.
- 29.W. H. Moreland, op. cit., p. 79.
- 30.Ali, op. cit., p. 179.
- 31.Ibid., p. 180.
- 32.Satish Chandra, "Mughal India: Standard of Living," in Tapan Raychaudhri and Irfan Habib (eds.) op. cit., pp. 460-461.
- 33.H. A. Reitsma and J. M. G. Kleinpenning, The Third World in Perspective (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), p. 306.
- 34.Literally 'Mansab' means rank; and Mansabdar, the holder of rank, dignity or office.
- 35.Reitsma and Kleinpenning, op. cit., p. 308.
- 36.Rizvi, op. cit., p. 177.
- 37.Percival Spear, " The Mughal Mansabdari System," in Edmund Leach and S. N. Mukherjee (eds.) Elites in South Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 14-15.
- 38.R. C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal (Calcutta: G. Bardwaj and Co., 1971), p. 340.
- 39.Citation from the epigraph, quoted in Ibid.
- 40.Kamrunnesa Islam, Aspects of Economic History of Bengal, c.400-1200 A. D. (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1984). p. 19.
- 41.Ibid., p. 27.
- 42.Ibid., pp. 162-163.
- 43.Ibid., p. 163.
- 44.Ibid., p. 162.
- 45.Ibid., p. 183.

46. Abdul Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1959), p. 19.

47. R. C. Majumdar, History of Medieval Bengal (Calcutta; G. Bardwaj and Co., 1973), p. 81.

48. After 1414, there was a short interruption by Raja Ganesa and his family (1415-1437). Raja Ganesa interfered for about two years, but after that his son, who converted to Islam, took over. The Illyas Shahis, however, managed to come back to the throne and ruled from 1437 to 1486. After the Illyas Shahis another short interruption took place. This time it was by the Abyssinians; their rule lasted for seven years (1486-1493).

49. Ibid., pp. 158-159.

50. M. R. Tarafdar, Husain Shahi Bengal, 1494-1538 A. D. : A Socio-Political Study (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1965), p. 114.

51. R. C. Majumdar, History of Medieval Bengal, p. 94.

52. Ibid., pp. 95-96.

53. Ibid., pp. 172-173.

54. N. K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement, Vol. II, (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukopadhaya, 1962), pp. 5-6.

55. Nurul Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals," in Robert E. Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 17.

56. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

57. Philip B. Calkins, "Stability and Change in Landholding and Revenue Systems in Bengal," in Robert D. Stevens et al., Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 19.

58. Ibid., p. 21.

59. Ibid.

60.Ibid., p. 19.

61.Shiva Chandra Jha, Studies in the Development of Capitalism in India (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay Publishers, 1963), p. 150.

62.A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism (Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1959), pp. 83-84.

63.Maddison, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

64.Shiva Chandra Jha, Studies in the Development of Capitalism in India (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay Publishers, 1963), pp. 215-216.

65.Quoted in Angus Maddison, Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan since the Moghuls (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 41.

66.For details, see B. B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1970); and V. Subramaniam, Transplanted Indo-British Administration (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1977).

67.Desai, op. cit., p. 91.

68.Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, A History of India (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 147.

69.Ibid., p. 70.

Chapter III

THE PAKISTAN PERIOD

After the British withdrawal in 1947, two independent states emerged on the Indian subcontinent, namely, India and Pakistan.¹ With independence came the major responsibilities of reconstructing the new states and societies. In the early years, after independence, Pakistan was not very fortunate in the sense that she lost two prominent leaders within a few years. This loss left the country in a severe political crisis. It took Pakistan more than eight years to adopt a constitution for the governance of the country.² The political instability affected the nation-building and economic development of the country in a major way; but beginnings were made despite the turmoil in the political sector. Let us look at events with regard to the development of the rural areas and agriculture in post-independence Pakistan.

Rural Development before 1958

The task of reconstruction of the economy, immediately after independence, was indeed a colossal one. During his life-time Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, controlled the state. Jinnah relied heavily on the bureaucrats for the administration of the new country. Provincial governors, appointed by Jinnah, used to enjoy more power than the elected representatives. Moreover, Jinnah's personal decision to become the Governor General, instead

of the Prime Minister is an indication of his preference for a strong centre. The position of the Governor General closely resembled the British viceregal system, in which the viceroy was the representative of the British crown. However, after the death of Jinnah, his successor Liaquat Ali Khan wanted the position of the Prime Minister to be more powerful, and remained in that position, instead of becoming the Governor General.

After the death of Liaquat, the first Prime Minister, in 1951, bureaucrats became more influential in the governing process of the country.³ The political leadership in post-independence Pakistan, however, realized the importance of promoting the agrarian economy of the country, and some steps were taken in that direction. One such step was the abolition of the zamindari system of land tenure, created by the Permanent Settlement by the British. The Land Tenancy Act of 1950, by which the zamindari system was abolished, gave rights to land to those who were tenants under the zamindari system. The Permanent Settlement had fixed the land revenue for 150 years. The zamindars took maximum advantage of this provision of the settlement. While the zamindars increased their share of revenue from the peasants, the government failed to reap any benefit at all. Moreover, the zamindars did not invest a reasonable share of their rental income for improving the conditions of agriculture. Most of the zamindars were absentee landlords and were unconcerned with cultivation techniques, or production.

If viewed in this context, the abolition of the zamindari system seems to be a progressive step, in favour of the peasantry. But a closer scrutiny reveals

that the Act helped the poor peasantry very little. The zamindars who lost land to the state because of the imposition of the land ceiling were given compensation. Furthermore, the acquired lands were distributed to those farmers who could pay the required amount of money, called the Salami;⁴ obviously the small farmers and the landless could not amass the required money. Also, the zamindars managed to keep most of their land by applying various tactics. The high land ceiling allotted to families and the lack of a clear definition of a 'family,' were opportunities by which they transferred their lands to others' names without much difficulty. The 1950 Act set the ceiling at 33 acres per family, or 3.3 acres per family member, plus an additional 3.3 acres as a homestead plot. In 1961, the ceiling was raised further and set at 125 acres.⁵

Whatever land was acquired by the government could not be distributed properly because of the poor implementation of the Act. The lack of an efficient administrative agency, maps and up-to-date land records were the big stumbling blocks. Referring to this state of affairs, M. A. Zaman writes:

The poor implementation record in Bangladesh demonstrates the futility of starting a programme without an adequate implementing agency. No reform, however beneficial in intent, should be introduced which is beyond the existing agency's competence unless the agency can be expeditiously enlarged and its personnel trained. Thus it is not only the political will of a government but also its administrative abilities which determine the chance of successful implementation of a land reform programme.⁶

The Act, by removing the zamindars as rent receivers on behalf of the state, brought the cultivators into a direct relationship with the state. It protected them from the heavy exploitation of the zamindars, but at the same time placed

them under a different kind of exploitative relationship. In this case, it was the tehsildars, the state revenue officials at the thana level, who began appropriating excess revenues from the peasants.⁷

Another step in the field of agriculture and rural development was the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Programme, popularly known as the V-AID which came into being in 1953. The objectives of this programme were manifold. The most important ones were:

1. To apply improved production techniques for raising productivity;
2. To improve community services such as schools, health centres, pure water supply, etc.;
3. To develop ideas of self help, and promote cooperation and self respect.⁸

The V-AID was, in fact, Pakistan's version of community development. Pakistan's approach to the programme combined the idea of extension with the spirit of self help. This state-guided programme sought to promote the conditions of villagers through demonstration, initiation and advice. The First Five Year Plan (1955-60) of Pakistan highly emphasized the necessity of village development and recommended the V-AID programme very favourably.

At the field level, it was the V-AID workers who played the most important role for the implementation of the programme. They were in need of collaboration with various departmental specialists located at the regional level, and also with the non-official leaders of the area. The programme was administered through a semi-autonomous agency, which was outside any regular

government ministry or department. Initially, the programme achieved some modest success, which made the government confident of its possible positive role in the reconstruction of the rural areas. However, it soon became apparent that the newly instituted programme would have to face some serious obstacles from within the governmental bureaucratic set-up as well as from without. The regular government agencies/departments did not like the idea of a semi-autonomous agency performing so many important functions. They feared that they may be gradually overshadowed by this new agency. The programme also interfered with some of the economic and welfare functions that local government bodies were already performing.

In addition, the V-AID had its own problems. One of the major problems was that it failed to mobilize a sufficient number of people for various projects, because various councils created for the implementation of the programme lacked roots among the people. Despite concern for the involvement of local voluntary groups and local government, it essentially became a bureaucratic mechanism.⁹ The V-AID workers were multipurpose in terms of their operations, and were required to do multifarious extension services, in many of which they lacked expertise. Moreover, V-AID workers were government employees and were treated as outsiders by the villagers, because they came from other areas in most cases.¹⁰ Some other important reasons for the gradual demise of the V-AID were: the withdrawal of U.S. technical assistance for the programme; lack of adequate training of V-AID workers in various fields; conflict with agricultural departments; and the creation of the Basic Democracy

system.¹¹

Although some attention was given to village development, agriculture in general was neglected during the decade following the independence of Pakistan. "The prices of agricultural goods had been maintained at a low level to provide cheap raw materials and cheap food for urban consumers. This disincentive for agricultural growth was accompanied by the high price farmers had to pay for the goods produced by the protected industrial sector."¹²

On the political front, as mentioned earlier, the country was passing through a turbulent environment after the death of Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan. So many cabinets were formed, and so many were dismissed, both at the central and provincial levels, that it is sometimes difficult to keep track of all of them. Factionalism and corruption among politicians rose to such an extent that the last Governor General, Iskander Mirza, found it necessary to promulgate Martial Law in the country; the food crisis was another excuse.

After the promulgation of the Martial Law, the situation, however, moved dramatically. The Governor General, who declared Martial Law, was forced to leave the country by the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Ayub Khan, and power went into the hands of the military for the first time in the short history of Pakistan.

Military Rule and the Basic Democracies System (1958-1969)

Ayub Khan wanted to deal with the forces that were destabilizing the country. Very soon after coming to power, Ayub came up with his own plans and programmes to protect the country from its unstable and chaotic political and economic environment. A comprehensive political experiment undertaken by Ayub, popularly known as the Basic Democracies system, was an attempt to attain the twin objectives of economic and political development, as well as to counter the centrifugal and destabilizing forces that had plagued the country before the imposition of Martial Law.

The system was very comprehensive in its coverage. It was fashioned to encompass both urban and rural areas, with emphasis on the latter. In the rural areas there were four tiers: divisional council, district council, tehsil/thana council, and union council.¹³ If shown diagrammatically, the structure appears as in the following Table:

Table 1: Structure of the Basic Democracies System

Centre			
<u>Province (West Pakistan)</u>		<u>Province (East Pakistan)</u>	
Administrative units	B.D. units	Administrative units	B.D. units
Division	Divisional Council	Division	Divisional Council
District	District Council	District	District Council
Subdivision		Subdivision	
<u>Tehsil</u>	<u>Tehsil</u> Council	<u>Thana</u>	<u>Thana</u> Council
Union	Union Council	Union	Union Council
Village		Village	

The main thrust of the system was on the union level for several reasons. One was that the system sought to get citizens involved in the management of local affairs at the grass-roots level. Villages, the lowest units of social organization, were not found suitable from the viewpoint of cost-benefit analysis. One of the main purposes of the basic democracies system was to make expert knowledge available at the local levels. Therefore the government had to send officials to the level, chosen to be the vital unit of the system. As the village was too small a unit from the viewpoint of cost effectiveness, the union, a conglomerate of villages, was found to be the feasible unit.

The peculiar feature of the system was that representatives to the union

council were chosen on the basis of the adult franchise and then acted as the electoral college for the election of the president of the country, as well as for the election of the members of the central and provincial legislatures. In addition, the union councillors were given some administrative and judicial functions within their constituencies.

Above the Union Council was the thana/tehsil council, which was the second tier of local government in ascending order. A Thana or Tehsil is a composite of several unions. All union chairmen within the administrative area of the thana/tehsil were members of the thana/tehsil council; it also included thana/tehsil-level officials (TLOs) as members. In East Pakistan it was the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO.), who was the chairman of the thana council. In West Pakistan, the executive head of the general administration at the tehsil level (Tehsildar) was the chairman of the tehsil council. The number of official members, however, was not allowed to exceed the number of elected members in the council.

The next higher unit of local government and administration was the district council, which again was composed of elected and non-elected (official) members. The principle of official members not exceeding elected members was maintained at this level too. Though elected representatives were given a majority, the chairmanship of the council remained in the hands of the deputy commissioner, a career civil servant.

The highest unit of local government under the Basic Democracies system was the divisional council. It was also composed of elected and official

members, with the same principle of composition as applied to the lower levels. The elected members of the district councils within a division then elected the members of the divisional council.

The Basic Democracy system, as it was claimed by the government, was designed to confer authority and responsibility on people at all levels of administration. It was also meant to make the technical competence of the government officials available at the local levels and to promote cooperation and consultation between people's representatives and civil servants.¹⁴

The system was able to politicize local government by integrating elected bodies with the governmental bureaucracy, but it has been alleged that the bureaucracy always maintained the upper hand in the formulation of policies and the management of affairs.

Though the reliance of the government on the union as a focal unit of administration is understandable, its reliance only on the union-level representatives, called Basic Democrats, for electoral purposes, is obscure, and has to be explained in the light of Ayub's preferred political philosophy. Ayub believed that the general masses of Pakistan were not politically mature enough to exercise their voting right to select their President or legislators. Therefore, he was in favour of an indirect system of representation, where people's opinion would be reflected through their chosen representatives. Here Ayub's political motives become apparent, if we examine his logic of choosing only the union councillors as the electoral college. If literacy were to be the criterion of having a voting right, then certainly union councillors would not be the only people

who should get that exclusive privilege. Therefore, conferring voting rights on the union councillors to the exclusion of other literate people is certainly a politically motivated decision. On a closer scrutiny it seems that the regime's primary concern was to legitimise their rule, by giving it a representational character, and at the same time to keep control of the system.

The Rural Works Programme (discussed below) was an important instrument in the hand of the central government to manipulate the union council leadership. As Rehman Sobhan puts it:

The Works Programme proved the ideal vehicle for the reinforcement of government control over the union councils. The Government could legitimately claim that they were catering to a genuine economic need in the villages; but they were also binding the basic democrats to the regime with more than constitutional ties. By putting the execution of the programme in the hands of the BDs, and by giving them hard cash for direct disbursement, they gave them scope for power and wealth beyond their most extravagant expectations.¹⁵

The regime not only controlled the Basic Democrats, but also maintained a close liaison with the local influential people through the distribution of patronage. The formation of project committees at the local levels for the implementation of various projects is an example. Some local influential people were included in these committees as members by the controlling authority (Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Divisional Officer, depending on the case) with a view to increase the representation of the local people. The point to note, however, is that they were not the representatives of the people but chosen by the authority.¹⁶

As it appears from the above, in the rural areas, the main beneficiaries of Ayub's system were a selected group of privileged people: Basic Democrats and rich farmers. The former group had direct access to the patronage network with the centre by virtue of their office, and the second group through their linkage with the influentials at both central and local levels.

During the ten years of his stay in power, Ayub initiated and implemented many reform measures through various institutional means. Setting up two rural development Academies in the two wings of Pakistan are examples; and the widely known Comilla model of rural development also took shape during his tenure in the office of the Presidency.

East Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (EPARD) and the Comilla Model

The previous experiment in community development with the V-AID made one thing clear: training was vitally necessary for actors associated with various aspects of the programme. The need was especially acute for the village-level workers, and the higher-level officials in charge of policy formulation and general administrative supervision of the programme. Therefore, the government concerned itself with the training of administrators, both new probationers and the old civil servants. The government's primary concern was to make the civil servants welfare officers, instead of mere technical specialists in their respective areas. This objective, the government in power believed, could be realized through the creation of specialized training institutes.

The government therefore decided to set up two academies for village development - one in Peshwar, West Pakistan, and the other in Comilla, East Pakistan - in July, 1957, after long consultation with foreign advisors, the Ford Foundation and the concerned local officials. Michigan State University (MSU) agreed to provide the necessary technical assistance. The faculty members recruited for the academies were sent for training to MSU, and this was mostly financed by the Ford Foundation.

After receiving training at MSU, the graduates returned to their work in May 1959. Akhter Hameed Khan, who was chosen as the Director of the EPARD, was given permission by the V-AID administration to use Kotwali thana in the Comilla district as a laboratory area for experimentation with rural development projects.¹⁷ After long experimentation, the Academy developed certain institutionalized methods for the promotion of rural development, which have come to be known as the 'Comilla model,' 'Comilla programme,' or 'Comilla approach'.

The model is based on several assumptions: firstly, villagers themselves have a better understanding of their own problems; secondly, villagers should strive for bringing about changes within their means through cooperative endeavours; thirdly, if the flow of resources can be ensured to the local level, villagers will themselves be able to initiate the process of change.¹⁸ However, it should be noted that the builders of the model wanted to bring about changes in the rural areas within the existing social and political structure. They had no plans of changing individual farming based on private ownership of land and

the means of production.¹⁹

There are four components, which made the Comilla model an integrated package for the promotion of rural welfare. They are: (1) the two-tier cooperative system; (2) the Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP); (3) the Thana Training and Development Centre; and (4) the Rural Works Programme. Let us discuss them very briefly.

Two-Tier Cooperative System

The main objectives of the two-tier cooperatives were two-fold: one was to organize the peasant proprietors, and the other was to protect them from ruthless exploitation by the money lenders, who were the richer sections of the rural population. As Akhter Hameed Khan puts it:

They leased land or loaned money (both in great demand) at exorbitant rates. Their affluence brought them social and political leadership. They were closely united with the prospering city middle class. They used the savings accumulated from leasing and lending for the professional advancement of their children and for investment in trade and urban housing. Manifestly, the new rural upper class was even more urban-oriented than its predecessors - the landlords and merchant bankers of the Empire.²⁰

The cooperative system relied on villages as its primary focus. The main purpose of the cooperative was to accumulate some capital for the villagers. The village-level cooperative society, called the Krishi Samabya Samiti (KSS), was linked with the thana-level Cooperative Association, called Thana Central Cooperative Association (TCCA). Both the TCCA and KSS had elected managing committees. Each KSS elected a chairman, and a manager/organizer.

A model farmer was also chosen by the KSS members. All of these organizations served the role of lynch-pin between the thana and the villages.²¹

The primary cooperatives, i.e., KSSs, used to send their saved capital to the TCCA, thereby a sizable amount of capital was accumulated for the use of cooperative members. The cooperative system increased the productive capacity of the peasantry and helped them improve their farming techniques. Irrigation works would not have been possible without cooperative efforts.

Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP)

The primary purpose of this programme was to make the best possible use of the ground and surface water for the cultivation of agricultural lands. Usually there is an abundance of water during the summer, because of the heavy monsoon rain; but water is in short supply during the winter season. Therefore, irrigation became an important priority for cultivation, during the dry season.

As it was virtually impossible on the part of an individual farmer to rent the necessary tools for irrigation purposes, village-level cooperatives (KSSs) were found suitable in this regard. Farmers jointly rented irrigation equipment like low-lift water-pumps and tube-wells.²²

Thana Training and Development Center (TTDC)

The purpose behind the creation of the centre was to integrate the facilities of local government and the state bureaucracy. An additional purpose was to coordinate the activities of various nation-building departments at the

thana level. Some of the main functions of the TTDC included: (1) the training of the representatives of various cooperative organizations, e.g., model farmers, managers and chairmen of the KSS; (2) training of the extension workers of various government departments; and (3) coordination and management of development works performed by various nation-building departments, at the thana level.²³

In a nutshell, the TTDC acted as a secretariat at the thana level. It served as a centre for the coordination of governmental officials and their services and supplies, also as a meeting place for the government officials and local representatives. Another major function of the Centre was to train villagers, for example, cooperative workers of the KSS and TCCA, model farmers and managers of the cooperatives. A recently completed study on the comilla model of rural development reveals the trend in training activities conducted by the Comilla TTDC, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Category and Number of Persons trained at the TTDC, Comilla, in different years.

Years	On Cooperatives and Organisation	On RWP* & TIP**	On Education Programme	On other Programmes	Total
1962-63	231	130	N.A.	115	476
1966-67	485	187	115	48	835
1969-70	959	189	407	46	1,631
1970-71	1,161	528	465	44	2,198
1971-72	1,232	Nil	N.A.	N.A.	1,232
1976-77	436	Nil	N.A.	33	469
1981-82	230	Nil	34	40	304

*Rural Works Programme

**Thana Irrigation Programme

[Source: M. Anisuzzaman et al. Comilla Models of Rural Development: A Quarter Century of Experience (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1987), p.45]

The table clearly shows the decline of training activities after the period 1971-72. The authors of the research attribute this to lack of coordination, both vertical and horizontal, at the thana level; and also to the absence of a government official backed by sufficient authority to coordinate various departmental activities.²⁴ Following independence, officials belonging to various nation-building departments, at the thana level, started working more

in an isolated fashion rather than in an integrated manner. While their linkage with the centre remained strong, linkage with other functional departments at the field-level became weak. The uncertainty about the shape of local government and administration in the immediate post-independence period, was partly responsible for this. In addition, there was no effective mechanism to make the Thana Level Officials (TLOs) cooperate with each other, or with the public representatives. The argument made by the aforesaid researchers that a government official, backed by sufficient authority, was needed to solicit the cooperation of all thana level government functionaries, was, in fact, a long felt need.

Rural Works Programme

The primary purpose of the Rural Works Programme was to generate employment in the slack season and to build up infrastructure for the development of rural areas. The necessity of the programme becomes apparent from the words of Akhter Hameed Khan:

Roads, drainage and embankment are the infrastructure of rural development. Without link roads, without good drainage, and without protective embankments there can not be much agricultural development. And without employment to the rapidly increasing landless villagers, no government can hope for stability...²⁵

The Rural Works component of the programme is highly significant because it is said that this programme marked the beginning of local level planning in the country. The systematic management and implementation of projects also began with this programme.²⁶

The Comilla Approach: An Evaluation

The Comilla approach to rural development undoubtedly presented a unique institutional mechanism for the development of rural areas. The application of the approach helped increase the production of certain agricultural crops, e.g., rice, mainly due to the availability of improved agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, pumps, tube-wells, and services, including training.

The distribution of these inputs, however, remained highly skewed in favour of the big farmers and local influentials. The managing committees of cooperative organizations were dominated by the rich farmers, to the virtual exclusion of marginal farmers and landless peasants. Credit operations clearly favoured the committee members, and the rate of repayment of the loans was very disappointing. The managing committee members were found to be the largest defaulters.²⁷

The builders of the model relied on the rationality of villagers as decision-makers, and thus assumed that a well devised institutional framework may result in the 'trickle-down' of development effects. But it did not happen; the already rich managed to get richer.²⁸ The social structure of the village was not duly taken into account.²⁹

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

In the middle of the 60s, the introduction of the High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) promised to increase the production of crops like rice. But this was dependent on the mechanization of agriculture and the availability of inputs and

services at the local levels. In the face of this practical need, the Comilla model provided some solution.

In 1970 the government decided to proliferate the Comilla approach to rural development throughout the country under a framework called the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The main objectives of the programme were basically the same as those of the Comilla model: (1) to make use of the two-tier cooperative system, developed in Comilla, in order to encourage farmers to accumulate capital through local mobilization; and (2) to integrate supplies and services at the thana level. The IRDP not only became an organizational basis for supplying agricultural inputs, importantly, credit and training, but also sought to address the question of distributional inequality. As Abdullah puts it:

The IRDP therefore, propose a fairly complete assault on the agrarian problem of Bangladesh,¹ one which will not only raise the total output and therefore marketable surplus of agriculture, but also distribute rural incomes at higher absolute levels, and in the process tilt the balance of rural power decisively in the interests of the now dependent and depressed sectors of the farming community.³⁰

But this the IRDP tried to do through the help of cooperatives, whose membership was unrestricted and the inevitable happened; the rich farmers dominated the Managing Committees of the cooperative associations. The executive head of the IRDP at the thana level, called the Project Officer (PO)

¹The author's reference to Bangladesh can be understood to include the pre-partition Bangladesh as well. The IRDP came into existence in 1970 and in the following year Bangladesh became independent, but the Programme continued.

was rendered in a weak position vis-a-vis the Cooperative Managing Committee. Moreover, the IRDP did not have full control over the supplies of inputs and services provided at the thana level. As other departments were also involved in the above functions, the IRDP's activities were affected by their policies. This presented a difficulty for the IRDP Project Officer in trying to implement projects in the way his organization desired.

Therefore, despite concerns for the small and marginal farmers, the IRDP's attempts to promote their cause were thwarted by the rich farmers and other counter forces. Like the Comilla experiment, the IRDP also failed to do anything substantial for the poorer sections of the society. The situation of great inequality, as it prevailed during the 50s and 60s, was not conducive to bringing about the kind of change the IRDP wanted. The following Table shows that there was an actual growth in landlessness during this period.

Table 3: Landlessness in Rural Bangladesh

Year	Landless labourers as a percentage of total cultivators	Number of landless labourers in millions
1951	14.3	1.51
1961	17.5	2.47
1963-64	17.8	2.71
1964-65	17.5	2.75
1967-68	19.8	3.40

[Source: A. R. Khan, "Poverty and Inequality in Rural Bangladesh," in ILO, Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, 1977, p. 155]

The Ayub System: An Assessment

The Basic Democracies System devised by Ayub attempted to link the centre with the villages and shows a good degree of concern for the rural people. But in the rural areas, the main beneficiaries of Ayub's institutional strategies were the rural elites, especially Basic Democrats, and also rich farmers. Land-holdings gradually concentrated in fewer hands, thereby resulting in growing landlessness, as we have seen above.

Inter-sectoral differences between the urban areas and the countryside increased at an alarming rate. The following Table gives some idea.

Table 4: Rural-Urban Income Distribution

	1954/55	1964/65	Increase	
			Absolute	Percentage
Population (million)	88	112	27	27.3
Urban	10	16	6	60.0
Agricultural	78	96	18	23.1
Income Per capita (rupees)	316	360	44	13.9
Urban	1133	1278	145	12.8
Agricultural	201	207	6	3.0

[Source: K. Griffin, "Financing Development Plans in Pakistan," in Keith Griffin and A. R. Khan (eds.), Inequality and Poverty in Pakistan (London: The Macmillan Press, 1972), p. 39].

As appears from the table, the difference between the per capita income,

in the rural and urban areas, was significant. Far from shrinking, the gap between urban and rural income actually increased between 1954 and 1964 (two plan periods). In 1954 urban income per capita was about 5.6 times agricultural income, while by 1964 it was over 6 times agricultural income. Also, whereas the percentage increase in rural income was 3% over a ten year period; the increase in urban income for the same period was 12.8%, which means that urban income grew more than four times faster than rural income.

The transfer of resources from agriculture to the urban sector was indeed very high. According to one estimate, the annual resource transfer was 3600 million rupees³¹, which was 15% of the national gross output. Of the domestic part of the development expenditure in the non-agricultural sector, 63 to 85 percent was used for higher consumption in the urban areas.³²

The transfer of resources from agriculture to the urban sector does not, however, mean that all strata in the urban areas benefited. As the impact of development policies was different on different social strata in the rural areas, so it was in the urban sector. Wealth concentrated in the hands of a few privileged families. It was found that 22 families owned 66% of industry, 97% of insurance and 80% of banking assets.³³ Ayub's liberal economic policies helped their wealth grow faster. He was clearly in favour of the private sector and the market economy, which were tremendously encouraged by measures like the tax-holiday scheme. Under the scheme certain industries were exempted from taxation for the first three years; and were exempted for further periods, if profits were reinvested. Liberal concessions were given to industries

even after the expiry of the tax-holiday period.³⁴ Therefore, while the corporate military-industrial elites benefited because of the state's fiscal and monetary policies, the living condition of the industrial workers deteriorated. The wage rate of the workers declined.³⁵

On the political side, by the introduction of the Basic Democracies system, the regime antagonised various groups in the society. "The Basic Democracies system alienated the urban groups (the intelligentsia, the students, and the urban salaried workers), which prior to 1958 had played a leading role in East Pakistan political movements. Making Basic Democracies the electoral college meant limiting the political participation of these groups."³⁶ By conferring electoral functions to the Basic Democrats, the Ayub system minimized the importance of party politics. Therefore, these groups played a major role in the agitation against the Ayub regime.

In the rural areas, though the regime succeeded in creating a group of supporters (Basic Democrats, rich farmers, a section of rural elites), the rural poor (marginal farmers and landless peasants), whose number increased relatively over time, remained dissatisfied with the regime for obvious reasons.

All these factors led to nation-wide movements in 1969, which the regime could not withstand. So, what we see in the final analysis is that Ayub's Basic Democracies, instead of solving the problems of political instability, as claimed, became another cause of it, in the long run. The system relied exclusively on a limited group of people for its survival, but disenfranchised the majority of the populace. Therefore, it did not promote, but instead limited,

peoples' participation in the political and economic decisions which affect them.³⁷ The decentralization of administration at the local levels was more apparent than real, because, with the exception of the lowest tier of the local government, the higher bodies were made the extended arms of the central government in that they were clearly dominated by the state bureaucracy. Even the lowest tier, i.e, the Union council, where representation was direct, was vulnerable to central pressure. The Rural Works Programme (RWP) fund granted by the centre was an important avenue in this regard.

After the fall of Ayub in 1969, Yahya Khan, the then commander-in-chief of the army, came to power. Thus, in a period of a little more than two decades, Pakistan came under the second martial law rule. Yahya remained in power for about two years and a half; and during this period a nation-wide general election was held, controversy surrounding which led to the disintegration of Pakistan in 1971. The Yahya period can be regarded as a transitory phase; and, in terms of the reorganization or reform of local administration or rural development, nothing significant took place during this interlude. Therefore, we have bypassed this period.

In the next chapter we will discuss how the local government and rural development issues have been dealt with in Bangladesh, after liberation from Pakistan.

Endnotes:

1. East Bengal (present Bangladesh) became a part of Pakistan under the name East Pakistan.
2. For an elaborate description of the political development following the independence of Pakistan, see K. B. Sayeed, The Political System of Pakistan (Boston: Houghton Mufflin, 1967).
3. It is interesting to note that Ghulam Muhammad, Chaudhuri Md. Ali and Iskander Mirza, successive Governors General of Pakistan, were bureaucrats.
4. Aminul Islam, "Bangladesh," in Musthaqur Rahman (ed.) Agrarian Egalitarianism: Land Tenure and Land Reforms in South Asia (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1981), p. 31.
5. M. A. Zaman (1976) "Land Reform in Bangladesh to 1970," (Mimeo), (Madison, Wisconsin: Land Tenure Centre, University of Wisconsin, 1976), p. 13.
6. Ibid., p. 18.
7. Aminul Islam, op. cit.
8. Md. Abdul Momin, "Institution Building and Rural Development in Bangladesh," Journal of Local Government, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1984, p. 49.
9. Muneer Ahmad, "Rural Self Government in Pakistan: An Experiment in Political Development through Bureaucracy," in Robert D. Stevens et al., Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 217.
10. Md Abdul Momin, op. cit., p. 49.
11. G. M. Platt (1966) "Agriculture and Administration," in Guthrie S. Birkhead (ed.) Administrative Problems in Pakistan (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 100.
12. Omar Noman, The Political Economy of Pakistan, 1947-1985 (London: KPI Ltd., 1988) p. 16.

13. Lawrence Ziring, "The Administration of the Basic Democracies," in Birkhead (ed.), op. cit., pp. 32-33.
14. Safiur Rahman, "The Philosophy of Local Government and the Failure of Basic Democracies," Administrative Science Review (Dhaka), Vol. 14, No. 1, 1986, p. 78.
15. Rehman Sobhan, "Social Forces in the Basic Democracies," Asian Review, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1968, p. 171.
16. Safiur Rahman, op. cit., pp. 78-81.
17. A. F. Raper, Rural Development in Action: The Comprehensive Experiment at Comilla, East Pakistan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 37.
18. Manzur-I-Mowla, Comilla and UJ: A Comparative Study of Rural Development Policies (Dacca: Centre for Social Studies, 1980), p. 9.
19. A. R. Khan, "The Comilla Model and the Integrated Rural Development Programme of Bangladesh: An Experiment in Cooperative Capitalism," in Dharam Gahai et al. Agrarian Systems and Rural Development (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), p. 115.
20. Akhter Hameed Khan, "The Comilla Project--A Personal Account," International Development Review, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1974, pp. 3-4.
21. Md. Abdul Momin, op. cit., p. 53.
22. R. D. Stevens, "Comilla Rural Development Programmes to 1971," in Stevens et al. op. cit., p. 115.
23. Md. Abdul Momin, op. cit., pp. 53-54.
24. M. Anisuzzaman et al. Comilla Models of Rural Development: A Quarter Century of Experience, (Comilla: BARD, 1986), pp. 48-49.
25. Akhter Hameed Khan, Tour of Twenty Thanas (Comilla: BARD, 1971), p. 3, quoted in Abdul Momin, op. cit., p. 54.
26. Md. Abdul Momin, op. cit., p. 54.
27. Mohiuddin Alamgir, "Some Aspects of Bangladesh Agriculture: Review of Performance and Evaluation of Policies," Bangladesh Development Studies,

Vol. 3, No. 1, 1975, pp.292-293.

28.A. R. Khan, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

29.Manzur-I-Mowla, op. cit., p. 9.

30.Abu Abdullah et al., "Agrarian Structure and the IRDP - Preliminary Considerations," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1976, p. 247.

31.Pakistani unit of currency.

32.Keith Griffin, "Financing Development Plans in Pakistan," in Keith Griffin and A. R. Khan (eds.) Growth and Inequality in Pakistan (London: The Macmillan Press, 1972), p. 44.

33.Noman, op. cit., p. 41.

34.Viqar Ahmed, "The Economy of Pakistan since 1947," in Richard A. Stanford (ed.) Rural Development in Pakistan (Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1980), pp. 4-5.

35.Noman op. cit., pp. 41-42.

36.Rounaq Jahan, Pakistan: Failure in National Integration (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 124.

37.Mohiuddin Azad, "Models of Decentralization: Bangladesh Experience," A Seminar Paper. Development: Policy and Administration (First Senior Staff Course) (Savar, Dhaka: Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, 1985).

Chapter IV

RURAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN BANGLADESH: THE MUJIB AND ZIA REGIMES

The Mujib Regime (1971-1975)

After a bloody civil war of about nine months, Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation in 1971. Though independence was declared on the 26th March, 1971, the final victory came in December 1971, when the occupation army surrendered to the joint Bangladesh and Indian forces. It was the controversy surrounding the result of a country-wide general election, held in 1970, that led to the civil war. In the election, the Awami League (AL) won a landslide victory, capturing 160 seats out of 162, in East Pakistan; in West Pakistan, it was the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which won the majority, 81 out of a total of 138 seats.¹ The AL was led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the PPP was led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Both political parties proved themselves to be regional in terms of popular representation; the AL's support base was confined to East Pakistan, whereas the PPP's was in West Pakistan.

After the electoral victory the League leadership, time and again, repeated that they would enact a Constitution for Pakistan, based on the six-points and eleven-points programmes.² These programmes, in a nutshell, sought maximum autonomy for the provinces. The PPP was fearful of the AL's intended constitution which, according to the PPP leadership, could result in a confederal structure, not a federation. Having failed to persuade Mujib to change his stand

on the autonomy issue, Bhutto threatened to boycott the National Assembly session convened at Dacca on March 3, 1971. In view of this situation, Yahya Khan, the President and the Chief Martial Law Administrator, postponed the session. As a result of this decision, the reaction in East Pakistan was severe: the Chatra League (student wing of the AL) went so far as to hoist the national flag of Bangladesh in the presence of the AL leaders and a huge crowd.

Sheikh Mujib called for a "non-violent non-co-operation movement" against the central government of Pakistan. He was arrested and taken into custody in West Pakistan on March 25, 1971. Most of the elected leaders and about three million people fled to India for protection. A government in exile was formed with the elected members of the AL; the exiled government opted in favour of an armed struggle against Pakistan to liberate Bangladesh. A Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army) was formed with Indian help; and the Bahini members received training and arms in Indian camps, and engaged in a guerrilla warfare with the occupation forces of Pakistan.

After the surrender of the Pakistan army, Sheikh Mujib was released from the Pakistani jail, where he had been held prisoner for so long, and he returned to Bangladesh in January 1972. Immediately after his return, he had to take control of the new-born country. He devoted himself to the gigantic task of the reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy; the rehabilitation of the refugees; and the establishment of a political and administrative order. Though most of the issues were urgent, the leadership could not pay equal attention to all of them. Some of the issues which demanded urgent priorities were: the

restoration of law and order; the holding of general elections; and the securing of diplomatic recognition from various countries.³

Sheikh Mujib wanted to have a new beginning, at least in his speeches and public pronouncements. He had a dream of a golden Bengal where there would be no exploitation and no starvation. It is one thing to appeal to the sentiment of the people, but quite another to manage the practical affairs of a country while in power. With the given social structure and the economic constraints in developing countries, political parties fail to keep many of their pre-election promises to the people; the AL party in Bangladesh was no exception. However, it must be admitted that, despite severe constraints, both at home and abroad, Sheikh Mujib's performance, in some fields, was quite impressive. The promulgation of a constitution within one year of the assumption of office by the AL party; the holding of national parliamentary elections, immediately after the adoption of the constitution; the averting of a large-scale famine, after independence; the rehabilitation, within a short time, of ten million refugees, who fled to India during the civil war; and the resumption of the communication links after the necessary repairs of about 300 railway bridges, 274 road bridges, and 6 airports, were success stories. They were no mean achievements. The rapid clearing of the Chittagong sea port, which became unfit for navigation, because of the implantation of mines by the Pakistani army, was another major success.⁴

Sheikh Mujib also turned quickly to reorganize the administrative structure of the country, which, he thought, would be necessary for the new

beginning he wanted to make. For this purpose, a Committee, known as the Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC), also known as the Chaudhuri Committee, according to the name of the Committee's chairman, was constituted. The Chaudhuri Committee suggested several measures to overhaul the administrative system, keeping in view the special needs of the new-born country - speedy reconstruction of the economy and socialist transformation of the society, as envisaged in the Constitution.

The Administrative and the Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC)

The Committee was composed mainly of non-bureaucrats. Muzaffar Ahmed Chaudhuri, an expert on Public Administration and a Professor of Political Science at the University of Dacca, was appointed as the Chairman of the Committee. The other members of the Committee were: a representative from the Planning Commission; the Secretary, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs (Establishment Division); and a political representative nominated by the Prime Minister. The Committee was asked to examine the structure of the public services, and to recommend a new structure, keeping in view the functional needs and requirements of the government. The Committee was also asked to recommend a recruitment policy in the government services, and a comprehensive scheme for administrative reorganization.⁵

Of the many valuable recommendations of the ASRC, the recommendations for a unified grade structure for the various cadres of the

public service, and the necessity for popular representation at all levels of local government were of special significance. The former recommendation was directed at the alleged elitism of the civil service, which was a dominant trait of the pre-independence service structure. The Committee was of the opinion that top posts of the public services should be open to the people of talent from various cadres; they should not be the exclusive preserve for a group of people, as with the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) during the Pakistan days, and the Indian Civil Service (ICS) during the British period. The latter recommendation was meant for the democratization of the administrative system and to free it from bureaucratic dominance. The Committee frequently referred to the relevant Articles of the Constitution in support of their recommendation in this regard.

The Committee argued that functions should be distributed to various levels of government in accordance with the nature of the function. The functions which concern the entire country such as defence, foreign affairs, and currency should be the domain of the central government. But there are certain functions which are local in nature, for example, a local bridge, a primary school, etc. Referring to the sphere of local government, the ASRC observed:

There are certain functions - agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, and reclamation, health and rural sanitation, education, social education (women and children), communication, rural arts, crafts and industries, rural engineering, cooperation and housing- which concern the local people vitally. The local government in the rural areas such as the UP [Union Parishad] and the TP [Thana Parishad] can deal with these subjects effectively. This is in consonance with democratic principles.⁶

The Report of the Committee, for unannounced reasons, was not accepted

by the government. Therefore, the valuable recommendations contained in the Report remained as mere paper works.

The Awami League Regime and the Local Government

Both the constitution of the Republic and the ASRC were in favour of popularly elected strong local governments. The authors of the above documents put special emphasis on the role of local government institutions for the development of rural areas. However, the government, despite its concerns for local institutions, moved very slowly in this regard.

Immediately after independence, the government dissolved all the existing local bodies by an Order.⁷ The Order provided for new bodies, in place of the dissolved ones, which were to be administered by nominated committees. The Union Council was renamed as the Union Panchyat; and the District Council (located above the Union Council), as the Zilla Board. For the former, the Order provided for a Committee with members to be appointed by the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) ; for the latter, a Chief administrator, to be appointed by the government. Later, the Deputy Commissioner was chosen as the head of the Zilla Board.⁸ What is important to note is that in the period immediately following independence, local bodies were placed under central bureaucratic dominance. No significant attempt was made by the regime to give the local bodies a representative character, despite the pre-election promises, constitutional guarantees, and recommendations of the Planning Commission.

However, a step towards democratization of the local bodies was the government's decision in March, 1973 to hold elections for municipalities and Union Councils.⁹

The AL regime's slow movement with regard to democratization of local government has to be explained in the context of the social circumstances that characterized the rural scene at that period. It is a fact that during the liberation war a significant cross-section of the population, both in the urban and rural areas, came in possession of arms. When the war was over, these arms were not surrendered fully despite repeated appeals by the new government in power. The presence of illegal arms in the far flung rural areas caused a serious threat to the legitimacy of the new regime. This was one of the main reasons why the AL government favoured the policy of centralization, instead of decentralization, for the administration of local areas. In addition, two other causes were partly responsible: (1) the fear of central political leaders of losing control of the rural areas to local elites and to the opposition political parties, and (2) the fear of the bureaucracy of losing its already established power in the scheme of the government.¹⁰

Mujib's Politics of Patronage

Sheikh Mujib's reliance on the bureaucracy at the local levels was simply a matter of convenience. Circumstances forced him to rely on the bureaucrats; his personal preference was for a political approach towards problem solving. Since his student life, Mujib was a political activist; and later as a member of the Awami League (AL), he became deeply involved with party politics. Though he had very little experience of practical administration,¹¹ Mujib was familiar with the games bureaucrats used to play in both the British and the Pakistani periods. Probably it was his bitter experience which made him averse to the bureaucracy, both civil and military. Time and again, Mujib appealed to the bureaucrats to change their mentality and to reorient themselves with new realities. He wanted them to be servants of the people, instead of to be their masters.

That he was reluctant to approve the status and privilege the bureaucrats enjoyed before, can be seen from his policy measures. Presidential Order No. 9 of 1972 is an example. The Order provided for the dismissal of civil servants without any prior notification; a good number of civil servants were sacked from their jobs with the application of this Order. The threat of arbitrary dismissal threw the civil servants into a condition of high uncertainty and job insecurity; the morale of the entire service declined sharply.¹²

Mujib not only turned against the civil bureaucracy, but his attitude towards the regular army organization was also not very favourable. The share of expenditure on the defence sector was not only insignificant, but it declined

gradually; it dropped to 15% in the 1974-1975 budget whereas the same in the 1973-1974 budget was over 16%. In the 1975-1976 budget, the defense expenditure declined further;¹³ therefore, there was a growing resentment among the members of the army against the AL regime. Furthermore, the creation of the Rakki Bahini (a para military force), to the negligence of the regular army, was another cause of resentment.

It was not only the civil bureaucrats who suffered from job insecurity; military officials also did not feel very secure. A good number of military officers were fired from their jobs on various complaints, received from the close associates of Sheikh Mujib.¹⁴ It was later found that three officers out of 25, who took part in the killing of Sheikh Mujib and his family had been dismissed earlier.¹⁵

Sheikh Mujib took the risk of displeasing the civil and military bureaucracies in the hope that he would be able to give a political direction to the new country through the use of party channels. He was in favour of the distribution of patronage for the building up of a strong political party. Even during the Pakistan period, when he became a Minister in the AL-led government in East Pakistan in 1956-57, there were reports of a clash between him and the AL chief, Ataur Rahman Khan, on the issue of the relationship between the party and general administration.¹⁶ Therefore, Mujib's distribution of patronage to his party members and sympathizers, immediately after assuming the Office, was not at all surprising. An added justification given by the Mujib regime for the distribution of patronage to the aforesaid groups of

people was "their sufferings for the cause of the nation."¹⁷

The use of the patronage system could be either positive or negative, depending upon how it was used. A selective use of the system could have made some contribution, at least, in the political sector, while an indiscriminate use could be disastrous. It was the latter which happened in Bangladesh in the initial years. By a Nationalization Order, passed on March 25th, 1972, the Bangladesh government got control of more than 80 to 85 per cent of the nation's industrial, banking, and insurance business.¹⁸ The efficient management of this vast public sector was not at all an easy task, especially against the backdrop of a situation where there had existed an acute shortage of top-level managerial personnel. The shortage resulted due to the departure of Pakistanis after East Pakistan became independent. The available vacant positions were filled by party favourites, most of whom lacked any experience in handling responsibilities in the financial sector. Moreover, the Awami Leaguers, making use of the party channels, got licenses and permits for import and export; the real business people were deprived of their due claims. What happened was that the party members who held licenses and permits made quick money by selling them; this was a short cut method without any risks. The interference by these superfluous intermediaries contributed to the inflationary spiral.

Mujib's Agrarian Reforms: Problems with Ambiguous Socialism

The most controversial aspect of the AL's policy measures, emanated from the principle of socialism, to which the party committed itself both before and after the election, held in 1970. The election Manifesto (1970) of the AL contained the following pledges:¹⁹

1. Establishment of a socialist economy and as a necessary first step, the nationalization of banking and insurance, heavy industries, and also key industries like jute and cotton;

2. A progressive land reform and the distribution of land among the landless peasants; and

3. Reform of the tax and revenue systems. Salt and landholding below 8 acres were promised exemption from any taxation.

As mentioned before, immediately after independence, the party in power took measures with regard to its first pledge. The Constitution, framed and promulgated by the Awami League regime, accepted socialism as one of the principles of state policy, along with the principles of democracy, nationalism, and secularism. And the bulk of the industries, banks, and insurance businesses was nationalized. One major problem with the policies regarding socialism, however, remained. The Constitution provided for three kinds of property ownership: (1) state ownership, (2) co-operative ownership, and (3) private ownership. It was not spelled out clear^{ly}, whether these three kinds of ownership would be just transitional arrangements or whether the state ownership would overtake the private ownership, allowing it only to a limited extent, as in other

socialist countries.²⁰ The lack of any clear definition on this major issue made the AL socialism a hotchpotch.

The Awami League leadership acted promptly with regard to the fulfillment of the later two pledges as well. As promised in the election manifesto, landholdings below 8.3 acres (25 bighas) were exempted from property taxation.²¹ The State Acquisition and Tenancy (3rd Amendment) Order 1972 (P. O. 96), which provided for the exemption of land holdings below 8.3 acres also provided that other cesses and rates, for example, the Development and Relief Tax, the Education Cess, and the Local Rates wouldn't be exempted. Another Presidential Order, called The Bangladesh Landholding (Limitation) Order, 1972 (P. O. 98), set the maximum limit of land holding at 33 acres (100 bighas).²² The surplus lands, according to the new measures, were to be distributed among the householders owning less than 1.5 acres of land.²³ It was estimated that 76,712 acres of land would be available for redistribution. The new measures also abolished the Salami²⁴ (advance money) from the peasants to make the distribution easier.²⁵

Later, the Planning Commission, created in April, 1972, tried to clarify some of the policy issues and suggested some policy alternatives to the regime. Here we will mainly touch upon the Commission's prescriptions with regard to local administration and rural development.

The Planning Commission Approach to Local Administration and Rural Development

The Planning Commission was created with a view to advise the regime on economic issues and, also, to formulate plans and policies for the socialist transformation of the society. The Commission was expected to perform three main sets of functions: (1) preparation of the annual and long-term plans in consultation with the ministries; (2) recommendations with regard to policies and institutional changes for the implementation of projects; and (3) co-ordination of some important economic policies like import, export, exchange and price policies.²⁶ The Commission, which was composed mostly of non-bureaucrats, gradually became a very important policy-making organ in the field of the country's economic decision-making process. The First Five Year Plan (FFYP), prepared by the Commission in 1973, endorsed most of the nationalization measures which the ruling party had started before the finalization of the plan. The Plan, as it appears from the writings of the Deputy Chairman of the Commission, was tailored to the needs of the political leadership.²⁷

The framers of the FFYP were of the opinion that if the cherished goals of the Constitution were to be achieved, dedicated cadres, committed to the ideology of socialism, were necessary. This was because there was an acute need of dedicated people who would be willing to work with and among the masses at the grass-roots level. These cadres must perform the tasks of change agents by mobilizing, inspiring and organizing the people and making them

prepare for the acceptance of changes in income distribution, property ownership, etc. The Commission was suspicious of the role of the bureaucracy in the transformation of the society along a socialist line. The FFYP observed:

They (the bureaucrats) can, therefore, be neither innovators nor catalytic agents for a social change...It is only a political cadre with firm roots in the people and motivated by the new ideology and willing to live and work among the people as one of them that can mobilize the masses and transform their pattern of behaviour.²⁸

The Commission, therefore suggested that the cadres should be kept outside the normal bureaucratic channels. Still, the functioning of the two groups - ideologically committed cadres and the politically neutral bureaucracy - side by side, without interference in each other's work, would not be an easy task. The delimitation of their jurisdictions and coordination of their functions were not at all easy in a country having a multi-party democratic system. In the socialist countries, the party cadres have been functionally integrated with the administrative structure. But in the case of Bangladesh, the relationship between the cadres and the bureaucracy was not made at all clear by the Commission.²⁹

However, the Planning Commission came up with some concrete suggestions for strengthening the tax base of the state in agriculture. According to the Commission, agriculture, being the largest contributor to the GDP, had the most important potential for financing development. With the increasing use of modern technology in agriculture, the income of the rich farmers, and also of those with a landholding below 8.3 acres, increased substantially. Therefore, according to the Commission, there were no valid reasons to exempt these

groups of people from sharing the tax burden; in fact, it was necessary from the point of view of equity.³⁰

The Commission offered some suggestions as to how the policy of taxing agricultural income could be implemented. According to the Commission, local authorities could be entrusted with the responsibility of the assessment and collection of taxes. It was because local authorities were supposed to be more familiar than the central authorities with the patterns of landholding at the local level that they were in a position to make fair assessments. The Commission argued that the chances of misuse of power by the tax officials would be reduced if representative institutions were put in charge of tax collection.³¹

The regime, however, continued with the policy of exempting agricultural income below 8.3 acres, justifying this on the ground that small farmers suffered a heavy loss during the war of liberation; the party's electoral promise to that effect was another justification. The pursuance of the above policy resulted in the exemption of 90% of agricultural land and 99% of the rural population from taxation. The impact of under-taxing was obvious: resource mobilization within the sector remained dismally poor. Moreover, there was little likelihood of diverting surpluses from other sectors for financing investment in the agricultural sector.³² As a result, agriculture suffered.

The Planning Commission recommended some more measures for the mobilization of local resources, by using popular participation. The possibilities of using labour power for various rural development projects were considered. One proposal was that all able-bodied males, irrespective of wealth and status,

had to contribute some physical labour every year. Those people who would be unable to provide physical labour had to pay equivalent financial contributions at the prevailing wage rate. The Commission also recommended that some progressivity might be added to the proposed tax. The imposition of the tax as well as their collection, the Commission argued, should be the responsibility of the local government bodies.³³

In addition, the Commission suggested that students should also be used for the reconstruction of the economy. The enthusiasm and the high spirit of the students could be fruitfully utilized for organizing the masses, and also for selecting and supervising various projects. Students could also contribute some manual labour to the completion of various projects.³⁴

These proposals by the Commission were not very easy to implement and, as a matter of fact, the regime failed to act on them decisively. As the former deputy chairman of the Commission puts it:

The system of labour utilisation described above required an efficient local government under a forward -looking political leadership so that privileged groups in rural society with high income and wealth did not subvert the system. These groups would be opposed to the compulsory input of physical labour as well as the surcharge of additional tax, of which they had to bear the full burden. Such a mobilisation of the rural labour force would require not only an efficient self-governing institution at the "grassroots" level; it would also require a more egalitarian distribution of income and assets, especially land.³⁵

The regime not only failed to explore any of the above alternatives with serious attention, but had to rely on a pro-urban policy for survival. The urban middle classes, which could easily destabilize the regime, were left undisturbed,

as far as possible. Here we will focus on the government's food distribution system to show the urban-bias of the regime's policies.

Public Food Distribution: The Rationing System

Bangladesh, since its birth, had to rely on imported food grains to meet a food deficit. During the period 1973-6, one-third of the total aid received by Bangladesh was in the form of food supplies.³⁶ The available food grains, both from domestic and foreign sources, were distributed through a system of government rationing.³⁷ There were several categories of people, for example, the 'relief category,' and 'priority groups,' who benefited from the system. People belonging to the 'relief category,' which contained beggars and destitutes, used to receive food free of charge during the time of natural calamities such as floods, cyclones and droughts.³⁸ The distribution of food through the 'Food For Works Programme' (FWP) was also included in the 'relief category.'³⁹ Priority groups included, among others, armed forces, police, government officials, employees in large enterprises, and resident students in hostels.

Two kinds of ration systems, namely, the Statutory Rationing and Modified Rationing, operated throughout the country. Under the first system, all people living in the six largest cities⁴⁰ were given permanent ration cards. Once a week, the urban dwellers, irrespective of their income, were entitled to food grains, edible oil, and sugar at a price lower than the government cost, and far lower than the free market price. The privileges of the statutory system was extended to 'priority groups,' even if they were outside the six big urban

centres.⁴¹

The 'Modified Ration System' was meant for people living outside the statutory areas, that is, the six large urban centres. The population falling under the modified system was divided into four groups, on the basis of local taxes paid by various households. Local taxes were used as indicators to determine different economic categories. The lowest income bracket, which included the landless, and deficit farmers received priorities. However, it was the remaining foodgrains, available after meeting the requirements of the statutory areas, and of the 'priority groups,' that were distributed to the modified rationing areas.⁴²

The Food Rationing System, which mainly benefited the urban areas, put a heavy pressure on the government's budget. Differences in the government purchasing price, ration price, and the free-market price, even at the beginning of 1975, as the following table shows, were significant.

Table 1: Prices of foodgrains, January 1975 (Taka per lb.)

	Rationing Price	Government Cost	Free Market Price
Rice	1.50	3.50	7.75
Wheat	1.25	2.00	6.00

[Source: Jack Parkinson, "Food Aid," in Just Faaland (ed.), Aid and Influence: The Case of Bangladesh (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1981), p. 85]

As can be seen from the table, the ration prices of both rice and wheat were substantially lower than the government cost, and more than four times cheaper than the free market price. Huge subsidies were needed to meet the differences. The subsidy in the year 1973-74 was estimated to be about one quarter of the total public sector development expenditure (Tk. 960 million).⁴³ Despite frequent concerns expressed by the foreign donors, regarding the unfair and inequitable food distribution system, the position remained unchanged for a long time for understandable reasons. Jack Parkinson put the point succinctly:

The urban middle class, the industrial workers, the officers and men in the army and administration constitute vocal, volatile, and organised groups which would create disorder, incite dissatisfaction and threaten the political status quo if estranged. These governing elements of the population, minuscule in number but overwhelmingly powerful, have grown accustomed to their privileged position, including the supply of cheap ration food. By contrast, the rural poor remain unorganised and as a silent majority in the political structure constitute no immediate threat.⁴⁴

Problems with Economic Management: Centralization as a Policy Response

The nationalization of major industries and financial institutions was not found to be very useful in terms of economic performance. The AL's dubious socialism and indiscriminate use of the patronage system not only resulted in mismanagement in the economic sector, but also to anarchy in many respects. In the key sectors of the economy like agriculture, industry, and construction, production failed to catch upto the pre-independence level. The following Table gives an idea of the over-all situation.

Table 2: Gross Domestic Product of Bangladesh

(Values in \$ million at 1972-3 prices)

	1969-70	1972-3	1973-4	1974-5
Agriculture	3,980	3,403	3,788	3,713
Industry	535	412	473	467
Construction	297	215	93	220
Power and gas	15	18	32	33
Transport	300	300	327	327
Trade	483	439	490	491
Housing	287	295	303	312
Public				
Administration	158	174	243	308
Banking and				
Insurance	32	41	42	44
Professional				
and misc.services	392	404	408	412
Total	6,479	5,702	6,200	6,325

[Source: Just Faaland and J. R. Parkinson (1976) Bangladesh: The Test Case of Development (London: C. Hurst), p. 14]

As the key sectors failed to advance with a reasonable speed, the economy remained very fragile, and was having difficulty coping with the growing demands of the lower and middle classes. Dissatisfaction among the people against the regime grew. One of the main causes of the people's dissatisfaction was: the pressure of the inflationary spiral, resulting in soaring prices of consumer goods, and a decline in the real wages of both urban and rural middle and lower classes.

Large-scale smuggling was also responsible for the deteriorating economic situation. The major source of the country's foreign exchange earning, jute, was severely hit by the smuggling activities. The lower rate of production and wide-spread smuggling pushed the prices of consumer goods to an unprecedented high level. By the end of 1973, the increase in prices was about 300 per cent over the pre-independence (1969-70) price level.⁴⁵ The situation was further aggravated when a severe flood hit the country in July and August, 1974. The damage caused by the flood was severe: about one million tons of foodgrains, and jute goods worth 10 to 15 million dollars were damaged. The flood resulted in further rises in prices of essential goods, 700 to 800 per cent, over the 1969-70 price levels; thousands of people died of starvation. The number of deaths, according to an official estimate, was 27,500 by the end of November 22, 1974; the unofficial number was much higher.⁴⁶

When the economy of the country was at the verge of collapse, and thousands of people were dying, the opposition political parties got a unique chance to create public opinion in their favour; they took full advantage of the

situation. Some opposition parties formed a united front to start mass movements for the overthrow of the government, accusing it of gross incompetence and corruption.⁴⁷

Importantly, it was the leftist political parties which came to the forefront; they started gaining some ground among the common people. There were three factors which worked in favour of the leftist parties. Firstly, the armed struggle which led to the independence of Bangladesh made left-oriented parties more convinced of the need for revolutionary means of struggle. Secondly, the failure of the AL regime to improve the economic condition of the general people provided them with scope to popularize alternative visions. Thirdly, the leftists also used the fear of Indian hegemonism to agitate the masses against the party in power.⁴⁸ The radical political parties described the AL as the 'puppet' of the Indo-Soviet imperialism and vowed to topple the regime through guerrilla warfare. They formed armed cadres to engage in sabotage and to kill the enemies of the revolution. They argued that the task of revolution remained unfinished in Bangladesh and the puppet regime must be removed for the unfulfilled tasks to be completed. A government estimate shows that more than 6,000 people were killed, including four AL MPs. In addition to the killings, robberies of banks and houses, and attacks on police stations became common features.⁴⁹

In the face of the growing deterioration of law and order, the government found itself in a precarious position. The government tried to assert its authority and to regain its credibility by arresting the leaders of the radical political

parties, and by the application of repression. In view of the critical situation that prevailed - killings, lootings, robberies, and smuggling - the AL government proclaimed a State of Emergency on December 28, 1974, and thereby temporarily suspended the fundamental rights of citizens, conferred by the Constitution. At the beginning of 1975, the Constitution was amended with a view to centralizing power. The Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Parliament on July 25, 1975 and was passed as an Act within an hour, with virtually no debate, though the issue was of crucial importance to the nation as a whole. The Amended Constitution provided for a presidential form of government, where the President would have the supreme power over the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government. The Constitutional amendment also provided for a one-party system.⁵⁰

Under the provisions of the new Constitution, Sheikh Mujib became the President of the Republic of Bangladesh, as if he was elected to that Office. After assuming office, he went forward with the formation of a National Party, as stipulated in the Constitution. Mujib justified the changes in the constitution by arguing that a new system became essential because the system practised so far failed to provide anything meaningful to the common people. Mujib felt that to realize his dream of an exploitation-free society, a 'Second Revolution' had become necessary. The main objectives of his so-called 'Second Revolution' were: (1) to achieve a self-reliant economy through an increase in production in all fields; (2) to check population growth; (3) to eradicate corruption; and (4) to unify the Bengali nation.⁵¹

On February 24, 1975, Mujib announced the formation of the new National Party under the name of the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Bangladesh Peasants and Workers Party)(BAKSAL).⁵² Later, in an address to a public meeting at Suhrawardy Uddyan on March 26, 1975, Mujib disclosed certain programmes, to be undertaken in the future, for the implementation of the new system, as indicated in the amended constitution. Some of the important aspects he disclosed were:

1. The formation of multi-purpose co-operatives in all villages without changes in the land ownership pattern. The produce from land would be divided equally among three parties: the owner, the co-operative and the government. Membership in the co-operatives would be compulsory for all able-bodied unemployed and landless labourers.

- 2 Each thana of the country would be administered through an administrative council, composed of BAKSAL representatives; youths; females; workers; farmers; and government officials. The thana council would be headed by a Governor; civil servants would also be eligible for the post.

3. The existing districts would be dissolved as administrative units and sub-divisions would be promoted to districts. The administration of a district would be vested in an Administrative Council, headed by a Governor. The government officials, units of the army and police, etc. posted at the district level, would be placed under the administrative supervision of the Governor. The District Administration Council which was placed under the direct control of the central government, was vested with the economic planning, plan

implementation, and law and order functions at the district level. This was envisaged as a part of the government's decentralization plan.

4. Administration of justice would be made simpler and accessible to the common people. Tribunals and courts would be set up at the thana level for the speedy disposal of justice.

5. A people-oriented administrative system would replace the bureaucratic secretariat system.⁵³

On June 6, 1975, Mujib announced the structural set-up of the new National Party, BAKSAL, which would contain five horizontal fronts, and two vertical committees. The horizontal fronts were: Jatiyo Krishak League (National Peasants League), Jatiyo Sramik League (National Workers League), Jatiyo Mahila League (National Womens League), Jatiyo Jubo League (National Youth League) and Jatiyo Chatra League (National Students League).⁵⁴ The two committees, which were given major responsibilities and powers, were: the Executive Committee and the Central Committee; there were 15 members in the former and 115 members in the latter. The members of the Executive Committee were given the rank and status of ministers; most of the members came from the former AL. The Central Committee included some members from other political parties, the Vice Chancellors of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar Universities, the editors of two newspapers (Ittefaq and Bangladesh Observer), the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Airforce, and also 20 senior bureaucrats.⁵⁵

On June 21, 1975, a Presidential Order was issued whereby 61 districts were created. Later, on July 16, 1975, the names of the Governors were

announced. Out of a total of 61 governors, 14 were bureaucrats.⁵⁶ Though some top-ranking army officers were chosen as the members of the Central Committee of the BAKSAL, and as Governors of the districts, the army in general remained highly dissatisfied. The army's dissatisfaction was not only due to cutbacks in the defence sector, and the development of a parallel paramilitary organization, but there were also personal conflicts between some members of the AL leadership.⁵⁷

Mujib's new steps, primarily meant for the centralization of power, in the name of a 'second revolution,' alienated many social groups for various reasons. The lawyers' discontentment concerned the stipulated changes in the legal system; the press was dissatisfied because of the nationalization of the mass media. The civil bureaucracy was dissatisfied because, under the new Governor scheme, many of them would be placed under the appointed Governors. The rich farmers were afraid of the proposed co-operative system though there were assurances that land ownership would not be changed. A sizeable part of the educated sections, including students and teachers, were also dissatisfied with the imposition of the one-party system and restrictions on a free press.⁵⁸

The Fall of Sheikh Mujib

Immediately after independence, the AL leadership had to pay attention to some urgent needs facing the country. Some of the important priorities of that period were: the restoration of law and order; the holding of general elections; and the securing of diplomatic recognition from various countries.⁵⁹ Also, of course, the reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy remained as a task needing immediate attention and hence priority. The new administration had to accept this challenge and Sheikh Mujib started well. Some achievements had been made with regard to the above objectives.

Massive international assistance helped the new and inexperienced regime to avoid disaster in the initial years. The help provided by the United Nations Relief Operations in Bangladesh (UNROB) was of particular importance. It was estimated that Bangladesh received \$ 1373 million as grants and credits during the initial two years following independence. However, the economy began to falter after the gradual reduction in aid by the international donors.⁶⁰ Moreover, the development strategies pursued by the regime, some of which were mismanaged, were also partly responsible for the downfall of the regime.

Some observers argued, not without basis, that external factors also contributed to the fall of the Mujib regime. The deliberate delay in the shipment of food grains by the U. S. was a case in point; it was a major cause of the famine in Bangladesh in 1974. Bangladesh faced a serious food shortage in the summer of 1973 because of an unanticipated delay in the shipment of food grains by the U.S. The only way that food shortage could be met was by

diverting some shipments of food grains which were on their way to other countries. At that time the U. S. S. R. bought a huge quantity of food grains from the U. S. A. and hence was in a position to divert some shipments to Bangladesh, which Bangladesh could repay at a later date. However, requests to the U. S. to that effect were declined. Moreover, by the middle of 1974, the U. S. government had been considering to resolve a disputed issue with the government of Bangladesh before any further shipment of food grains would be made; the dispute resulted over the selling of 4 million jute bags by Bangladesh to Cuba. The U. S. government informed the Bangladesh authorities that under the PL 480, as amended in 1966, any country which imports from or exports to or allows vessels under its registry to call at a port of North Korea or Cuba, is disqualified to receive assistance under the said Act. Therefore, shipment of foodgrains to Bangladesh was delayed until the problem was resolved; the last shipment reached Bangladesh in July, 1974. No further shipment was made until December, 1974.⁶¹ "In the intervening months, in August and September [of 1974], the worst famine in Bangladesh in twenty five years occurred; thousands of people died of starvation."⁶²

One writer argues that the famine could have been avoided if the advanced warning had been taken seriously and the administration had been competent enough to arrange the necessary logistics.⁶³ "The government was callous and indifferent, allowed large-scale smuggling and hoarding to go unchecked and depended heavily on foreign assistance. They took foreign assistance or commitment for food aid for granted and did not pursue a

vigorous policy to actually procure them [foodgrains]."⁶⁴

In the face of this troubled domestic politics and unfavourable international situation, the Mujib regime could not survive. On August 15, 1975, Mujib, along with the family members present in Dhaka, was killed by a group of dissident army majors. Khondker Musthaq, the Foreign Trade Minister in the Mujib cabinet, known as pro-western and a supporter of a mixed economy, was sworn in as the President. The majority of ministers in the Mujib cabinet joined the new government of Musthaq. Major General Ziaur Rahman (popularly known as Zia), the Deputy Chief of Staff of the army, was promoted to the position of the Chief of Staff.

Immediately after the assumption of power, the Musthaq government reversed some of the policies undertaken by the previous administration. The district governor scheme was dropped and the previous collectoral pattern (Deputy Commissioner as the head of the district administration) was revived. The new government dissolved the BAKSAL and restored a multi-party parliamentary system. "However, the Musthaq Ahmed civilian cabinet only served as a facade, since the real power remained with the army. But the army was not united, and a fierce struggle for control took place."⁶⁵

As a result of internal conflicts, a coup took place under the leadership of Khaled Musharraf, an AL sympathizer. The Chief of Staff of the Army, Major General Ziaur Rahman, was put under house arrest; and Musthaq was forced to resign from the Presidency. Khaled Musharraf, who was Brigadier at the time of the coup, promoted himself to the rank of a Major General and

became the Army Chief of Staff. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, A. S. M. Sayem, a non-partisan, was sworn in as the President. However, Khaled Musharraf lasted only four days. In a counter coup on November 7, 1975, the army faction loyal to Zia, overthrew Khaled Musharraf; and he was killed while attempting to flee. Zia emerged as the de-facto power wielder in the new regime.

The Zia Regime (1975-1981)

With Zia's coming to power, the bureaucracies, both civil and military, regained their positions. As a first step to satisfy the army, the defence budget was raised significantly by the new government; this was meant for the consolidation of the power base. The 1974-75 budget, framed by the previous government, was revised and the allocation to the defence sector was raised to Tk. 2062.7 million from Tk. 750 million. The allocation was further increased for the subsequent financial years.⁶⁶

The Presidential Order which Sheikh Mujib used to keep the bureaucracy in check (P. O. 9 of 1972) was annulled. Members of the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) again occupied the key positions in the Secretariat, Public Corporations, District administration, and other strategic centres of decision - making.⁶⁷ In short, the political party-direction of decision-making that Mujib tried was reversed.

Zia's development strategies resembled the model Ayub pursued in Pakistan because of the emphasis placed on the private sector, promotion of

exports, and the growth of export-oriented industries. "The additional dimension that the new strategy had over the strategy of the Ayub model was the greater emphasis on agricultural production, through large-scale government subsidies and heavily village-oriented self-help development programmes with which General Zia identified himself."⁶⁸

Initially, it was announced by the post-Mujib governments, those of Musthaq and Sayem, that national elections would be held in February, 1977. But due to the political situation in the country, Zia and the military high command refused to hold the election on the date announced, which was not to the liking of the President. Gradually, on November 30, 1976, Zia took more powers in his hands by becoming the Chief Martial Law Administrator, a post long held by the President. Soon after that, Sayem resigned from the Presidency on health grounds. Zia became the President on April 21, 1977. After the assumption of the Presidency, Zia pledged that general elections would be held in December, 1978. The Constitution was amended, dropping secularism as a state policy; socialism was also redefined to mean simply 'social and economic justice.'

From the very start it was understood that the regime would promote a mixed economy. In fact, the regime took several measures to encourage private enterprise. The industrial policy was liberalized and the ceiling on private investment was raised significantly. Many industries nationalized by the Mujib regime were divested. From the 1976/77 financial year, agricultural income started to be taxed at Tk. 15 per acre. The taxation, though lower than that in

other sectors, marked a good beginning.⁶⁹ These practical measures showed positive results in the economic sector.

After assuming power as the President, Zia declared that he would seek a vote of confidence in a referendum to be held in May, 1977. Before the planned referendum, Zia came up with a 19-points programme, indicating the likely pattern of development he wanted to pursue.

Zia's 19 Points

The 19-points programme was announced by Zia on April 30, 1977. The points covered a wide range of fields from domestic politics and the economy to international relations. Substantial emphases were placed on self-reliance and a participatory pattern of development. In order to achieve the above main objectives, the 19-points programme paid attention to the rural economy, especially the promotion of the agricultural sector, for enhancing food production so that no one had to starve. In addition, the programmes emphasized the development of textiles, house building, literacy, basic health care, population control, promotion of the private sector, and healthy worker-management relations. The need for a healthy local government, a committed governmental bureaucracy, and women's and youth's participation for nation building was also recognized. Other objectives which were also given importance were the eradication of illiteracy and control of the population explosion.⁷⁰

A close look at the 19 points programme reveals that Zia's objective was

to ensure, for the common people, the satisfaction of some basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, and medi-care. The realization of the major goals, envisaged in the programme, Zia believed, would be possible through a participatory political system.

After the announcement of his 19-points programme, Zia made a vigorous mass contact tour to elicit support for it. Shortly after this, came the referendum in which voters were asked whether they had confidence in the policies and programmes enunciated by Zia; the result was an impressive yes.¹¹ In fact, the referendum was an attempt by Zia to give some legitimacy to his rule. Having received the people's mandate, Zia went ahead with his programme. As a first step towards realizing the goal of self-sufficiency in food production, Zia undertook canal-digging, on a massive scale, for building irrigation and drainage. Both the district administration and the Union Parishad leadership were used to mobilize the villagers for the digging of canals, on a self-help basis. Usually it was the district administration which took the lead.

Zia wanted to revitalize the thana administration as well. The formation of the Thana Development Committee (TDC) was an attempt to make the thana more effective in terms of rural development. The TDC came into being, in each thana, for the preparation of local plans, the mobilization of resources, and the supervision and implementation of various projects adopted in the plan. The Committee was composed of all the elected Chairmen of the Union Parishads (UPs) and had the option to co-opt three to eight leading non-officials as members; however, the number of officials and co-opted members could not

exceed the number of elected members.⁷²

The newly constituted body soon came into conflict with the existing parent body at that level, i.e., the Thana Parishad (TP). Officially the TDC has been empowered to formulate and implement plans, but was made dependent on the Thana Parishad, an official-dominated body, for the approval of schemes. This practice resulted in an uneasy relationship between the TP and the TDC.

However, Zia was not satisfied with decentralization at the thana level only; he wanted to go beyond. In the pursuit of making the country self-sufficient in food, he turned to villages. Zia's development strategies clearly show that he was heavily inspired by the Swanirvar (Self-reliance) Movement in Bangladesh, which had begun in a piece-meal fashion since the 1970s.

Zia and the Swanirvar (Self-Reliance) Movement

Zia had become closely familiar with the movement before he took over as the President. The Swanirvar Programme originated in the early 70s when several districts, hit by flood and famine, made spontaneous efforts to boost agricultural production.⁷³ The Swanirvar (self-reliance) programmes were given different names in different districts, for example, Comilla Sabuj (Green), Sufala (highly fertile) Noakhali, Shaymal (soft green) Sylhet, Urbara (highly fertile) Mymensingh, Swaransheela (golden) Chittagong Hill Tracts, Swabalambi (self-dependent) Faridpur, Unnata (Developed) Kusthia, Swayamber (Self-sufficient) Jessore, Agrani (Advanced) Rajshahi, Swanirvar (self-reliant) Dacca,

Samridha (Prosperous) Khulna, and so on.⁷⁴ Later, the Swanirvar workers of various districts felt the necessity of consolidating their approach and spreading it further. With a view to this end a conference was organized in Dacca in September, 1975. At the conference Swanirvar was chosen as the name of the movement for the whole country.⁷⁵ In the second Swanirvar Conference, held in January, 1976, the following decisions were taken:

1. to rely on the co-operative as a tool for Swanirvar;
2. to remain non-political and non-partisan;
3. to evolve a model of local planning for the development of villages.⁷⁶

In November, 1976, Zia participated in the inauguration of a Swanirvar project, called the Ulashi project in the district of Jessore. The project is also called the Ulashi-Jadunathpur (U-J) Experiment. The experiment was undertaken by the district administration, especially at the initiative of the deputy commissioner of the district, to meet the irrigation and drainage needs of the local areas. The central government, despite recognition of the problem, had failed to undertake the project for the preceding 25 years. Finally, the district administration decided not to wait further for the central help, and went ahead with the project, depending on the local resources. The bureaucracy-initiated project ended up with impressive results. The main strategy employed by the district administration, for the completion of the project, was the call for self help.⁷⁷

Zia had always been a supporter of the civil servant's role in the development of rural areas. In a major policy statement issued on December 1,

1976, Zia indicated that civil servants at all levels of government - division, district, subdivision - should play a major role in guiding, organizing, and leading the rural people for development activities.⁷⁸ Following Zia's policy statement, later the Cabinet Division launched a new scheme, called the Own Village Development (OVD) Programme. It was meant for the mid-level government officers, who would volunteer to go to their own villages for a month with a view to observe, participate, and contribute in the developmental works. The Implementation Cell of the Cabinet Division issued some guidelines on January, 1977, for the officers participating in the OVD Programme:

1. Under this programme the Government servants in close association with their kith and kin may be able to motivate the villagers in participating in various rural development programmes;

2. Because of lack of education, the villagers are in general ignorant of the various Government programmes in their villages. The OVD officers may find out through discrete local enquiries what financial provisions (if any) the Government or the local bodies have made in the field of development;

3. The OVD officers may particularly emphasize such development areas as adult education, attainment of self-sufficiency in food, family planning and population control and cottage industries;

4. The strategy in achieving the above objectives should be based primarily on establishing rapport between the officers and the co-villagers through formal and informal meetings and by seeking active co-operation of the local leaders.⁷⁹

The National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) assisted the Cabinet Division in the implementation of the Programme. The OVD officers were required to attend a two-day briefing session at the NIPA before their departure to their respective villages.⁸⁰

On March 23, 1978, President Zia gave audience to 500 officers, who participated in the OVD programme. They presented five reports to the

President; four of them were concerned with four administrative divisions of the country, namely, Dacca, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna, and the fifth was a consolidated report. In their reports the participants confirmed that villages should be the main focus of development and they supported the OVD Programme undertaken by the Government. They not only supported the programme, but requested that they be allowed to visit their villages three times, instead of once a year.⁸¹ The President assured them of all possible help and accepted the recommendations/suggestions of the OVD officers. In a later workshop, held at NIPA in June, 1979, the OVD officers felt the necessity of an organizational structure at the village level for the practice of bottom-up planning and also of promoting the Swanirvar at the grass-roots.⁸²

When Zia became President, the self-reliant movement, already underway, got a strong patron. His 19-points Programme, announced before the referendum of May, 1978, clearly indicated his commitment to the cause of agricultural and rural development through self help. The demonstrated success of the Ulashi-Jadunathpur (U-J) project drew Zia's attention and he launched a vigorous campaign for canal digging, as a means of infrastructure building for irrigation agriculture throughout the country.

As a matter of fact, Swanirvar strategies for rural development had received a favourable response from all the previous governments. Mujib took a personal interest in the Swanirvar, and Musthaq, who became President after Mujib, appointed Mahbub Alam Chashi, an ardent advocate of Swanirvar, as his principal secretary. During the Musthaq period, instructions were given to the

local administration to provide the necessary support to local Swanirvar programmes. Under Zia, too, the Swanirvar programmes received the support of the Government. Zia wanted the Ministry of Agriculture to look after Swanirvar affairs, and Chashi, who acted as the principal secretary before, was appointed a special secretary to look after the Swanirvar.⁸³

The Swanirvar movement had made some major headway in the meantime. The experiment with Gram Sarkar (Village government) as a quest for a viable institution for rural development is the most significant in this regard. The idea of the Gram Sarkar first took shape in a village called Paschim Sultanpur in Raozan thana of the Chittagong district. In this village, Swanirvar workers renamed the 'Swanirvar Committee' as a 'Village Sarkar' (Village government). The village government resembled the ministerial organization at the centre; and like the latter, various portfolios were distributed to the members of the Gram Sarkar. This idea of the Gram Sarkar soon spread to the neighbouring areas. The Chairman of the Rangunia Union, under the Rangunia thana of the same district, being attracted by the idea of the Gram Sarkar, introduced it at the Union level. The Union Parishad was called the 'Union Sarkar' and different portfolios were distributed among Union Ministers. The Union Ministers formed Gram Sarkars in their respective areas.

Later, the concept of the Gram Sarkar was experimented with in some other parts of Bangladesh.⁸⁴ Finally, the Government of Ziaur Rahman decided to accept the Gram Sarkar model as a unit of local government for the entire country.

Zia and the Gram Sarkar (Village Government)

Zia's firm commitment to village-oriented policies led him to the adoption of the Gram Sarkar (village government) format for the whole country. On April, 1980, the President declared in a public meeting in a village named Jirabo at Savar thana, Dacca district, that the Gram Sarkar would be formed in all villages of Bangladesh. In pursuance of this policy, later the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives framed detailed rules for the formation of the Gram Sarkars, as pledged by the President. The Swanirvar Gram Sarkars (Constitution and Administration) Rules, 1980, provided for a Gram Shava (village assembly). The Gram Sarkar would be chosen by the meeting of a Gram Shava, under the supervision of the Circle Officer of the thana, or any officer authorized by him. The Gram Sarkar would be composed of a Gram Prodhan (village headman) and eleven other members, at least two members being women. The Order also provided that functional/interest groups representation should be taken into account. The Gram Sarkars were entrusted with the following functions, in particular:⁸⁵

- (a) Increasing food production;
- (b) Mass literacy;
- (c) Population control and family planning; and
- (d) Law and Order, including the holding of salish (judicial sessions) to settle local disputes.

The Gram Sarkars were also expected to promote Gram Samabaya (village co-operatives), and Samabaya Banks (co-operative banks).⁸⁶

The institution of the Gram Sarkar was devised by the Zia government with a view to make villages the hub of rural development. It was expected that the Gram Sarkar, through a system of representation of the functional groups, like the farmers, the youth, the women, and agricultural labour, would give better opportunities to villagers to participate and implement development projects which concern them. Moreover, it was hoped that as twelve members of the Gram Sarkar would be in charge of various portfolios such as agriculture, education, family planning, etc., the administration of the programmes would improve.

However, as a new institution the Gram Sarkar faced some major problems to cope with the existing situation. For example, the relationship between the Gram Sarkar and other local bodies such as the Union Parishad and the Thana Parishad remained unclear; there were considerable jurisdictional overlaps. The government's emphasis was on the newly created Gram Sarkar rather than on the Union Parishad, which was not to the liking of the latter (Union Parishad). Moreover, a possible avenue of linking the Gram Sarkar with the UP was closed by disqualifying the members and chairman of the UP to become the members of the Gram Sarkar. There were also allegations that members of the ruling party dominated the Gram Sarkars. Some critics allege that Zia wanted to create a political support base by creating the Gram Sarkars.⁸⁷

Several studies on the performance of the institution have revealed that participation of the landless in Gram Sarkar affairs was minimal. In many cases,

Gram Sarkar members showed utter ignorance of their duties and responsibilities; even in some cases, there were members who were unaware that they were on the village boards.⁸⁸ A report on the leadership pattern of Gram Sarkars in six villages showed that they were clearly dominated by the village influentials.⁸⁹

The situation was further complicated by the creation of some additional organizations at the local level. The Village Defence Force (VDF), organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs, was entrusted with functions which overlapped with the functions of the Gram Sarkar. Some of the main functions of the VDF were: (1) maintenance of law and order in the village; (2) supervision of adult education and family planning programmes; (3) to pick up volunteers for development activities.⁹⁰ Another newly created local body, called the Youth Complex, also contributed to the complexities at the local level. The Youth complexes were granted unprecedented power and were formed by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, as a weapon to counter the Gram Sarkar.⁹¹ The Minister in charge of the above Ministry, Captain Halim, was vehemently opposed to the institution of the Gram Sarkar. According to Chashi:

Captain Halim had already started Youth Complexes with the declared objectives of finding self employment path for the unemployed youth. But the real objective was to develop storm-troopers for political objectives. Hats and Bazaars of the country were freely distributed amongst them so that they might raise taxes and squander the same according to their own sweet will.⁹²

On top of everything, the government proliferated the institution of the

Gram Sarkar much too quickly, without establishing adequate supervisory mechanisms, and without imparting training to concerned actors of the new institution.⁹³

Despite the government's top priority to raising agricultural productivity, budgetary allocations to agricultural and related areas, as evidenced by the table below, were not commensurate with this commitment.

Table 3: Public Development Expenditure on Rural Development,
1976-79

	% of Total Development Expenditure		
	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79
Agriculture	13.4	13.1	13.1
Rural Development	4.0	4.2	4.6
Water and Flood Control	7.3	11.8	10.0
Total Rural Development	24.7	29.1	27.7

[Source: Stefan de Vylder, Agriculture in Chains (London: Zed Press, 1982), p. 30]

Moreover, the allocation to the agricultural sector benefited the big and middle farmers more than others because it is they who enjoyed the benefits of agricultural inputs like pesticides, fertilizers, etc. Over 40% of the budgetary allocation in agriculture went to the subsidization of agricultural inputs. The beneficiaries of the government subsidies, instead of investing their surpluses in agriculture, spend the bulk of it in the consumption of urban-produced goods and services.⁹⁴

There are also other mechanisms which siphoned off resources from the rural to the urban areas. The litigation concerning landholding, in the village areas, is one such avenue through which considerable resource transfer takes place. A study on village litigation shows that of the average expenditure of Tk.

3,144 per year, Tk. 2,500 goes to the urban areas in the form of lawyers' fees, hotel charges, etc. The study is based on a sample of 52 villages from different districts. If the figures of the study are used to calculate the trend of resource transfer from the countryside to the urban areas in Bangladesh, the picture is an alarming one. The estimate shows that an amount of Tk. 850 million out of a total of 1,000 million spent on law suits by villagers finds its way to the urban areas.⁹⁵

Within the agricultural sector, it was the big and middle farmers who reaped the benefits of the government development policies. Also, small farmers gradually started losing their lands to big farmers, which meant that landholdings were concentrating in fewer hands.⁹⁶

The government also failed to act on the urban-biased food-rationing system. Statistics on food grain distribution to statutory rationing areas, priority groups, modified rationing areas, and relief categories, for some selected years, show the disparity.

Table 4: Food Grant Off-Take for the Rationing System in Bangladesh, 1972/3-1977/8 (thousand tons)

Year	Statutory Rationing (1)	Other priority groups (2)	Total priority groups (3)	Modified Rationing (4)	Relief (5)
1972/3	465	354	819	1,592	207
1973/4	502	396	898	777	52
1974/5	471	554	1,025	578	161
1975/6	359	595	954	495	226
1976/7	377	609	986	288	199

Notes:

1. Ration card holders in six big urban centres of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Rangamati.
2. Includes police, armed forces, student hostels and government mills, large-scale industrial enterprise, and government employees outside statutory areas.
3. Self-explanatory.
4. Distributed by local government (Union Councils) at half the statutory level.
5. Domestic relief and 'Food for Work.'

[Adapted from Kamal Siddiqui, The Political Economy of Rural Development in Bangladesh (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1987), p. 382]

As can be seen from the above table, the bulk of the foodgrains distributed through the rationing system went to the statutory areas and to the priority groups. The share of the modified rationing areas, comprised of the whole country except the six urban centres, was disproportionately low.

The public food distribution system not only discriminated against the rural areas, but also adversely affected the urban poor classes, especially the

destitutes, who left their villages in search of work and food after the devastating famine of 1974. After 1974 the government stopped issuing new ration cards in the statutory areas except to the government officials. The worst hit by this measure was the poorest of the poor in the urban areas.⁹⁷

Conclusion

As we have seen, rural development received considerable importance during both the Mujib and Zia regimes. Mujib's half-hearted socialism and indiscriminate use of the patronage system brought disaster to the economy; but his attempts to give a political direction to the decision-making process by using the party apparatus was salutary. However, the attempt failed because of the lack of trained political cadres committed to socialism.

The one-party system was an attempt towards centralization in the face of growing economic crisis and political unrest. Within the one-party framework, the district governor scheme was a promising step in that it provided for a political head for a district, in place of a bureaucratic head. In that sense it was a significant departure from the past practices in the field of local government and administration. The main drawback of the scheme, however, was the nominated governor; an elected head at the district level could have made a vast difference.

In respect of decentralization, no significant change took place at other levels of local government. Bureaucratic domination in the local bodies continued. A participatory pattern of rural development, envisaged in the Constitution, remained a far cry.

During the Zia period, bureaucratic elites regained their position, which had been shattered during Mujib's time. While the bureaucratic tradition was fully revived, Zia also relied on a populist-based leadership style. He was an ardent advocate of village-based politics and rural development through self help. The institution of the village government, introduced by Zia, despite limitations, was a serious step towards decentralization of powers and functions at the grass-roots level. The problem however, was with excessive party politicization and jurisdictional overlap with other local bodies. Other tiers of local government, viz., union, thana, and district, remained under bureaucratic control. Despite the regime's emphasis on village development, the urban-bias of policies continued.

In the next chapter we will discuss rural development administration as it was dealt with by the Ershad regime.

Endnotes:

1. Talukder Maniruzzaman, Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh (Dacca: Bangladesh Books International, 1975), p. 41.
2. For details on these programs, see ibid.
3. Nurul Islam, Development Planning in Bangladesh: A Study in Political Economy (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1977), p. 2.
4. Talukder Maniruzzaman, Bangladesh: Revolution and Its Aftermath (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1988), p. 157.
5. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (ASRC), Part I: The Services, 1973, Preface.
6. Ibid., Part II: The Administration, Article 10.4., p. 298.
7. See Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Local Councils and Municipal Committees (Dissolution and Administration) Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 7, 20th January, 1972).
8. For details on this, see A. M. M. Shawkat Ali (1982) Field Administration and Rural Development in Bangladesh (Dhaka, Centre for Social Studies, 1982), pp. 118-125.
9. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Presidential Order No. 22 of 1973, dated March 23, 1973.
10. Nurul Islam, op. cit., p. 211.
11. Mujib served as a Minister in the AL-led government in East Pakistan for less than a year.
12. The degree of uncertainty became so high that some civil servants reported to Emajuddin Ahmed that they used to check the newspaper in the morning, before leaving for the office, just to make sure that they still had their jobs. This fact epitomizes the gravity of the situation. See Emajuddin Ahmed, Bureaucratic Elites in Segmented Economic Growth: Bangladesh and Pakistan

(Dacca: The University Press Ltd., 1980), p. 147.

13.Ibid, p. 145.

14.Ibid., p. 147.

15.Ibid., Note 31.

16.Talukder Maniruzzaman (1988), op. cit., p. 158.

17.Ibid. p. 159.

18.Moudud Ahmed, Bangladesh: Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1983), p. 19.

19.Nurul Islam, op. cit., p. 24.

20.Ibid., pp. 26-27.

21.Abu Abdullah, "Land Reform and Agrarian Change in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1976, p. 92.

22.Ibid., p.95.

23.M. A. Momin, "Rural Poverty and Agrarian Structure," Journal of Local Government, Vol. 17, No.1, 1988, pp. 1-19.

24.The money required by peasants to submit to the government before they were given possession to redistributed lands.

25.Abu Abdullah, op. cit., p. 95.

26.Nurul Islam op. cit., p. 42.

27.Ibid., pp. 30-31.

28.Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, The First Five Year Plan (Dacca: Planning Commission, 1973), p. 4.

29.Nurul Islam, op. cit., pp.31-32.

30.Ibid., p. 196.

31.Ibid., p.198.

32.Ibid., pp.196-197.

33.Ibid., pp. 209-210.

34.Ibid., p. 210.

35.Ibid.

36.Jack Parkinson (1981) "Food Aid," in Just Faaland (ed.), Aid and Influence: The Case of Bangladesh (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.), p. 82.

37.The Food Rationing System was originally started by the British after the Bengal famine of 1943. The system remained in place during the Pakistan period, and also continued in Bangladesh.

38.Ibid., pp. 83-84.

39.Stefan De Vylder, Agriculture in Chains (London: Zed Press, 1982), p. 32.

40.The largest cities are: Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Narayanganj, and Rangamati.

41.Ibid.

42.Jack Parkinson, op. cit., p. 85.

43.Ibid.

44.Ibid., p. 94.

45.Ibid., p. 151.

46.Talukder Maniruzzaman (1988) op. cit., p. 162.

47.The opposition parties, which formed the United Front, were: The National Awami Party (Bashani Group); Bangla Jatiya League; Bangladesh Gono Mukti Union; Bangladesh Communist Party Leninist ; and Krishak-Sramik Samajbadi Dal. See Emajuddin Ahmed, op. cit., p. 156.

48.Ibid., p.173.

49.Ibid., p.157.

50.Moudud Ahmed, op. cit., p.235.

51. Holiday (National Weekly), March 16, 1975, quoted in ibid., p. 261.
52. Ibid., p. 245.
53. Ibid., pp. 245-6.
54. Ibid., p. 252.
55. Ibid.
56. Emajuddin Ahmed, op. cit., p. 160.
57. For details, see T. Maniruzzaman (1988), op. cit., pp. 182-185.
58. Rounaq Jahan, "Bangabandhu and After," The Round Table, 66, No. 2, 1976, p. 79.
59. Nurul Islam, op. cit., p. 2.
60. T. Maniruzzaman (1975) "Bangladesh in 1974," Asian Survey, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 117-128.
61. Parkinson, op. cit., pp. 97-99.
62. Ibid., p. 99.
63. Moudud Ahmed, op. cit., p. 212.
64. Ibid.
65. K. Westergaard, State and Rural Society in Bangladesh - A Study in Relationship (London: Curzon Press, 1985), p. 88.
66. Talukder Maniruzzaman (1988), op. cit., p. 202.
67. Ibid., p. 209.
68. Ibid., p. 210.
69. Nurul Islam, op. cit., p. 198.
70. For a full list of the 19-points programme, see Appendix-2.

71. An overwhelming majority (98.8%) voted in the affirmative. For details see, T. Maniruzzaman (1988), op. cit., p. 216.

72. K. M. Tipu Sultan and M. Ameerul Huq, "Thana Development Committee In Bangladesh: A Study of Its Roles and Functions," Journal of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Vol 11, Nos. 1 & 2, 1982, pp. 13-14.

73. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, "Swanirvar Bangladesh - Problems and Prospects," Political Economy, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1976, p.192.

74. Rita Afsar, Swanirvar As a Strategy for Endogenous Rural Development, BIDS Research Report No. 73 (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1988), p. 14.

75. S. M. Ali, "The Sense and Sensibility of Swanirvar Gram Sarkar Format for Rural Development," Administrative Science Review, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1979, p. 24.

76. M. A. Chashi, "Self-Reliant Rural Bangladesh - Problems and Prospects," Political Economy, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1976, p. 176.

77. M. A. Chashi, "What is Ulashi," in Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad and Monowar Hossain (eds.) Development through Self-help: Lessons from Ulashi, (Dacca: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1978), p.6.

78. S. M. Ali, "The Own Village Development," Bangladesh Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1981, p. 127.

79. Ibid., pp. 127-128.

80. Ibid., p.128.

81. Ibid., p. 130.

82. For details on this, ibid., pp. 134-135.

83. Rita Afsar, Swanirvar As a Strategy for Endogenous Rural Development, BIDS Research Report No. 73, 1988, p. 15.

84. Two models emerged, namely, the 'Kusthia model,' and the 'Sadullapur model.' For details see, S. M. Ali, "Self-Reliance (Swanirvar) Movement in the 1980s," Political Economy, Vol. 4, No.1, 1979, pp.79-82.

85. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, The Swanirvar Gram Sarkars (Constitution and Administration) Rules, 1980, Article 17.

86. Ibid.

87. For details, see Ahmed Shafiqul Huque, The Problem of Local Government in Bangladesh: The Failure of Swanirvar Gram Sarkar (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1984).

88. Md. A. Hakim, The Colonial Legacy in the Administrative System of a Post-Colonial State: The Case of Bangladesh, 1971-1985 (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1988), p. 298.

89. B. Khuda, Ideals and Realities in Participatory Institutions in Rural Bangladesh (Bergen: DERAP Publications No. 123, 1981), cited in M. Q. Zaman, "Ziaur Rahman: Leadership Styles and Mobilization Policies," Politics, Administration, and Change, Vol. 9, Nos. 1 & 2, 1984, p. 113.

90. Ibid.

91. For details on this point, see M. A. Chashi, In Quest of Shownirvar (Dhaka: Shownirvar Workers' Trust, 1984), p. 125.

92. Ibid.

93. Committee for Administrative Reforms/Reorganization (CARR), The Report, p. 136.

94. Stefan De Vylder, op. cit., p. 31.

95. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

96. For a detailed description, see M. A. Momin, "Rural Poverty and Agrarian Structure in Bangladesh," Journal of Local Government, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1988, pp. 1-19.

97. Nuimuddin Chowdhury, "Urban Rationing in Bangladesh in Mid-1980s: The Distribution of its Benefits," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1987, pp. 73-74.

Chapter V

RURAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN BANGLADESH: THE ERSHAD REGIME AND THE UPAZILA ADMINISTRATION

Upazila Administration: The Coming of the Concept

The 'thana,' which was renamed 'upazila' by the Ershad regime, and which initially meant a police outpost, owes its origin to the British rule in India. The British rulers experimented with various politico-administrative arrangements in their colony during their about two hundred years of stay in power. The reforms touched upon almost all aspects of life in India. The new land-revenue settlement systems, and reforms in the politico-administrative systems, like constitutional government, party politics, departmental organization, and district administration, set a new course in India's history which was to leave a deep impact on the future shape of Indian society.

During the Mughal period, the central government did not employ any police force below the sarkar (the unit corresponding to district) level. However, under the British rule districts were divided into several thanas or police jurisdictions, and a police officer called Darogah was posted in each thana with 10 to 15 barkandazes or armed guards under his command. The purpose was to entrench the central state power within the rural society. The central government wanted to establish a firm control over all means of legitimate coercion in their newly won colony. Also, the Darogah was made a salaried employee of the state, whereas the police were dependent on land grants in the

pre-British period.

The police outpost at the thana level was first introduced in Bengal. In discussing the impact of the Darogah system in the Bengal countryside, Basudev Chatterji writes:

In Bengal with the establishment of complete governmental monopoly over the legitimate instruments of coercion, the countryside became dotted with thanas as local centres of police control presided over by the darogahs as the local representatives of the Company Bahadur. In short, the rural police was conceived of as the front-line defence against the forces of disorder that threatened to undercut the authority of the Company.¹

Before the British take-over, the maintenance of law and order at the rural level was a prerogative of the zamindar. Zamindars represented the centralized authority at the local level; they were the locus of power and authority, the dispenser of justice, and the preserver of law and order in their respective localities.² "In the medieval Bengali literature the Zamindar was frequently referred to as a Raja [king], irrespective of the nature of his tenure."³ There is no doubt that in the medieval Bengal the zamindars used to enjoy very high status with their local subjects.

The zamindars' exclusive privileges, however, came under attack with the promulgation of the Police Regulations of 1792, which divested zamindars of their traditional law, order and police functions in their localities. The above Regulation made the police functions at the local level a central jurisdiction.⁴ While the Police Regulation of 1792 snatched away the zamindars' law, order and police functions, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 compensated the loss

by giving them extraordinary powers, in terms of land-revenue collection. This was one of the shrewd calculations of Governor General Cornwallis (1786-1793), who did not find it at all threatening to give more authority to the zamindars, because the risk of revolt in the far flung regions was minimized by divesting the zamindars of their coercive functions.

The permanent settlement system of land tenure, introduced by Cornwallis, made Bengal a little different from other provinces in some respects. In Bengal, the government relied more on the zamindars than on revenue officials, as intermediaries for the land-revenue collection; whereas in the non-zamindari provinces, the government employed a hierarchy of revenue officials, like kanungoes, naib tahsildars and tahsildars, from the village to the district level. "Though established for the revenue purposes, they served as a source of information as well as a means of carrying out executive orders for all branches of the government in rural areas."⁵ In Bengal, it is precisely this lack of revenue officials at the local levels which, mainly, resulted in an ineffective communication between the centre and the regions. The situation worsened immediately after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857; the financial burden and debts of the government increased, coupled with the deterioration in the law and order situation. It was at this point that the government felt the need for some kind of local self-government, for it could help mobilize some resources from internal sources at the same time as it would be face-saving.

In Bengal it was the Village Chowkidari Panchayat Act of 1870 which

marked the beginning of the serious legal steps toward local self-government.⁶ The next significant step was the Road Cess Act of 1871 which provided for committees with elective membership and a non-official majority.⁷ Though a beginning was made, nothing significant took place in that decade. After almost a decade and a half it was Lord Ripon who pushed the issue further and argued that the first generation of educated Indians, inspired by the ideals of democracy and liberty, should be given more share in the governance of the country. He felt that natives should be given some role in the local government first, then in the provincial and central governments gradually. Ripon's ideas were laid down in the form of a Resolution by the Government of India in May 1882. The Resolution emphasized the virtues of election to local bodies and the need for freeing them from official control. In the Resolution, the subdivision, not district, was considered to be the most important unit for local administration.⁸

Ripon's resolution on local self-government was the basis for the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885.⁹ This Act provided for a three-tier system of local government, with district boards at the top, union committees at the bottom, and local boards in between (at the sub-divisional level). However, unlike Madras, where the Act itself created the local bodies, the Bengal Act simply provided for an enabling clause authorizing the executive government to create them.¹⁰ As a result, what happened in Bengal was a half-hearted effort towards the creation of local bodies. Not only did the local-level bodies remain dependent upon the higher ones, but bureaucratic dominance also

continued. The District Board was headed by the District Magistrate, a civil servant. "The liberal views of Lord Ripon were not unfortunately shared by either the local governments or the authorities in England. The high hopes raised by [Lord Ripon] in the minds of the Indians were thus dashed to the ground." ¹¹

It was the Royal Commission on Decentralization (1909), also known as the Hobhouse Commission,¹² which recommended that further democratization of local bodies was necessary. Of the major recommendations of the Commission, several are of particular importance. Firstly, the Commission was in favour of the subdivision, the unit of administration below the district, to become the primary unit of administration.¹³ The Commission also recommended that governmental control over some financial matters be relaxed and functions be delegated to local committees. In order to ensure a sound financial basis for local bodies, the Commission recommended that some sources of taxation hitherto under provincial jurisdiction be transferred to local bodies. The Commission also felt that the non-official members of the local bodies should be elected and in a majority.¹⁴ The Commission also noted that for effective administration either the number of subdivisions should be increased or several than is should be grouped to form a 'circle,' under the supervision of a Sub-Deputy Magistrate - Collector.¹⁵ Unfortunately most of the recommendations of the Committee were ignored by the Government of India as well as by the provincial governments.¹⁶

In Bengal the next major recommendations for the reorganization of administration came from the Bengal District Administration Committee, 1913-14 (Levinge Report), which upheld most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Decentralization (1909). The Report criticized the prevalent practice of making lower local boards dependent upon the District Board and argued that this should be reversed. According to the Committee local self-government ought to start from the bottom and work up, otherwise the concept would lose its real meaning.¹⁷ The authors of the Report also felt the need of an executive agency below the sub-district level, and recommended the creation of the post of the Circle Officer (CO), as a connecting link between the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO), and the village communities.¹⁸

Following the recommendation of the Committee, the post of CO was created in 1919. But this was the time when WW I had just ended and the people of India were demanding more representation in the government. The Indians co-operated with the British government on the implicit understanding that after the war was over the local people would get more share in the scheme of government. The British government sought the co-operation of its Indian subjects on the plea that a British victory would make the world safer for democracy. Naturally, therefore, the nationalist politicians expected that more democratization would be carried out in India. It was against this backdrop that the Indian Constitutional Reforms Report (1918), popularly known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, was issued.¹⁹ The Report promised responsible

government in India, and recognized the need for popular representation in the local bodies. It was the Montagu- Chelmsford Report which provided the basis for the Village Self Government Act, 1919. This Act introduced a two-tier structure of local bodies - District Boards and, below them, Union Boards. The Act provided Union Boards with considerable power in respect of taxation for the management of village administration. Some judicial functions were also entrusted to the Union Boards. It is interesting to note that the constitution of the Union Boards remained virtually the same until their replacement by a different system in 1959.²⁰

During the last phase of the British administration, especially in the period after World War II, the British government devoted more attention to the promotion of local self-government in India; it was partly in response to the increasing problems of development. In the province of Bengal, the administrative system, once again, was thoroughly examined by a Committee, officially known as the Bengal Administration Enquiry Committee (1944-45), also known as the Rowlands Committee.²¹ One of the main purposes of the enquiry by this Committee was to find out how to make local governments efficient adjuncts to the administrative system.²² After an intensive investigation, the Committee found that the organizational structure and method of administration was no longer suitable to handle the ever-increasing developmental functions, which became universal phenomena in the post-war era. In view of the emerging developmental functions and also the issue of

accessibility to governmental services by the rural people, the Committee suggested that Union Boards should be the basic unit of administration, in the sense of being more active agents in the development work. The Committee therefore was in favour of strengthening the Union Board for the above purpose and recommended that a full-time government-paid clerk should be employed by the Board. The Committee also recommended that between the District Board and the Union Board, there should be a jurisdiction for a Circle Officer (CO). We have seen earlier that this was one of the recommendations of the Levinge Committee also. The difference between the two Committees, on this point, however, was that the Rowlands Committee opted in favour of one Circle Officer for each thana, instead of a group of thanas.

After the British withdrawal, the structure of local government in East Pakistan remained more or less the same as it was during the last phase of the British rule.²³ It was with the promulgation of the Basic Democracies Order, 1959, that the old local government structure was replaced. For the purposes of meeting the requirements of growing developmental functions at local levels, the government increased the number of COs, one for each thana. In essence, the above measure carried out the scheme that the Rowlands Committee had intended for the Bengal thanas.

The main functions of the CO were developmental. Unlike the executive heads at the district and subdistrict levels, the CO, though he was the head of general administration at the thana level, had no executive power in respect of

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

revenue collection or law and order. However, he was required to keep his administrative superiors (DO and SDO) informed about the general conditions regarding land revenue and law and order of his thana. In order to keep his superiors informed the CO was required to make extensive tours to rural areas. He was also required to maintain a tour-diary, which was to be sent later to the DO through the SDO. The COs function was that of a linking-pin between the higher echelons of the government and the rural society. But after the 1960s, when most of the government Departments began to employ their officers down to the thana level, the complexities of the CO's role increased. He neither had the executive power in respect of revenue, law and order, as mentioned earlier, nor did he have the authority to ensure coordination of development functions undertaken at the thana level. It is interesting to note in passing that what Cornwallis wanted to do by the creation of Darogah (Police Officers at the thana level), the later reform efforts wanted to achieve by the creation of the post of the CO. In both cases the primary objective had been to link the rural society with the central authority, though the nature of the link was different.

By the 1970s, it was found that the CO became almost helpless in the face of growing complexities in the administrative system. Though the CO was made the Vice Chairman of the Thana Council and was empowered to preside over its meetings in the absence of the SDO, who was the Chairman, he found himself in a difficult position to co-ordinate development functions. The complexity resulted mainly from the appointment of higher-grade officers at

the thana level by various government ministries. This factor gradually undermined the CO's coordinating capacity.²⁴

The Circle Officer, though he came under increasing challenge from within the expanding central bureaucracy, remained in virtual control of the local body at his level (thana) and below. Both during the British and the Pakistan periods, local bodies in the Bengal region remained under bureaucratic control, despite recognition of the importance of the elective principle and popular control. Under Ayub's Basic Democracies system, only the Union council members were elected directly, while the higher tiers, including the Thana Council, had mainly indirect elections. In the case of the Thana Council, the Union Council Chairmen were ex-officio members along with the thana level government officials. Both district and thana councils were headed by bureaucrats. This unrepresentative character in the local bodies continued even after the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

The 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh duly recognized the need for representative bodies at local levels, and this was reiterated by the Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (1972). But nothing substantial happened with regard to democratization of local bodies and making them effective adjuncts to the administrative system for rural development. It was this long-felt historic need that the Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR) sought to address in 1982.

The Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR)

Ershad came to power through a bloodless coup in March, 1982. Immediately after coming to power, Ershad's military government appointed a Committee to suggest measures for administrative reorganization. The Committee was headed by M. A. Khan, the then Naval Chief and the Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator (DCMLA). Members of the Committee included mostly civil and military bureaucrats, one University professor, and one journalist.²⁵ The Committee was appointed with the following terms of reference:

- (a) To review the structure and organization of the existing civilian administration with a view to identifying the inadequacies of the system for serving the people effectively; and
- (b) To recommend an appropriate, sound and effective administrative system based on the spirit of devolution and the objective of taking the administration nearer to the people.²⁶

In its thorough examination of the administrative organization of the country, the Committee identified a number of inadequacies, which were responsible for the poor performance of the administrative system. According to the Committee, the major defects were the following:

- lack of appropriate, consistent and uniform personnel policies with regard to recruitment, promotion and training of public services.
- tadbir [lobbying]-based approach to decision-making.
- difficulties of the common man to comprehend the compartmentalised functions and complexity in governmental decision-making.
- absence of a sound and durable political process to give appropriate, consistent and uniform policies with regard to public welfare.
- vertical-functional departmentalism that vitiates area-based coordination.

- weak local government system rendered weaker by lack of appropriate political direction.
- weakening of traditional administrative and representative institutions at different levels of administration.
- creation of parallel political and administrative institutions leading to conflict in jurisdiction.
- reluctance on the part of the political authority to devolve power to the representative institutions at the local levels.²⁷

Having identified the problems facing the administrative system, the CARR recommended some concrete measures with regard to their solution. Of the measures suggested by the CARR, the following ones are of importance for our purpose:

1. upgrading the quality of the thana administration;
2. establishing local self-government for the district and the thana;
3. abolishing the sub-division;
4. creating additional districts;
5. creating a high-ranking committee to ensure that the recommendations were, in fact, implemented.²⁸

After thorough enquiries and deliberations, the Committee concluded that the civil administration needed an overhauling at the division and sub-division levels. Also, the Committee strongly felt that the thana should be made the hub of rural development. Therefore, the Committee suggested that steps be taken to make the thana "into an unit of administration effective in terms of both regulatory and development administration."²⁹ If this were to be realized, the Committee felt, the thanas should be upgraded, which meant that they would need adequate infrastructural facilities, more trained personnel, and sufficient

financial resources. The Committee assumed that development administration at the local level should be a function of both elected representatives and government officials, and can take place in an environment of cooperation, not conflict. The Committee's recommendations in this regard were guided also by factors like the feasibility of participation of the local people in managing their own affairs, the cost effectiveness of maintaining centrally recruited departmental officials (subject matter specialists) at local levels, and providing supplies and services to those levels. The Committee found the district as a unit too large and the union too small for the above purposes.

Having made a strong point for thanas to be upgraded to make them the main centres of development, the Committee suggested that the proposed upgrading of thanas be undertaken on a phased basis. The existing thanas having Thana Training and Development Centres and also staff quarters were found to be suitable for the recommended upgradation; the number of such thanas was found to be 401 in the various administrative divisions. In order to undertake the recommended phase-wise upgrading, the Committee relied on a formula, based on population. According to the Committee, thanas having more than 200,000 population were to be taken up for upgrading in the first phase; thanas having a population over 100,000 were to be taken up in the second phase; and the thanas with population below 100,000 were to be taken up in the third phase.³⁰ The scheme suggested by the CARR was as follows:

Table 1: Phase-wise program of upgrading thana administration, as suggested by the CARR.

Division	1st Phase	2nd Phase	3rd Phase
Dacca	39	49	10
Chittagong	34	39	33
Rajshahi	22	65	17
Khulna	21	45	13
Total	116	198	73

[Source: Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR), The Report, p. 161.]

The Committee's recommendation for a phased upgrading covered 387 thanas only; it did not specify the sequence of upgrading for the remaining thanas. However, it is implied that the thanas having less than 100,000 population were to be taken up in later phases.

The government accepted most of the proposals made by the CARR. A high powered body for the implementation of the reform measures, as recommended by the CARR, was constituted by the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) in August 1982, less than three months after the submission of the CARR report. The body was named the National Implementation Committee on Administrative Reforms (NICAR).³¹ The next step in the process of implementation was the upgrading of the thanas, and a resolution to this end was passed on 23rd October, 1982. The resolution

provided for a structural set-up for the reorganized thanas and duties of all government officials to be posted at the thana level, along with the duties of the upgraded Thana Parishad Chairman, to be elected, were included in an annex to the Resolution.³² In the Resolution the chief executive officer at the upgraded thana level was named Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO). Later, in pursuance of the above resolution, the government passed an Ordinance in 1982 (No LIX), which provided the requisite legal foundation for the necessary upgrading, as stipulated in the Resolution. The Ordinance was titled 'The Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, in which terms like 'thana,' 'upgraded thana,' and 'Thana Nirbahi Officer' were used throughout. Later, another Ordinance (No. XXXIII of 1983) changed the title of the previous Ordinance to 'The Local Government (Upa-zilla Parishad and Upa-zilla Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982. In the revised Ordinance terms like 'thana,' and 'Thana Nirbahi Officer' were replaced by 'Upa-zilla,' and 'Upa-zilla Nirbahi Officer' respectively.³³ Another subsequent Ordinance (No. LXIII of 1983) made further changes in the title of the previously amended Ordinance. The spelling of the title 'upa-zilla' was changed to 'upazila', and related terms were changed accordingly.³⁴ However, for our purposes here we have used the terms 'upgraded thana,' and 'upazila' as interchangeable.

However, the phased upgrading of thanas as recommended by the CARR was modified by the government while implementing the recommendation. The

government undertook the task of upgrading in the sequence shown below:

Table 2: Phases of Upgrading

Phases	Dates	N o . o f <u>t h a n a s</u> upgraded
First Phase	7 November, 1982	45
Second Phase	15 December, 1982	55
Third Phase	24 March, 1983	55
Fourth Phase	15 April, 1983	57
Fifth Phase	2 July, 1983	51
Sixth Phase	1 August, 1983	47
Seventh Phase	14 September, 1983	50
Eighth Phase	7 November, 1983	37
		----- 397
Ninth Phase	1 December, 1983	18
Tenth Phase	1 February, 1984	45
		----- 63

[Source: Yusuf Hyder, Development: The Upazila Way (Dhaka: Dhaka Prokashan, 1986), p. 11]

The task of upgrading proceeded in phases at a very good speed. As the Table shows, by November, 7, 1983, 397 thanas had been upgraded, the number

rose to 460 by February, 1984. The court system was also decentralized at the upgraded thana level.³⁵

The upgrading process, however, met stiff resistance from the major opposition political parties, including the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; only one party, Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) supported the scheme. The major opposition parties were opposed not only to the administrative reorganization planned by the military government, they questioned the very legitimacy of the military rule. Major demands of the opposition included: immediate withdrawal of martial law, the return of the military to barracks, withdrawal of the ban on political activities - none of which were accepted by the regime.³⁶

As the regime was determined not to yield to the opposition demands, it made every effort to win over the support of the people. It stressed the importance of democratizing local bodies, and also committed itself to restoring democracy at the national level; assurances to withdraw martial law were also given. However, after considerable efforts - seeing no chance of compromise with the opposition - the President went on national Television to announce the dates of elections for the upgraded thanas as well as for the national Parliament. The date for the upazila election was set for March 24, 1984.³⁷

The opposition, however, called for a boycott of the election, and urged candidates who had filed their nomination papers to withdraw. They also appealed to the people to form resistance committees at village, union, upazila,

and district levels.³⁸ As a result of the intense pressure created by the opposition, the government was forced to postpone the upazila elections, but came up with a new strategy saying that elections for the Parliament would be held first. The date for the parliamentary elections was set for May, 1984. However, agitation against the regime continued and frequent strikes hit the national economy severely. Because of the non-cooperation of the opposition, the government was forced to change the date for parliamentary elections as well. A new date for the elections was set for December 8, 1984, in place of the previously set May 27, 1984.

This again did not work, as the opposition was determined not to settle for anything less than the withdrawal of Martial Law and the resignation of the regime. The regime, however, kept trying, and the date for the parliamentary elections was again shifted and a new date was set for April 6, 1985. This constant shifting of election dates clearly implies that the government wanted to buy time in the hope of coming to a reconciliation with the opposition.

In the meantime, the regime, sensing no likely compromise in view of the opposition tactics, began to think in terms of a different strategy to overcome this impasse. Lt. General Ershad, the President and the Chief Martial Law Administrator, in a nation-wide broadcast announced that he wants the people, not the opposition parties, to say whether or not they endorse the policies the government had proposed to undertake. For this he wanted a referendum, and the date for the same was fixed on March 21, 1985.³⁹

This time the government did not show any leniency, and went ahead with the new plan. The entire governmental bureaucratic machinery was used to persuade voters to participate in the referendum. According to a government estimate, 72.15% of eligible voters turned out and 94.47% of them voted in favour of General Ershad. Two important reasons contributed to this spectacular outcome. One was that no campaign against the referendum was allowed;⁴⁰ the second reason was the massive vote rigging, though the regime could have avoided it.

Interpreting the referendum results as the firm support for the regime's policies, the Ershad government proceeded firmly with the previously cancelled upazila elections. New dates for the elections were set for May 16, and May 20.⁴¹ Despite efforts by opposition parties to undermine the government's new efforts, the elections were well participated.⁴² It was later found that the opposition failed not only to prevent people from participating in the polls, they failed to prevent even their own party members from running for the upazila chairmanship.⁴³ It was in May, 1985 that the elected chairmen took over as heads of Upazila Parishads from the Nirbahi Officers who headed them until their election.

Local Government and Field Administration: The Upazila Way

What makes the upazila different from the previous thana is the degree of democratization and also of the decentralization of development functions. Until 1982, the thana administration was totally dependent on the centre; there was no elected body at the thana level. The Thana Parishad (Council) used to be headed by the Sub-divisional Officer (SDO), a bureaucrat. The 1982 reforms provided for the thana level an elected chairman, and a Parishad (Council), composed of elected and official members, with only elected members having the voting rights. Another feature to be noted is that only the Chairman of the upgraded Thana Parishad (TP) is elected directly; whereas chairmen of Union Parishads (UPs) continued to remain members of the TP by virtue of their office. However, the overriding principle that an elected representative will head the Parishad has remained unaltered.

But, according to section (d) of the Local Government (Thana Parishad Administration and Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, the government reserves the right to determine the number of government officials at the upazila level; also it exercises its right to appoint four members in the Parishad, three women and one freedom fighter. While the official members do not have voting rights, they can participate in the deliberations of the Parishad.

Another significant aspect of the 1982 reforms is the provision for the decentralization of development functions at the upgraded thana/upazila level. The government, however, has retained the regulatory functions; and also

development functions which are inter-upazila and regional in nature. The regulatory and development functions retained by the government are as follows:

1. Civil and criminal judiciary.
2. Administration and management of central revenue like income tax, customs and excise, land revenue, land tax, etc.
3. Maintenance of law and order;
4. Registration;
5. Maintenance of essential supplies including food;
6. Generation and distribution of electric power;
7. Irrigation schemes in more than one district;
8. Technical education and education above primary level, viz., agricultural, engineering, medical, education, high school, college and university education;
9. Modernised District hospitals and hospitals attached to the medical colleges;
10. Research organizations like Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Laboratories;
11. Large-scale seed multiplication and dairy farms;
12. Large-scale industries;
13. Inter-district and inter-thana means of communication, viz., posts, telegraph, telephones, railways, mechanically propelled road and inland water transport, highways, civil aviation, ports and shipping;
14. Flood controls and development of water resources;

15. Marine fisheries;
16. Mining and mineral development;
17. Compilation of national statistics;⁴⁴

The government Resolution of 23rd October, 1982, which provided for the list of 'retained subjects,' however, did not provide for any list of 'transferred subjects.' A list of 'transferred subjects' was prepared by Md. Faizullah by the method of exclusion, as he calls it, i.e., by excluding the retained subjects from the total functions carried out at the upgraded thana/upazila level. The list includes:

1. Agriculture, including extension services, input, supply services, and irrigation;
2. Primary education;
3. Health and family planning, including Upazila Health Complexes, Medical College Hospitals and all population control services;
4. Rural water supply and sanitation program;
5. Rural works program;
6. Food for works program;
7. Disaster relief including vulnerable group feeding (VGF), institutional group feeding (IGF) etc.;
8. Co-operatives and co-operative-based rural development programmes;
9. Fishery development;
10. Livestock development.⁴⁵

As it can be seen from the above list, the Upazila Parishads are expected to perform a wide array of functions. However, it is a plain truism that without adequate financial support, the upazilas simply can't perform the functions allocated to them. The chronic shortages of financial resources has been found to be one of the main causes of the lack of development of strong local self-government in Bangladesh. This may be one of the reasons why the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance of 1982 provided for the creation of an Upazila Parishad Fund for each Upazila. Under the Ordinance, the Fund will have the following sources:

- (a) the proceeds of all taxes, rates, tolls, fees and other charges levied by the Parishad under this Ordinance;
- (b) all rents and profits payable or accruing to the Parishad from the property vested in or managed by it;
- (c) all sums received by the Parishad in the performance of its functions under this Ordinance or under any other law for the time being in force;
- (d) all sums contributed by individuals or institutions or by any local authority;
- (e) all receipts accruing from the trusts placed under the management of the Parishad;
- (f) all grants made by the Government and other authorities;
- (g) all profits accruing from investments; and
- (h) such proceeds from such sources of income as the Government may direct to be placed at the disposal of the Parishad.⁴⁶

For the sake of simplicity, the above sources can be classified into two categories: (1) internal sources, and (2) government grants. In order to generate revenues from internal sources the Upazila Parishads have been empowered to

levy taxes, rates, tolls and fees from the following:

1. Lease money on Jalamahals [water bodies used as fisheries] situated entirely within thana boundaries;
2. Taxes on professions, trades and callings;
3. Tax on dramatic and theatrical shows and other entertainment and amusement;
4. Street lighting tax;
5. Fees for fairs, agricultural and industrial shows and exhibitions and tournaments;
6. Fees for licenses and permits granted by the Parishad;
7. Toll on services and facilities maintained by the Parishad;
8. Lease money from specified hats [periodic markets], bazaars and ferries to be determined by the Government.⁴⁷

Of the above sources, only the lease of Jalamahals and hats and bazaars have the potential, to generate much revenue. By 1983, there were 8513 Jalamahals in Bangladesh, which comprised 4,46,510 acres of land. The average size of a Jalamahal was 52.45 acres.⁴⁸ The problem, however, is that not all upazilas have Jalamahals.⁴⁹ Even the upazilas having Jalamahals will not be able to generate any substantial amount of revenue from the source because of a legal limitation. Under the present arrangement the upazilas can tax only the Jalamahals which are bigger than 2 acres and smaller than 20 acres. This kind of Jalamahal is very limited in number. The prospect of another major source of income, hats and bazaars, is also not very bright because they are not equally developed in all upazilas. Therefore, what constitutes the major sources of

income for some upazilas, will yield little revenue in many others. Furthermore, sources like (1) taxes on professions, trades and callings, (2) tax on dramatic and theatrical shows, etc., (3) street lighting tax, and (4) fees from licenses and permits are poor sources of revenue. Traditionally, it was the Union Parishad which used to collect revenues from these sources.⁵⁰ The transfer of these sources to the Upazila Parishads has weakened the tax bases of the Unions Parishads, and hence it remains as a source of conflict between the two tiers of local government.

The taxes made available to the Upazila Parishads are woefully inadequate to meet their financial needs. In the face of meager revenue generation from the internal sources, the Upazila Parishads will remain heavily dependent upon the central government. Usually there are three methods by which the central government can funnel funds to the Upazila Parishads: (1) conditional grants; (2) unconditional grants; and (3) revenue-sharing. As the Upazila Parishads do not have any constitutional basis, and were created by executive fiat, the central government does not have any obligation to follow either method 2 or 3, and its usual method is conditional grants.⁵¹ Of course, there are some arguments for providing such grants. One major argument is that by such grants the central government can make local plans and projects compatible with the national objectives. But the main problem in the context of Bangladesh is that the centre takes undue advantage of the instruments of control at its disposal, financial control being the main one, to influence local

politics.

With the creation of Upazilas, the nature of intergovernmental grant system has undergone some changes. The Annual Development Program (ADP) of the government through which funds channelled to the Upazila Parishads, does not provide any grant to the Upazilas under the title Rural Works Program (RWP) or Food-For-Work (FFW). Under the government's decentralization program Upazila Parishads have been entrusted with handling the above programmes. In order to help Upazila Parishads undertake development projects, the central government will provide them two block funds under the title: 'Development Assistance Fund' and 'Infrastructure Fund.' The latter is meant for creating infrastructural facilities at the Upazila level, and once they are completed, the funding may be stopped.⁵² The pattern of allocation to the above heads through the ADP can be seen from the table below.

Table 3: ADP allocation for Upazilas

Year	UZ Infra- structure to UZs	Development Assistance	Total	(%) of ADP Tk. allocation	(%) of Revenue Surplus of the Government
1982-83	130.00	--	130.00	7.17	23
1983-84	172.30	170.95	343.25	18.15	65
1984-85	223.00	200.00	423.00	22.50	77
1985-86	225.00	200.00	425.00	25.17	65
1986-87	175.00	200.00	375.00	18.75	34*
Total	925.30	770.95	1696.25		

*Note: This is based on a revenue surplus expectation of Tk. 1100.00 cr. in FY 86/87 which may change (in many years in the past revenue surplus were usually less than estimated) thereby changing/increasing the portion of Upazila allocation.

[Source: Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission, Programming Division (Upazila Cell), An Interim Report on Upazila Development, 1982-83 to 1985-86 (July, 1986), p. 4].

As per section 40 of the Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, the government provides strict guidelines as to how block funds should be used. The Planning Commission provided comprehensive guidelines in July, 1983, which were slightly revised in July, 1985; some more subsequent revisions took place in June, 1988. According to the June, 1988 guidelines the Development Assistance Fund provided by the ADP has to be spent in the following manner:

Table 4: Sectoral Allocation Pattern for Annual Upazila Development Plan (AUDP)

Sector	Previous Allocation		Present Allocation	
	UZ Guidelines, 1985		UZ Guidelines, 1988	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Maximum				
a. Agriculture and Irrigation	15%	25%	12%	20%
b. Small and Cottage Industries	5%	10%	5%	10%
Physical Infrastructure				

				202
c. Transport and Communication	17.50%	30%	15%	25%
d. Housing and Physical Planning	10.00%	17.5%	10%	17.5%
Socioeconomic Infrastructure				
e. Development of Education	5%	12.5%	5%	12.5%
f. Physical,			7.5%	15.0%
g. Health	7.5%	15.0%	5.5%	12.5%
h. Sports	2.5%	7.5%	2.5%	7.5%
i. Misc.	2.5%	5.0%	2.5%	5.0%

Note: UZ = Upazila.

[Adapted from Government of Bangladesh, the Planning Commission, Upazila Guidelines, 1988, pp. 4-5]

The guidelines not only impose a formula for the allocation of fund sectorally, but also provide that the following types of work can not be undertaken from the Upazila Development Fund:

1. Construction of cafeteria, restaurant or shopping centres;
2. Extension of Office buildings or any other buildings for the Upazila functionaries;
3. Expenditure for payment of arrear bills of any government department such as arrear salary or any other dues, or for payment to cover any losses;
4. Construction/reconstruction of gate or boundary walls of the UZ Parishad Bhavan, Shahid Minar, Mosque, Temple, Church, etc.

5. Purchase of generator for electrification;
6. Construction of new school/college/madrasha [religious school];
7. Construction of any club or the association buildings;
8. Construction/repair or extension of buildings for bank or any other government or autonomous organization;
9. Construction of Tennis ground;
10. Extension of loan to any individuals, family or institution;
11. Purchase of land for construction of new hats and bazaars;
12. Expenditure on national government's retained subjects;
13. Expenditure on any item of the Revenue Head of the UZP;
14. Direct purchase of land for digging of ponds, playgrounds or schools;
15. Undertaking of projects for generating income for the Upazila Parishad;
16. Procurement of expensive equipment, furniture and luxury good;
17. Undertaking of projects in the municipal areas;
18. Establishment of Kindergarten schools;
19. Expenditure on the same project by amalgamation of UZ Development Fund and funds available for the divisible components of national projects;
20. Undertaking of schemes without considering the practical feasibility, priority, constraints of the local resource, etc.⁵³

Many of the restrictions imposed by the centre on Upazila Parishads are understandable; they seem to ensure proper utilization of centrally allocated funds. But the reasons for restriction barring UZPs from undertaking profitable

ventures for the generation of income is not very clear. It certainly limits the ability of the UZP to be functionally independent.

However, it can be recalled at this point that for the first time in the history of local government in this area, many functions have been transferred to the thana level and the local body has been provided with a tax base. It should also be recalled that the 1982 reforms provided for an elected chairman at the thana level, which is new in the context of Bangladesh, both in the post-independence and the pre-independence phases of her history. The elected chairman has been given considerable power as well; he has been made the chief coordinator of all development activities at the thana/upazila level. The chairman has also been empowered to oversee the government officials deputed to the Thana Parishad.

These are some of the positive sides of the administrative reorganizations, envisaged by the CARR and given concrete shape by the Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982. However, these seemingly bright aspects of the reorganization effort must be scrutinized in terms of major issues pertinent to the growth and development of local bodies. To begin with, the Local Government Ordinance provides the central government with unqualified power with respect to the approval of the budget (section 36), sanction of development plans (section 40), taxation (section 42), supervision and control (sections 49 and 50). Further, the government holds extraordinary power in such matters as (i) inquiry into the

affairs of Parishads (section 51), (ii) suppression of Parishads (section 52), approval of all regulations of a Parishad (section 59), and delegation of power (section 65). Most importantly, the government, under section 4 of the Ordinance, has the right to appoint four members in the Upazila Parishad (3 women members and another, usually from the freedom fighters).

All these control mechanisms coupled with the heavy financial dependency of local bodies point to the fact that the elected Upazila chairman and also the Upazila Parishad have virtually no alternative to be functionally independent of the central government.

Another significant aspect of the 1982 reform is that it not only provided for more power to the local government side at the thana level, but it also strengthened the government bureaucracy at that level. The chief executive officer (CO/UNO) has been given additional powers; new offices have been created (Judiciary, Statistical Office, Upazila engineer, etc.), and some structures have been rationalised (e.g., integration of health and family planning; agriculture, fisheries and livestock). Under the upazila scheme the chief executive officer of the field administration, called the UNO, who is supposed to work as the staff officer of the elected chairman of the UZP, has been given the controlling power over other departmental officials at the upazila level. One of the main instruments provided to the UNO is the power to write the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of the Upazila level officers dealing with the retained subjects, except Munsif, the head of the judicial organ at the Upazila

level. The Report is a kind of performance evaluation containing comments on the moral and intellectual integrity of the officer concerned. Later it is used as a basis for promotion. Another authority vested in the UNO is the supervision and control of the revenue and budget administration of the Upazila. Moreover, he has been empowered to approve payment of all expenditures, a treasury function. The vesting of the above authorities in the UNO has made him a superior authority in relation to other officials working at the Upazila level.⁵⁴ The authority to write the ACR of officials concerned with transferred subjects has been vested in the chairman, UZP; however, the judiciary has been kept out of his control also.

The enhanced authority given to the Nirbahi Officer, belonging to the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administrative) cadre gave rise to serious problems. The age-old generalist/specialist controversy manifested itself in various forms. The thana level Health officials forced the central government "to rescind the decision to have their ACRs written by the UNO."⁵⁵ The Police also freed themselves from the control of the UZPs by persuading the government to cancel the arrangement for granting them casual leaves (CLs) and writing their ACRs by the UZ Chairmen.⁵⁶

Members of three specialist services, the medical, engineering and agriculture, vehemently opposed the government's decision to place their services under the UZP. They formed a central co-ordination committee to create pressure on the central government to withhold the decision until the

Upazila Parishad elections were held.⁵⁷ Because of the mounting pressure, the government had to concede to the demands of the technical officials and suspend temporarily their deputation to upazilas. It took the government quite some time to correct this anomalous situation. It was not until the overwhelming victory of General Ershad in the referendum of 21 March, 1985, and the holding of UZ elections in April, 1985, that the government was in a position to take a strong stand on the controversial generalist/specialist issue, which almost paralysed the newly created Upazila administration. In May 1985, the government passed a resolution concerning the above generalist/specialist issue. The resolution called for the resumption of the deputation of government officials at the UZ level.⁵⁸ Though this bitter intra-cadre rivalry seems to have subsided for the time being, it may arise any time in the future. Before proceeding to examine how the upazila administration was perceived by the elected members and members of the central bureaucracy working at the upazila level, let us make a brief comparison of the newly instituted arrangement with the previously developed Comilla model of rural development to find out whether they have any common thread or whether the upazila experiment is a completely new innovation for rural development.

The Upazila Administration and the Comilla Model: A Comparison

The Upazila administration is the outcome of a long-felt need in the field of local government and rural development administration in Bangladesh. That the thana could be an effective forum for rural development administration,

especially from the viewpoint of coordination and cost-effectiveness, was amply demonstrated by the Comilla model of rural development, especially its Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) component.⁵⁹ The TTDC came into being as an answer to coordination problems for supplies and services. It sought to achieve three kinds of coordination: "coordination of different departmental programmes at the thana level; coordination of departmental efforts with those of the next lowest level of government, the unions; and coordination between the different unions."⁶⁰

Also, the concept of the TTDC as a forum for bringing together the elected representatives and the government officials for the better use of scarce resources has been accepted in the upazila scheme. The Member Secretary of the Khan Committee (1982), which gave the blueprint of the upazila administration, admits this fact.⁶¹

It can be noted here that Akhter Hameed Khan, the first Director of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) recognized a long time ago that the thana should be the main centre of coordination of development activities. He also recognized the need for an official sufficiently empowered to direct and supervise local bodies and nation-building departments at that level. In a note sent to the Chief Secretary of the Government of East Pakistan, expressing his views on local government and rural development, Akhter Hameed Khan wrote:

The importance of coordination at the thana level is extremely great. As pointed above all government departments have posted

officers at the thana headquarters. This place, in the course of generations, has become a vital and well established centre for the people of the area. The minimum institutions of a modern civilised society have grown here. It is easily accessible to all the Union Boards enclosed in it. What is needed is a coordinating officer who can intelligently plan and direct all development activity, who can supervise and encourage the Union Boards as well as establish close relations between the Departmental servicing and advice and local effort.⁶²

As can be seen, the appointment of the UNO with a high rank and pay scale, and conferring on him supervisory authority over other upazila level officers, is very much the same thing that Akhter Hameed Khan recommended for an improved thana administration. Where the Upazila scheme makes a significant difference from the Comilla approach, is the provision of an elected chairman. "For the first time ever in Bangladesh (though not quite the first time in South Asia), the chairman of a thana-level representative body would be directly elected."⁶³ This, again, did not happen all of a sudden. The Constitution of Bangladesh clearly provided for elected representative bodies at all levels of local government; it also provided for the narrowing down of the urban-rural gap. The Chaudhuri Committee Report, submitted during Sheikh Mujib's period, clearly reiterated the relevant constitutional clause (Art 59) in support of the Committee's strong plea in this regard. The Chaudhuri Committee was opposed to introduction of government officials into local bodies, and also to the inclusion of UP chairmen as ex-officio members of the TP. The Committee favoured direct election for all local bodies. As the Committee states:

The introduction of official members was an imposition of the bureaucratic element on the Thana Councils. It was a negation of democracy. Even if the Thana Parishad is to consist of the Chairmen of the Union Parishads, its authority will not be in the nature of direct mandate from the people, although it will be possible to avoid the difficulties associated with elections. In that case, the Thana Parishad will be a Committee, at best a Coordinating Committee to coordinate the activities of the UP. This seems to be contrary to the provision of the Constitution. We are of the view that the members of the TP should be directly elected in accordance with the provision of the Constitution.⁶⁴

Therefore, it becomes apparent that the idea of the upazila administration was already there; the CARR simply modified and transplanted it. The Comilla model of rural development, which originated before the independence of Bangladesh, the Constitution of Bangladesh, and also the ASRC, which reported in 1972, served as the main forerunners of the CARR, which came up with the idea of the Upazila administration.

Let us now see how the new upazila scheme has been viewed by the main actors associated with the institution since its inception.

Upazila Administration: View from Within

With the take-over of functions by elected UZP Chairmen in May, 1985, the bitter controversy over the co-ordinating role of the UNO and the authority of the UZP over transferred subjects seems to have declined considerably. It needs to be repeated here that the technical cadre resented not only the co-ordinating role of the UNO, but also the justification of their deputation to the UZPs.

By the time of my interview with the concerned actors of the upazila administration, the institution had already gone through seven years of its

existence. The UNO had started working as the principal staff officer of the elected chairman. New government functionaries deputed to the upazilas had assumed their offices and the scheme, as planned, started functioning. The concerned actors at the upazila level whom I interviewed were thus in a position to give their assessment of the system from what they had experienced since the scheme started functioning.

Generally, there is an assumption that government officials, on the average, are more highly educated than the public representatives at the local levels.⁶⁵ The upazilas we surveyed lend support to this popular stereotype. In terms of age group, educational background, and work experience the two groups - elected members and officials - seem to have marked differences (Tables 3, 4, and 5). The findings show that elected members at the upazila level are younger than the central government officials working at that level.

Table 5: Age group of Upazila-level elected members and officials surveyed

Age (in years)	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of responses	% of Total	No. of responses	% of Total
25-29	--	--	1	4.00
30-35	6	28.56	4	16.00
36-40	11	52.40	9	36.00
41-45	2	9.52	7	28.00
46-50	2	9.52	3	12.00

51-55	--	--	1	4.00
No answer	--	--	--	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

The elected groups are also found to have much lower educational qualifications, on the average. Only 33% of them are found to have a bachelor or higher degree, while 77% of officials are found to have similar qualifications; 25% of them have H.S.C. degrees and also diplomas in some field; only 8% have high school graduation, and none are below that level.

Table 6: Educational background of Upazila-level elected members and officials

Level of Education	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of	% of Total	No. of	% of Total
Below S.S.C.	8	38.09	--	--
S. S. C.	4	19.04	2	8.00
H.S.C.	2	9.52	1	4.00
H.S.C+Diploma	-	--	5	25.00
Bachelor	3	14.28	13	65.00
Masters	4	19.04	3	12.00
No answer	-	--	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

Notes: S. S. C. = Secondary School Certificate; H. S. C. = Higher Secondary

School Certificate. The former requires studies up to grade 10 in a High School; the latter needs two more years of study after High School graduation. In Bangladesh, it is Colleges, affiliated to Universities, which offer H. S. C. degrees. In addition to offering H. S. C. degrees, most colleges also offer Bachelor (Pass) degrees. Universities offer Bachelor (Honors) degrees, but an H. S. C. degree is required to enter an University. Here we have placed both Bachelor (Pass) and Bachelor (Honors) degree-holders in the same category.

The officials are ahead of elected members in terms of work-experience also. Only 19% of elected members have work experience prior to their present assignment, whereas the corresponding figure for the officials is 56%.

Table 7: Work Experience of Upazila-level elected members and officials

Experience	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
Yes	4	19.04	14	56.00
No	16	76.16	11	44.00
No answer	1	4.76	--	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

These marked differences between the two groups seems to have been causing some problems in the smooth working of the newly created bodies, as revealed by my interviews.

Some Pertinent Aspects of the Upazila

As mentioned, the elected chairman of the UZP has been given considerable power under the new arrangement. No doubt, it has made a significant departure from the previous practice where the bureaucrats belonging to the central government always dominated the local bodies, but it has also given rise to various conflicts. The central bureaucracy's fall from grace - the head of the general administration now the principal staff officer of the UZ chairman, and losing voting rights in the Committee deliberations - has given rise to various resentments. However, on the question of the adequacy of the power given to the new upazila chairman by the 1982 reforms, both elected representatives and civil servants showed striking similarity in their opinion (Table 8).

Table 8: Power of the Upazila Chairman as viewed by the concerned actors - elected members and public officials

Power	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
Not enough	4	19.04%	3	12.00%
Enough	13	61.90%	16	64.00%
Excess	4	19.04%	4	16.00%
No answer	-	--	2	8.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

Among the elected representatives we surveyed (21 in total) 19% felt that the power entrusted to the Upazila Chairmen was not enough, while 70% felt that power was enough and 19% felt that it was excessive. Among the officials surveyed (25 in total), 12% felt that the power allotted to the Upazila Chairman was not enough, 64% felt that it was enough, 16% felt that it was excessive, and 8% did not answer the question.

The same respondents were also asked to give their impression about whether the functions of the UNO should be under the control of the chairman. The respondents were given three main choices, from which they were asked to choose one (Table 9).

Table 9: Functions of the UNO as viewed by respondents
(UNO functions should be under the control of the Upazila Chairman)

Control	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
In all respects	8	38.00%	7	28.00%
In some respect	8	38.00%	13	52.00%
In no respect	2	9.50%	4	16.00%
No answer	3	14.20%	1	4.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

Of the elected representatives, 38% (8 out of 21) felt that the functions of the UNO should be under the control of the Upazila Chairman in all respects. Another 38% thought that the functions should be under his control only in some respects, while about 10% of respondents said that the functions of the UNO should not be under the control of the Upazila chairman at all, and 14% did not answer the question. On the issue of the relationship between the head of general administration and the elected chairman at the upazila level, a significant number (76%) of elected members wanted some kind of control of the latter over the former. Surprisingly a great majority of public officials (80%) did not object to the control of UNO functions by an elected chairman.

Among the public officials surveyed, 28% said that all functions of the UNO should be under the control of the Upazila Chairman, 52% felt that the

functions should be under his control in some respects, 16% did not approve of the idea at all, and 4% did not answer the question. The approval of officials to placing the bureaucratic head under the supervision of an elected head may be interpreted as their support to democratization of local bodies.

The respondents were asked whether or not any alternative to the central bureaucracy at the field level was possible. The overwhelming majority of both categories of respondents (87% elected members and 80% officials) answered that the central bureaucracy was needed at the upazila level (Table 10)

Table 10: Alternative to central bureaucracy at the field level

(Is an alternative to the central bureaucracy at the field-level possible?)

Alternative	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
Yes	3	14.20%	4	16.00%
No	18	86.80%	20	80.00%
No answer	-	--	1	4.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

Only 14% of elected members thought that alternative to central bureaucracy is possible at the upazila level whereas 16% of officials supported the idea; 8% of officials declined to comment on the issue.

The respondents who said that alternative is possible referred to a form of organization which would include public representatives, members of the

government organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs). One of the respondents suggested that local government and rural development affairs could be entrusted to political party organizations. These are merely suggested measures and, in practice, would be very difficult to implement. Most public representatives, however, did not find any major problem in the presence of the bureaucracy at the local level. Both in the questionnaire and informal discussions, they stressed the need for coordination. As is evidenced from the survey, the issue is not one of dismantling bureaucracy, but how to make it more responsive and functional. The representation of various client groups - NGOs and political parties, for example - sounds desirable as an idea, but won't be easy to materialize.

The respondents were asked to give their opinion about the voting right of the official members of the Upazila Parishad; under the current arrangement, they have lost their previous privilege to vote in the Parishad deliberations. Surprisingly, the response from both public representatives and public officials is in favour of a voting right for the public officials (Table 11).

Table 11: A voting right for Upazila-level officials
(Should the centrally recruited officials deputed to the
Upazila-level have the voting right?)

Voting Right	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
Yes	14	66.66%	20	80.00%
No	6	28.57%	4	16.00%
No answer	1	4.76%	1	4.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

Of the elected members 67% had no objection to giving a voting right to bureaucratic officials, and 80% of the officials wanted it. While 29% of elected members said 'no' to the voting rights of officials, the percentage of the officials supporting the same was 16%. About 5% elected members and 4% officials did not respond to the question. The demand of the officials to participate in the Upazila Parishad deliberations as voting members is quite understandable, and, in fact, they used to be voting members until 1982 local government reforms. But, the favorable attitude of the elected members towards the issue is not quite understandable because such approval may mean the loss of their own power.

Several explanations may be possible in interpreting this situation. One reason may be that elected members have not developed enough confidence in

running local affairs by themselves, or another reasons may be that under the present system of local government where centrally recruited officials are deputed to local levels by law, there is no valid ground to keep them at a distance. The entitlement to vote in the Parishad deliberations may have been considered as a means to solicit their whole-hearted co-operation.

The concerned Upazila-level actors were also asked to identify some of the problems of the newly instituted arrangement. Out of the 21 elected representatives surveyed, 13 identified personality conflict between the elected representatives and bureaucrats as the number one problem in the upazila administration. Nine of them thought social distance of officials from elected members to be a main problem; 6 identified the inability of both elected members and the bureaucracy to understand local problems. Another 4 out of the 21 identified the inability of the local government to control the transfer and promotion matters of the civil servants as the major problem. When the civil servants were asked to give their opinions about the problems of upazila administration, they also identified personality conflict (18 out of 25) as the number one problem. Of the 25 officials, 15 thought that inability of the representatives as well as civil servants to understand local problems was another major problem; 11 members identified the transfer and promotion matters of civil servants, in which local government bodies had no control, as a major problem.

In addition to surveying the opinion of Upazila-level actors about the

problems emanating at the horizontal level, we asked them how the new institution is vertically linked with the two tiers immediately above and below the upazila, i.e., district and union. Historically, districts were the main units of administration in the region constituting present-day Bangladesh. The deputy commissioner, head of the district administration, was once regarded as the eye, the ear and the hand of the government at the district level. Historically there has always been a "pull to the district" in the Bengal region.⁶⁶ Given this fact, it is important to see whether the primacy of the district administration has changed at all in the sub-national administration in Bangladesh, especially in the context where the upazila is supposed to be the key unit of development administration. We surveyed the opinion of upazila level actors to find out how, in the changed circumstances, the role of the deputy commissioner is being perceived by them.

Upazila and the District

Under the present arrangement of the local government system, centrally recruited officials located at the upazila level are functionally responsible to their district superiors. Again officers dealing with the transferred subjects have been made responsible to the UZP also. The UNO has been working as the principal staff officer of the elected chairman, and at the same time he is in charge of the retained subjects at the UZ level (not under the jurisdiction of the UZ). Hence, the UNO and also other officials have been placed under double

allegiance. Officers in charge of transferred subjects are required to draw their salaries from the UZPs, but they are dependent on their line ministries for their appointments, transfers, and promotion matters.

There are allegations that deputed officials try to satisfy their departmental heads rather than the UZ chairman. The same is true about the UNO too. Though UZPs are no longer dependent on the ZPs for the approval of their projects, the district-level superiors can still influence the UZ functionaries for the reasons indicated above. We asked the elected chairmen as well as the members of the central bureaucracy functioning at the upazila level whether the powers entrusted to the UZ Chairman and the Nirbahi Officer is enough or whether the deputy commissioner still has too much power with regard to UZ administration (Table 12).

Table 12: Power of the Deputy Commissioner (Does the D.C. have excess power with regard to the Upazila administration?)

Excess power	Elected members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of responses	% of total	No. of responses	% of total
Yes	8	39.89%	11	44.00%
No	10	47.61%	11	44.00%
No answer	3	12.50%	3	12.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

While 12.5% of elected members did not respond to the above question, 47.61% felt that under the present arrangement the DC's power with regard to

the upazila administration is not in excess, whereas 39.89% disagreed with the above view. It is true that the role of the DC in terms of development activities at the Upazila level has been sufficiently curtailed, but in terms of regulatory activities he still enjoys considerable power.

In addition to the district administration, the Upazila administration is also integrally linked with the Union Parishad, the unit immediately below it. As the decentralization measures of 1982 have resulted in relocation of functions of the two bodies, in many cases to the disadvantage of the Union Parishad, it is important to know the nature of functional linkages between them and the way that has been evaluated by relevant actors.

UZ and the Union Council

Under the present arrangement, it is the elected chairman of the UPs who become ex-officio members of the UZP. It has some positive at the same time some negative sides. On the positive side, the ex-officio memberships of the chairmen of lower councils provide a functional link with higher councils, in this case the Upazilas. The UP chairmen have also been given the power to remove the Chairman, in case of gross misconduct.

On the negative side the UPs have been made subservient to the powerful UZPs. The 1982 Local Government Reforms have taken away some tax bases from the UPs, which they previously enjoyed, thereby weakened their financial bases. Now the UP needs the approval of the UZP to levy taxes, rates and fees.

The Annual budget of the UP also needs to be approved by the UZPs. There has been allegations that working relationship between the UZ Chairman and the Chairmen of UPs, ex-officio members of the UZP, is not a very happy one, in many cases. One of the main reasons for this is that many UP chairmen were contenders for the post of the UZP chairmanship, and lost in the contest. The candidates who had lost in the UZP chairmanship election later returned as the members of the Parishad in their capacities as the UP chairmen. One possible solution to avoid this uneasy situation was to set the election dates for the two bodies on the same day or to bar the UP chairmen to run the contest for the UZP chairmanship. We asked the concerned representatives, and also public officials whether the election for the two bodies should be set on the same day, they did not seem to have attached any seriousness to this question at all (see Table 13).

Table 13: Date of election for the UZP and the UP
(Do you think that elections for the Upazila Parishad and the Union Parishad should be held on the same day?)

Election on the same day	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of responses	% of total	No. of responses	% of total
Yes	4	19.09%	5	20.00%
No	13	61.82%	18	72.00%
No answer	4	19.09%	2	8.00%
Total	21	100.00%	25	100.00%

19.09% of the elected members said that it could be a better arrangement, another 19.09% did not reply to the question, whereas 61.82% of them did not find any problem with the existing arrangement. A majority of the public officials (72%) did not find any problem, while 20% of them thought that our proposed alternative arrangement could be of help in minimizing conflicts arising from the composition of the elected membership. The remaining 8% of the officials did not reply to the question.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate the upazila administration as an organizational arrangement (Table 14). A great majority of the respondents, both elected members and bureaucrats, supported the scheme, but the support was stronger among the elected representatives.

Table 14: Upazila as an organizational arrangement
(How would you evaluate the upazila as an organizational arrangement?)

As an arrangement	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of responses	% of Total	No. of responses	% of Total
Bad	--	--	2	8.00
Not Bad	3	14.28	5	20.00
Good	12	57.14	11	44.00
Very Good	6	28.57	5	20.00
No answer	--	--	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.0

It is interesting to note here that 57% of the elected members evaluated the upazila scheme as 'good,' against 44% of public officials interviewed. Though some the public officials (20%) evaluated the scheme as 'very good', the corresponding number of elected members who evaluated the scheme in the same way was higher (29%). No elected member evaluated the scheme as 'bad,' but a small number of officials (8%) did so, while 8% declined to comment on the question. As it appears from the findings, although nearly two-thirds of them thought the scheme to be good or very good, in general, they do not seem to be very enthusiastic about it; there are some valid reasons for this. Firstly, the majority of the central government officials whose services have been transferred to the upazila level did not like the practice of transfer wholeheartedly. Secondly, officials belonging to technical cadres have a resentment to the UNO's authority over them. Thirdly, they may have difficulties in adapting to predominantly rural settings. Though most of the elected members seem to be well satisfied with the upazila arrangement, which for the first time has provided for considerable powers, in respect of development activities, to them, there still seem to be some reasons for concern. As we have seen above, elected members seem to be satisfied with the powers and functions entrusted to them, but they still seem to have problems with interacting with not so friendly bureaucrats deputed to upazilas from the centre, over whom they don't have adequate control.

We also asked the sample groups to give their reflections on how to make improvements in the present upazila administration. A majority of both the categories (90% of elected members and 80% of public officials) felt that training for both the elected and official members could be the best possible way for making improvements, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Suggestions for Improvement
(In the light of your experience, please mention some means for improvement.)

	Training for Bureaucracy B / E / Bur. under L. G.	Local government by local people	No ans.
Elected Members (21)	19 / 1 / 9	3	1
Public Officials (25)	20 / 3 / 1 / 5	2	-

Notes: B = Both Elected Representatives and Bureaucracy; E = Elected Representatives; Bur. = Bureaucracy; L. G. = Local Government; Bureaucracy under local government means that the members of the central bureaucracy placed at the Upazila level should be under the control of the local government; Local government by local people means that local government should be operated by the local residents only, without the involvement of the central bureaucracy.

As respondents listed more than one choice, totals may not add up to 21 for elected members and 25 for public officials.

It can also be seen from the above table that about 43% of elected members thought that the centrally deputed bureaucrats should be under the control of the local government. Not surprisingly, only 20% of the officials supported the idea that they should be under the full control of the local government where they are posted. Though a sizeable number of elected members wanted full control over the members of the central bureaucracy working at the upazila level, only a small number of them (14%) felt that local government without the involvement of centrally deputed officials would be a good arrangement. And 8% of the officials working in the upazilas, we surveyed, also felt that it could be so.

However, the overwhelming majority of the officials not only support the involvement of the central bureaucracy at the local level, they also want to be active members in the local councils. As we have seen above, 80% of officials wanted voting rights in the Upazila Parishad deliberations.

While the involvement of the civil bureaucracy in local affairs is an old tradition and has been viewed favorably by concerned actors, the issue of the involvement of the military bureaucracy in local affairs, an agenda which has emerged on the political scene after the Ershad government's take-over of power, has received a very poor reception; as a matter of fact, it is disapproved by the majority of the upazila-level actors interviewed.

A Role for the Army?

Ershad has always been an advocate of the army's involvement in the civil administration. He made his stand clear even before seizing power from the civilian government in 1982. In a press release on November 28, 1981, Ershad stated:

Our military is an efficient, well disciplined, and most honest body of truly dedicated and organized national force. Potentials of such an excellent force in a country like ours can be effectively utilized for productive and nation-building purposes in addition to its role of national defense...This concept requires us to depart from the conventional Western ideas of the role of the armed forces. It calls for combining the role of nation-building and national defence into one concept of total national defence...⁶⁷

With coming to power, the Ershad government placed many army officers in strategic decision-making posts. Ershad was not satisfied with the army's involvement in the higher-level decision-making bodies only; he wanted a Constitutional guarantee for the role of the armed forces in national politics. This issue, for understandable reasons, raised a lot of controversy, and was vehemently opposed by the opposition political parties.

The National Implementation Committee on Administrative Reforms (NICAR) discussed the issue of the role of the army in the civil administration of the country. There were proposals and arguments as early as October 1982 that the members of the armed forces should be given some role in the local-level administration. The high-powered NICAR discussed issues relating to the appointment of army officers as thana Commissioners and made some related suggestions. One suggestion was that the army oversee the district

administration. The Committee also called for a constitutional role for the armed forces. Shawkat Ali points out that the NICAR's discussions and suggestions with regard to the role of the armed forces in the civil administration were outside its jurisdictional competence.⁶⁸

We raised the question of the army's involvement in the local bodies with the concerned Upazila actors. Not surprisingly both the elected members and the official members of the Upazila Parishad reacted against the involvement of the army in local government bodies (Table 16).

Table 16: The role of the military
(Should the armed forces have a role in the civil administration?)

Armed Forces	Elected Members (21)		Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of Total	No. of respondents	% of Total
Yes	--	--	2	8.00
No	19	95.23	23	92.00
No answer	2	4.77	--	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

As can be seen from the table, 95% of the elected members opposed the idea of the army's involvement in the local bodies, while only 5% made no comment. In case of public officials, 92% disapproved the army's involvement and only 8% approved of it.

Upazila Administration: Its Prospects

The upazila as a tier of administration, with renewed emphasis at that level, can play a profound role with regard to the formulation and implementation of many national goals, rural development in particular. In fact, such is the rationale presented by the government for the creation of the upazilas. This is exactly what is meant by the term, 'bringing the administration closer to people.' The fruits of development, it has been assumed, can be shared by the people if the administration comes close to the people. But none of the above objectives can be achieved fruitfully if both central and local governments fail to cooperate in a concerted manner.

We have seen before that the Constitution of Bangladesh and various Committees on Administrative Reorganization placed heavy emphasis on the role of local government in the process of development. There is no doubt that local bodies have much to offer to the advancement of rural areas. Admitting that the upazila administration in Bangladesh can play a positive role for the upliftment of rural society, let us look at some vital areas where the help from upazilas can be meaningful.

In the context of a predominantly rural society like Bangladesh, agriculture comes first in any scheme of development, for it provides half of the country's GDP and two-thirds of the total employment. Unfortunately, growth in this vital sector failed to keep pace with the growth in population. In recent years, the situation has worsened by frequent natural calamities, which have

done serious damage to crop production. As a result, the country has become heavily dependent on foodgrain imports to feed its growing population. It also means that the country has to spend a good share of its scarce foreign exchange, which could have been spent otherwise, for the purchase of foodgrains. In 1955/56 the quantity of foodgrain import was less than 200 thousand tons whereas by the 1970s it exceeded one million tons. Still, the per capita foodgrain availability in 1982/83 was lower than in 1969/70.⁶⁹ The table below shows the nature of dependence on imported foodgrains in the mid-seventies and the early eighties.

Table 17: Food Production, Imports and Per Capita Availability, 1973/74 - 1982/83.

	Domestic Production (000 tons)	Imports (000 tons)	Per Capita Availability (lbs/year)
1973/74	10647	1670	361
1975/76	11496	1477	359
1978/79	11819	1146	347
1979/80	12014	2739	361
1980/81	13264	1059	343
1982/83	12930	1236	366

[Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Quoted in Atiq Rahman, "Resource Use in Bangladesh Agriculture - An Empirical Analysis, Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1987, p. 3]

The low growth in the agricultural sector is not only affecting the goal of a self-reliance in food production, but it also is affecting the growth of other sectors as well by putting pressure in their share of foreign exchange. Despite agriculture's crucial importance to the national economy as a whole, the total public expenditure (both revenue and capital)⁷⁰ on agriculture has rather declined over the years (Table below).

Table 18: Public Expenditure in Bangladesh

	1973/74	1978/79	1980/81	1985/86
Revenue expenditure per year (Current prices, million taka)	117	170	455	442
Development expenditure per year (current prices, million taka)				
Agriculture (including rural development institutions)	2596	5673	8912	6283
Per capita revenue expenditure per year				
Agriculture	50.4	70.0	60.1	67.5
Per capita capital expenditure per year				
Agriculture (including rural development institutions)	18.7	29.3	24.8	12.8

[Adapted from Atiq Rahman, "Resource Use in Bangladesh Agriculture - An Empirical Analysis," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1987, p. 12]

It is difficult to prove or disprove whether the local productivity in agriculture is related to the public expenditure patterns.⁷¹ While it is a good step for the government exchequer to reduce subsidies in agriculture, this must be evaluated in terms of its impacts on the poorer sections in the society. While a higher growth rate should be encouraged by appropriate institutional mechanisms and policy measures, the equity consideration in a poverty-stricken country can not be overlooked. The agricultural sector, being the most crucial for the country as a whole, must be induced to promote a higher growth rate and be capable of financing its major requirements. But so far, resource mobilization within the sector, for financing its own expenditure, is not very encouraging. Though the government introduced a land tax in the 1982-83 budget, revenue collection from this measure is very low. While in 1975/76 the share of land tax in total tax was 2.2%, it declined to 1.6% in 1981/82. In the 1982/83 budget the share of the land tax further declined and stood at 1.1%.⁷² The introduction of the land tax, which is the only direct tax in the agricultural sector, is a salutary step, but the poor generation of revenue is a cause for alarm. It is one field where the newly formed upazila can extend its cooperation to the central government. The upazila administration, being close to the villagers, is in a position to gather more information about landholding, can help implement land legislation, and can collect land revenues better than any central government department. A World Bank Mission which studied the tax system in Bangladesh with a view to making it an efficient and effective

instrument of domestic resource mobilization, makes an important recommendation with regard to raising direct taxes on agriculture.

The mission recommends that increases in agricultural land tax collections be linked to payments to local governments. Village level surveys indicate that taxpayers are more willing to pay the LD tax, for example, if they understand that, the additional revenue is earmarked for use in the local area. In the short term, earmarking could be accomplished quite simply - the local collecting officer would divide the duty collection into two parts, depositing one part into the local government (Upazila) account and the other into the central government (MEALR) account. Most local governments would continue to receive grants from the central government, although as the share of their revenue from local sources is increased, consideration should be given to reducing central grants. In this way, the land tax could combine to discharge the valuable function of registering land ownership and generate revenue which could provide a stable tax base for local governments, thereby enhancing their fiscal autonomy.⁷³

Let us now look at the Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) to examine how the foodgrains, collected internally, imported by spending the hard-earned foreign currency, and also received as aids from international donors, are distributed to various segments of the population. It was noted earlier that there were considerable pressures on the government from the foreign donors and aid-giving agencies to change the urban-biased PFDS, mostly dependent on subsidies. As a result of the mounting pressure, the Ershad regime has decided to eliminate subsidies from the Rationing System. By 1989 all subsidies from the Statutory Rationing areas was supposed to be eliminated. The subsidization of foodgrains in the statutory areas was unfair from the equity point of view, because it benefited mostly the higher income urban consumers.

Nuimuddin Chowdhury in a recent study on the PFDS in the statutory

areas found that cardholders in the said areas use their ration on the basis of a shrewd calculation of the difference between the market price and the ration price of various items supplied; they also take into account the quality of the supplied items. As statutory ration cardholders, especially the higher income-bracket ones, are selective in terms of lifting their quotas, a sizeable portion of the items remained unlifted. They were selective because they could afford to be so. Chowdhury reported that in the statutory areas an adult card was entitled to receive 104 kg. of foodgrain per year, of which 42.75 kg. was not usually lifted. The unlifted portion, which probably found its way into the market, was 41% of the total entitlement. Chowdhury also found that 20% of what was lifted in 1984/85 was leaked outside the household consumption.⁷⁴ Probably the households sold these items in the market for a price intermediate between the ration price and the market price.

In a country where the foodgrains are in short supply, the justification for some groups selling their portion for profit may be questioned. In the case of the statutory rationing areas, the quantity of foodgrains not lifted by cardholders and the quantity that was leaked from the households consumption were substantial. These quantities could have been channelled for use by more needy population. In this sense, the elimination of subsidies from the statutory rationing areas is a welcome step. But what is absolutely needed is an alternative channel for the urban poor.

The performance of the Modified Rationing System (meant for the rest

of the country other than the six large cities) does not seem to be any better. As we have seen (in the previous chapter), foodgrains in the MR areas are distributed on the basis of a Distribution Priority List (DPL), which is prepared on the basis of taxes paid by households to local government institutions. Usually households are divided into four categories: A, B, C, and D, with the last category receiving the highest preference. In his recent study on the Modified Rationing, Nuimuddin Chowdhury found that in many areas DPLs are outdated. As a result, many households which were enlisted as A or B category (i.e. paying higher taxes to local Boards) are receiving less foodgrains than what they actually deserve. Because of the unprecedented inflation and pauperization in the rural areas, the real income of many households has gone down, but they have not received commensurate compensation from the PFDS; it is mainly due to the outdated DPLs.⁷⁵ Moreover, there is a discrepancy in distribution between the urban and the rural households. Households under the MR system are classified on the basis of two local government types: Pourashavas (Municipalities) and Union Parishads (UPs), the former representing the urban households and the latter, rural. The patterns of foodgrain distribution in the MR areas shows that Municipality residents receive more foodgrains than the UP residents (see Table 19).

Table 19: Foodgrain Distribution per card, 1983/84- 1984/85
Bangladesh

		(Seers)		
Name of Division	UPs	1983/84	1984/85	
		Pourashavas	UPs	Pourashavas
Dhaka	28.5	110.3	25.2	79.1
Rajshahi	19.0	129.9	16.2	98.0
Khulna	33.7	107.3	31.1	120.6
Chittagong	19.2	130.6	37.0	130.0
Bangladesh	22.8	124.1	25.8	116.3

Note: UPs = Union Parishads. UPs are located in the rural areas, Pourashavas= Municipalities.

[Source: Nuimuddin Chowdhury, "Where the Poor Come Last: The Case of Modified Rationing in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1988, p. 38]

The Table vividly demonstrates that in all parts of Bangladesh the Pourashava or Municipality residents receive more foodgrains, through the MR system, than their rural counterparts. Moreover, foodgrains distributed through the MR system do not reach the target population in full quantities; leakages take place at various levels of distribution.⁷⁶

The above discussion on the PFDS seems to suggest that it has failed to provide the needed assistance to the poorer sections of the society, both urban and rural; the rural poor have been the worst hit. So long as the leakages continue and the old DPLs are not updated, the system will continue to falter.

However, in order for a positive change, the government has relied on the upazila administration for the proper and smooth distribution of foodgrains. The UNO has been authorized to issue Delivery Orders in respect of foodgrains, without having to go through his district superior, as was the case before. He has also been given a special role with regard to such matters as Modified Rationing, Government Employees Ration matters, Food For Works Program/Test Relief, etc.⁷⁷

In the meantime, however, the government seems to have been successfully reducing the subsidies from the PFDS (Table 20).

Table 20: Food subsidy as a percentage of total current expenditure

1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85
11.0	10.0	7.1	7.8

[Adapted from Abdul Ghafur and Omar H. Chowdhury (1988) Financing Public Sector Development Expenditure on Selected Countries: Bangladesh, p. 65]

The gradual reduction of food subsidies is a positive step, especially the elimination of subsidies in the statutory areas, i.e, the six largest cities. Here again some institutional mechanisms must be devised to protect the lower income urban residents. The reduction of subsidies in the modified areas must also be applied with due consideration to the lower income households.

The rationing system, regarded as the monetized part of the PFDS, is but

one aspect of the system; there remains another aspect, the non-monetized part, in which the local government, especially, the Upazila gets involved in many significant ways. The latter component of the system includes: Food-For-Works Program (FFW), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), and Rural Maintenance Program (RMP). A part of the FFW programs is being undertaken by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), and the remaining part is by the Upazilas. It is in the later part of the program, called Local Initiative schemes (LISs) that the Upazilas play and have the promise to play a significant role. The FFW Program, as a whole, is concerned with the raising of agricultural production and employment generation through the creation of rural infrastructure. The BWDB component is primarily concerned with development of surface water resources, whereas LIS is mainly concerned with rural infrastructure, namely roads.

In addition to FFW, the other two programs, namely, VGF and RMP where the UZP can play an important role, are also meant for reaching targeted poorer sections in the rural areas, destitute rural women in the above cases. In addition to rural works and FFW programs, the Upazila Parishads are also expected to implement "divisible" components of some ADP projects, for example, agricultural extension, fisheries, livestock, population and health, water supply and rural roads and markets.⁷⁸ Skilled manpower is badly needed for proper institutionalization and implementation of various programs at the local levels. The creation of the Local Government Engineering Bureau (LGEB),⁷⁹

not a regular Department yet, at the national level and the creation of the office of the Upazila Engineer, at the upazila level, may provide a good opportunity for the proper planning, implementation, and monitoring of the locally-initiated projects by the Upazila Parishads. Referring to the role of the local bodies, especially Upazila, a Government of Bangladesh/EEC Seminar on Food Strategies in Bangladesh - Medium and Long Term Perspectives, recommends:

Government should consider further devolution of power and resources to Upazilas if they are to plan, implement and maintain infrastructure projects adequately. Upazilas are now one of the main foci for development efforts, and it is logical that they should have prime responsibility for the planning, implementation and maintenance of key public assets in their areas.⁸⁰

The Ershad government has taken some steps to reorganize the land-tenure system as well, which was also a long-felt need in a country with high population growth and shrinking land-man ratio. A Committee to recommend measures for land reforms was appointed in July, 1982, immediately after the seizure of power from the civilian government.⁸¹ The Committee was headed by a senior civil servant, who was working as an advisor to the newly formed military government at the time of his appointment. The members of the Committee included civil servants, economists and one journalist. The Committee reported in January, 1983. Examining the problems of the land-tenure system, the Committee recommended that the previous ceiling of landholding should be lowered in view of the severe land shortages for the growing population. Considering the broad topographical variation in the

country, the Committee suggested two kinds of maximum ceilings: (1) 75 bighas (25 acres) for a family in the flood-control areas; (2) 100 bighas (33.3 acres) for a family in the flood-prone areas. The Committee also highlighted the importance of discouraging absentee-landlordism. A lower ceiling was prescribed for the absentee-landlords: 30 bighas for the flood-control areas and 50 bighas for the flood-prone areas.⁸²

Further, the Committee emphasized the need for protecting the interests of share-croppers because legal protection for them was found to be woefully inadequate. The Committee also felt that a minimum wage for agricultural laborers should be fixed because wages of this group, according to the Committee's findings, did not show proportionate variation with price fluctuations. The Committee suggested the minimum wage to be set at 3.5 seers of rice.⁸³ This measure, it was argued, could give laborers adequate protection in case of any price rise in the market place. With regard to the implementation of the above measure, the Committee suggested that there could be three means. Firstly, the government and the semi-government organizations could take the lead in this regard by paying the recommended minimum wage or more. Secondly, local government organizations could publicize and supervise the implementation of the relevant legislation in this regard. Thirdly, the landless and the marginal farmers would be allowed to participate in the decision-making process of local-bodies and steps would be taken to improve and expand their (marginal farmers) organizations.⁸⁴

The government accepted some major recommendations of the Committee and an Ordinance to this effect was passed in 1984.⁸⁵ The Ordinance ignored the variable land ceiling rate for the flood control and flood-prone areas and also for the absentee landlords, as suggested by the Committee. Instead, the Ordinance provided for a flat maximum ceiling for all kinds of landholding; however, it (Ordinance) provided for an elaborate protection for share-croppers. The Ordinance prohibits cultivation of another person's land without the execution of a duly prescribed contract form; it also gives the share-croppers the right to cultivate the barga (share-cropping) land for five years. The contract is to remain in force even if the ownership of the land changes hand. If a bargadar (share-cropper) dies before the expiry of the contract, the rest of the bargadar's family members will be automatically entitled to complete the contract. The Ordinance provides detailed procedures as to how the produce of the barga land should be divided between the concerned parties - the owner and the share-cropper. According to section 12(1) of the Ordinance:

- (a) one-third shall be received by the owner for the land;
- (b) one-third shall be received by bargadar for the labour;
- (c) one-third shall be received by the owner or the bargadar or by both in proportion to the cost of cultivation, other than the cost of labour, borne by them.

In addition, the Ordinance provides precedence to bargadars (sharecroppers) in case of selling of the land to customers other than the owner's family members.

Section 13(1) of the Ordinance reads:

Where the owner intends to sell the barga land, he shall ask the bargadar in writing if he is willing to purchase the land:

Provided that this provision shall not apply where the owner sells the land to a co-sharer or to his parent, wife, son, daughter or son's son or to any other member of his family.

The owner can't sell the land to any other person at a price lower than that offered by the bargadar. In case the land is sold to a third party, the bargadar gets the legal protection of cultivating the land for contractual five year periods.

In a separate Ordinance,⁸⁶ the Government set the minimum rates of wages for agricultural laborers. In this case, the government Ordinance fixed the minimum rate at a level slightly above that recommended by the Land Reforms Committee of 1983. The minimum rate of wage for agricultural laborers was set at 3.27 kg. of rice or the equivalent price for it in the local market.⁸⁷ The Ordinance also provided for a Council to be called the Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labour to look after the various aspects of the minimum wages for the above group and to recommend measures to the government as and when necessary. In making its recommendations to the government, the Council is required to consult the Upazila Parishads to know their views, if they have any.⁸⁸

Conclusion

The local administration system that emerged during the last phase of the British rule in India, and was partially modified during the Pakistan period, continued with its predominant bureaucratic features until major reshuffles by the military government in 1982. The pattern of local administration that has emerged after the 1982 reforms is in no way a sharp departure, but a logical continuation of a long-drawn-out process. In all essentials the newly introduced upazila administration is a modified version of the Comilla model of rural development. Probably the provision of an elected head at the thana level is its best contribution, in addition to some financial powers, however weak, given to that level.

The 1982 reforms, like many Committee/Commission recommendations before, has a primary objective of linking the rural areas with the centre, in a concerted fashion, in order to break the isolation of the former. The Third Five Year Plan (TFYP) of Bangladesh states:

The thrust on Upazila administration interfaced with Upazila Parishad has definitely broken that social isolation. What is now important is to motivate people to take full advantage of this historic opportunity to initiate a change of their choice in the society. To help that process both the Upazila Parishad and Upazila administration staff members will need to foster a planned development with full participation of people.⁸⁹

To what extent this participation is possible in the given socioeconomic structure is a matter which needs consideration (see Chapter VII below). However, the most striking feature of the 1982 reform, as mentioned before, is

that it has simultaneously enhanced the power of the local government and the central officials at the local level. Therefore, there are elements of decentralization and at the same time deconcentration. The decentralization part is too vulnerable because of the strict supervision and control of local government affairs by the central government and also the dependence of the Upazila Parishads on the central government for financial assistance. The bureaucratic component, though divested of its previous voting privileges in the decision-making processes of the Upazila, wields considerable power and can influence the process in many ways. However, it is interesting to note that our perception survey of the Upazila actors clearly indicate that they believe the central bureaucracy to be essential for the development of rural areas. This view was endorsed by the elected representatives as well as by bureaucrats themselves. What is more important is that the majority of our sample groups (public representatives and civil bureaucrats) disapproved the idea of the army's involvement in the local bodies, which the Ershad government has proposed. Whether or not it will eventually appoint army representatives to the local government bodies is not very clear at this point in time. On the assumption that no action will be taken on this issue in the near future, the present Upazila arrangement, with its democratic intent although limited effective decentralization, has some potentiality to promote the lot of the rural people, if its functions are not interfered with unscrupulously. The formulation and implementation of many vital aspects of development, with direct bearings on

the improvements of rural areas and the rural people - land reform, the agricultural sector, the food distribution system, for example - are areas where the Upazila Parishads can render valuable assistance to the central government.

Still, many important questions remain. One such question is: can development at the local level be a function of the local government bodies and the public bureaucracy only or must there be room for the participation of the non-government or private organizations as well? This question has increasingly been heard in recent decades. We raised and discussed this question with the concerned Upazila-level development actors and also with some local and central NGO officials in Bangladesh. It is to this aspect that we will now turn in the next chapter.

Endnotes:

1. Basudev Chatterji, "The Darogah and the Countryside: The Implementation of Police Control in Bengal and its Impact (1793-1837)," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 43, No. 1, p. 38.
2. Ibid, p. 22.
3. Ibid.
4. Comprehensive police reorganizations took place during Cornwallis' term as the Governor General (1786-1793) in India.
5. B. B. Misra, District Administration and Rural Development in India: Policy Objectives and Administrative Change in Historical Perspective (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 261.
6. M. Rashiduzzaman, Politics and Administration in the Local Councils: A Study of Union and District Councils in East Pakistan (Dacca: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 1.
7. B. B. Misra, op. cit., p. 209.
8. A. M. A. Muhith, The Deputy Commissioner in East Pakistan (Dacca: National Institute of Public Administration, 1968), p. 50.
9. Lutful Hoq Choudhury, Local Self-Government in Bangladesh (Dhaka: National Institute of Public Administration, 1987) p. 9.
10. B. B. Misra, op. cit., pp. 209-210.
11. L. P. Shukla, A History of Village Panchayats in India (Nasik: P. O. Trimbak Vidya Mandir, 1969), p. 51.
12. After the name of the Committee Chairman.
13. E. L. Tepper, Changing Pattern of Administration in Rural East Pakistan (Michigan: Asian Studies Centre, Michigan State University, 1966) (Occasional Paper No. 5), p. 58.

- 14.V. V. Rao and Niru Hazarika, "Democratic Decentralization: Theory and Practice," Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1978, p. 642.
- 15.Najmul Abedin, Local Administration and Politics in Modernising Societies - Bangladesh and Pakistan (Dacca: National Institute of Public Administration, 1973), p. 130.
- 16.V. V. Rao and Niru Hazarika, op. cit., p. 642.
- 17.The Report, para 9, Cited in Lutful Hoq Choudhury, Op. cit., p.10.
- 18.Najmul Abedin, op. cit., p. 130, Note 2.
- 19.The Report is named after Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy.
- 20.M.Rashiduzzaman, op. cit., p. 5.
- 21.The Committee was headed by Sir Archibald Rowland.
- 22.B. B. Misra, op.cit., p. 283.
- 23.Lutful Hoq Choudhury, op. cit., p. 13.
- 24.For detailed accounts on the workings and problems of the C.O.s role, see M. Anisuzzaman, The Circle Officer - A Study of His Role (Dacca: National Institute of Public Administration, 1963), and K. M. Tipu Sultan, Problems of Rural Administration in Bangladesh (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1974).
- 25.The composition of the Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR) was as follows: Chairman: Rear Admiral M. A. Khan psn BN, DCMLA and Advisor-in-charge of the Ministry of Communication; Members: 1. Mr. A. Z. M. Obaidullah Khan, Advisor-in-charge of the Ministry of Agriculture; 2. Mr. M. M. Zaman, Secretary, Cabinet Division; 3. BA-195 Brigadier Mahmudul Hasan, Director of Military Operations, Army Headquarters, Dhaka Cantonment; 4. Dr. Anisuzzaman, Professor of Public Administration, Chittagong University; 5. Dr. Shaikh Maqsood Ali, Director General, National Institute of Public Administration; 6. Member Secretary: Dr. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Member Director, BADC. Later, in its meeting on May 2, 1982, the Committee co-opted the following persons as members: 1. Mr. Obaidul Huq, Editor, The Bangladesh

Observer; (2) Mr. S. M. Al-hussainy, Member, Planning Commission; (3) Mr. M. A. Samad, Director of Agriculture (Retired).

26. CARR, The Report, Preface.

27. Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

28. Larry Schroeder, "Decentralization in Rural Bangladesh," Asian Survey, Vol. 25, No. 11, 1985, p. 1137.

29. CARR, The Report, p.159.

30. Ibid., p. 161.

31. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development and Upazila (Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies, 1986), p. 31.

32. See the Resolution on Reorganization of Thana Administration, dated 23rd October, 1982.

33. Government of Bangladesh, Ordinance No. XXXIII, dated July 18, 1983, sections 1 & 2.

34. Government of Bangladesh, Ordinance No. LXIII, The Bangladesh Gazette, Extraordinary, dated October 11, 1983, section 2.

35. Peter J. Bertocci, "Bangladesh in 1984: A Year of Protracted Turmoil," Asian Survey, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1984, p. 155.

36. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development, and Upazila, p. 73.

37. Yusuf Hyder, op. cit., p. 14.

38. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development, and Upazila, p. 74.

39. Ibid., p. 78.

40. Ibid., p. 80.

41. Ibid., p. 81.

42. Ibid., p. 83.

43. In Bangladesh local elections are held on a non-partisan basis. Though candidates run for elections on a non-partisan basis, most of them become involved with party politics immediately after election. It was not at all different with upazila election. Though estimates differ as to the exact number of supporters belonging to various political parties, there are clear indications that majority of the elected chairmen supported the JANADAL (the ruling party). For more details see, Ali, pp. 84-87, and Annex XI.

44. Resolution on Reorganization of Thana Administration (As amended up to 4th November, 1982)), Cabinet Div, GOB, Cited in Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development and Upazila (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1986), p. 19.

45. Mohammad Faizullah, Development of Local Government in Bangladesh (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1987), pp. 104-105.

46. The Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, Section 32.

47. Ibid., Third Schedule.

48. Government of Bangladesh, The Report of the Land Reforms Committee, 1983, Section 3.36, p.44.

49. Faizullah, op. cit., p. 113.

50. Ibid.

51. The central government provides detailed outlines as to how and where the funds should be spent.

52. Larry Schroeder, Rural Development Grants to Local Governments in Asia (Syracuse, N.Y.: Metropolitan Studies Centre, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1986), p. 57.

53. Upazila Guidelines, 1988, Annexure I, p. 15.

54. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development and Upazila, p. 46.

55. Hasnat Abdul Hye, "Upazilas at the Cross-roads" in his Dateline Gram Bangla (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1986), p. 63.

56. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

- 57.A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, Politics, Development and Upazila, p. 98.
58. See the Resolution in Syed Lotfur Rahman (ed.), Upazila Parishad Laws Manual (Dhaka: Soilur Publications, 1988), p. 379.
59. Tanvir A. Khan and Charles L. Chougil, "The Influence of the Comilla Experiment on Bangladesh Agricultural Development Policy," Journal of BARD, Vol. 16, No.2, 1987, pp. 31-32.
60. A. K. M. Mohsen "The Comilla Rural Administration Experiment : History and Annual Report, 1962-1963 (Comilla: Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, 1963), p. 12, Cited in Robert D. Stevens et al., Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 108.
61. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, "Decentralization for Development: Experiments in Local Government in Bangladesh," Journal of Local Government (Special Issue on Upazila), 1986, p. 16.
62. "Local Government and Rural Development: Some Early Thoughts of Akhter Hameed Khan," Journal of BARD, Vol. 16, January 1987, p. 35.
63. H. W. Blair, " Participation, Public Policy, Political Economy and Development in Rural Bangladesh, 1958-85," World Development, Vol. 13, No. 12, 1985, p. 1237.
64. Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee, 1973, The Report, Part II: The Administration (Art. 10.21), pp. 304-305.
65. A recent study conducted by a faculty member of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) provides some useful information on the background of Upazila chairmen in Bangladesh. The researcher collected data from 183 Upazila chairmen, of Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions, who participated in a week-long orientation course on 'Administrative Reform and Development' at the BARD. However, comparable data for the officials working at the Upazila level were not included in his work, as the researcher's primary concern was with the Upazila chairmen only. See Tofail Ahmed, "The Chairmen of Upazila Parishads in Bangladesh: A Study of their Background," Journal of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Vol. 15, July 1986, pp. 1-16.

66.E. L. Tepper, "The Administration of Rural Reform," in Robert D. Stevens et al., Rural Development Bangladesh and Pakistan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), p. 50.

67.Ershad quoted in Z. R. Khan, "Bangladesh in 1981: Change, Stability and Leadership," Asian Survey, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1982, p. 169.

68.A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, op. cit., p. 57.

69.In 1969/70, the per capita foodgrain available was 390 lbs., See Atiq Rahman, "Resource Use in Bangladesh agriculture - An Empirical Analysis," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1987, p. 3.

70.In Bangladesh budgetary allocations are made under two heads - revenue and capital. The former represents the routine expenditures and the later, the development outlays.

71.See Atiq Rahman, op. cit., p. 18.

72.Asian Development Bank, Financing Public Sector Development Expenditure in Selected Countries: Bangladesh (1988), Edited by Abdul Ghafur and Omar H. Chowdhury, p. 42.

73.World Bank, Bangladesh: An Agenda for Tax Reform, in 3 Volumes, Vol. I (Executive Summary and Overview), 1989, p. 43.

74.Nuimuddin Chowdhury "Accounting for Subsidized Food Resources Distributed in Statutory Rationing in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1988, p. 63.

75.Nuimuddin Chowdhury, "Where the Poor Come Last: The Case of Modified Rationing in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Development Studies, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1988, pp 32-33.

76.Ibid. pp. 49-51.

77.Government of Bangladesh, Food Division, Procedure and guidelines for distribution of foodgrains and issue of Delivery Orders in the Upgraded Thanas, Dated March 16, 1983 in Manual on Upazila Administration, Vol. II, 1983, pp. 115-118.

78. World Bank, Bangladesh: Promoting Higher Growth and Human Development, (A World Bank Country Study), 1987, p. 157.

79. The LGEB came into being in 1983/84, when the Works Program Wing of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives was discontinued. It was because after the 1982 local government reforms, the RWP functions were transferred to the Upazilas, and separate ADP allocations for the program was curtailed. In view of the changed circumstances, the LGEB emerged as a new device to look after the technical support services at the local levels.

80. Government of Bangladesh/EEC Seminar on Food Strategies in Bangladesh - Medium and Long Term Perspectives (1989), held in Dhaka, 8-10 October, 1988, p. 31.

81. It can be noted here that the Committee on Administrative Reforms/Reorganization (CARR) was also appointed during the same time period.

82. Government of Bangladesh, The Report of the Land Reforms Committee, 1983, p. 39.

83. Ibid., p. 51.

84. Ibid.

85. Government of Bangladesh, The Land Reforms Ordinance, 1984 (Ordinance No. X of 1984).

86. The Agricultural Labour (Minimum Wages) Ordinance, 1984 (Ordinance No. XVII of 1984).

87. Ibid., Section 3 (1).

88. Ibid., Section 4.

89. Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, The Third Five Year Plan (1985-90), p. 125.

Chapter VI

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs) AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH: SOME EVIDENCE FROM THE UPAZILA

Since the active involvement of the NGOs in development activities is of relatively recent origin, and it is more so in the case of Bangladesh, it seems worthwhile to explore in some detail the background to the emergence of NGOs and the reasons for their growing acceptability in the developing countries. Therefore, in this chapter an attempt has been made to address the above issues in a sequence. The first section discusses the reasons for the growth of NGOs, which is followed by a section on the social background, formation and nature, and functions of NGOs in Bangladesh. The third section is about the relationship of NGOs with the government. The fourth section deals with the issue of the involvement of NGOs at the Upazila level, taking into account its various dimensions. And the final section contains some concluding remarks. Let us first look at the general factors which have contributed and are now contributing to the increasing popularity of NGOs in the developing countries.

Reasons for Growth of NGOs

Anthony King, a social scientist, in an article on governmental overload in developed industrialized countries in the 1970s wrote "Governments have tried to play God. They have failed."¹ This remark seems to fit well the

developing countries of the present time. It explains in general why in recent decades the Third World Countries (TWCs) have started turning to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) more than ever before. The detailed reasons for this trend are varied and diverse. They stem from at least three sources: (1) the demonstration effect from the developed countries; (2) the failure of centralized development planning; and (3) the influence of donor agencies/organizations.

(1) Demonstration Effect: In the 1970s the advanced industrial states experienced some severe crises on all fronts - social, political, and economic. This crisis situation was analyzed differently by scholars of different theoretical persuasions. Scholars of liberal persuasion described the situation in terms of 'governmental overload' and 'ungovernability' of the state, whereas neo-Marxists described the situation as a manifestation of structural crisis ever-present in the capitalist social formation.

Conservatives usually prescribe two solutions to this crisis: (a) 'Privatization' or 'deregulation' and (b) control of agencies of socialization that regulate the formation and preservation of social norms as well as cultural and political value orientations. The second strategy seeks to go much deeper into the problems with a view to striking at their roots by fostering values like self-restraint, discipline and community spirit. Educators and school reformers, it is argued, should be calculative, plan strategies, and fortify national and historical consciousness through the school system.²

According to the neo-Marxists, the two strategies counteract each other.

As Claus Offe puts it:

Developed capitalist societies do not have at their disposal a mechanism with which to reconcile the norms and values of their members with systemic functional requirements underlying them. In this sense, these societies are always ungovernable, and it is largely due to the favorable circumstances associated with a long wave period of economic prosperity prior to the mid 1970s that they were able to live with this phenomenon of ungovernability.³

Whatever might be the debate, there is no doubt that the growing trend towards privatization in the developed countries has influenced the TWCs. In the developed countries, especially in the USA and the UK, the issue of 'privatization' got increased emphasis when conservatives came to power. They were strong advocates of using the market as a means of economic restructuring. "Privatization in its various forms was seen, therefore, as a solution to existing structural problems and as a means of achieving the necessary adjustment in the economy."⁴

(2) Failure of Centralized Development Planning: By the 1950s and 1960s, the impact of centralized development planning became clear. It became apparent that such a planning practice failed to serve the interest of the poor in any significant way. A trickle down of development to them did not happen, as it was supposed to. On the contrary, the situation of the poor deteriorated, and landlessness increased. It was against this backdrop that the major international organizations, including the World Bank, began to think about alternative development strategies. The Basic Needs theory and the target group approach,

which seek to ensure the availability of such essential services as clean water, sanitation, health, and education to the targeted poor people, emerged as a policy response.⁵

(3) Influence of Aid Donors/ Agencies: The World Bank assists developing countries in three main sectors: health, population, and nutrition. Moreover, developing countries receive the Bank's assistance in some unusual projects like 'the involuntary resettlement of people dislocated by dam projects from their socio-economic systems.' Because of the NGO involvement in the above two categories of work, the Bank has found it productive to collaborate with the NGOs.⁶

The collaboration between the Bank and NGOs is now increasing. The Bank considers production-related NGOs closely relevant to its development objectives. Some examples of production-related NGOs include: water users' societies, pastoral associations, consumer and credit corporations, farm equipment purchase and lease associations, tree grower associations, and other similar groups. NGOs concerning environmental and relief operations are also relevant to the Bank's objectives because they complement the Bank's policies of promoting a clean environment and supporting resettlement and reconstruction, etc. The Bank considers collaboration with NGOs a meaningful exercise as far as the implementation of its objectives are concerned, and makes this abundantly clear in its policy guidelines.⁷

Moreover, various bilateral aid agencies, like United States Agency for

International Development (USAID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), and Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), are also encouraging NGOs in developing countries.

Some of the most important functions undertaken by the NGOs include: mobilizing resources for development, generating public awareness through a network of information and communication, developing professional skills in respective areas, providing opportunities for significant endeavours and personal development through involvement in group activities, and facilitating feedback to policy and decision-makers.⁸

In general, NGOs in TWCs are supposed to play the following roles: "(a) to improve the welfare, uplift the socio-economic conditions and further the advancement of the poorest of the poor as identified in each country; (b) to catalyze and facilitate the development of self-reliant communities through people's participation; (c) to act as a liaison or linkage between peoples' organization and the government and to strengthen constructive partnership among them with emphasis on the need for a strong political will for sustained development efforts at all levels."⁹

Given the socio-economic realities in the developing countries, the above priorities, especially the first two, can only be meaningfully achieved through massive efforts in rural development. The World Conference on Agrarian

Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), held in Rome, 12-20 July 1979, was instrumental in popularising the concept of growth with equity through the participation of the people. The Conference also highlighted the importance of decentralized decision-making, and the promotion of people's organizations. Several delegations in the Conference emphasized the role of NGOs in rural development. According to them, "NGOs could effectively complement the efforts made by governments."¹⁰ So far, NGOs in various developing countries have been making tremendous efforts for the realization of the above goals. They are not only working for educating the disadvantaged social groups in order to make them aware of their own rights and to form their own organizations to articulate their interests, they are also contributing to the development of appropriate affordable technologies, suited to local conditions. The recent trend in development thinking of putting the people first in development strategies has also influenced the NGOs in setting their priorities.¹¹

NGOs are now getting increasing recognition from the state power too. International organizations and donor agencies are by now channeling a part of their aid to developing countries through the NGOs.

NGOs in Bangladesh

The Social Background: While voluntary organizations are not completely unknown in the context of Bangladesh, the emergence of NGOs, understood in

their modern connotation as delivery systems and mediums of conscientization and generators of employment as an alternative to the more traditional government channel, is of fairly recent origin. A socio-historical insight to the fabric of the region comprising Bangladesh will be helpful towards understanding the scenario of the relatively later development of NGOs there.

The rise of the powerful agro-managerial bureaucracy in the context of so-called 'hydraulic' societies may be one explanation to understanding the relative underdevelopment of NGOs in an Asiatic society like Bangladesh. Historically, the powerful state apparatus was called upon to play a pivotal role in the spheres affecting the lives of ordinary citizens. Hence the civil society did not get a chance to come forward as a mediator of the peoples' interest. As a result, the interaction between the state and civil society always ended up with the omnipotence of the former over the latter. Not only did this political organization affect the mode of development of alternative channels of articulation of people's interest, social organizations also contributed to their development.

The social character traits of the people inhabiting the region are of relevance in this case. In the Bangladesh society, social practices of zakat, chanda, and musti are a common phenomenon, especially among the Muslims who are in a majority. "Zakat is an annual donation, usually in the form of clothing to the needy. Chanda implies a one-time cash donation given for specific neighborhood purposes. Musti is usually given in the form of rice,

regularly saved and then given to support either one project or several." ¹²

Though there is some evidence of resource mobilization by local communities, they are mostly for religious purposes. "Religious tradition dictates the way in which contributions are given: in kind in the form of handfuls of rice for each family, cash donations, or building supplies."¹³ Examples of extra-religious voluntary works and resource mobilization for community works are few and far between.¹⁴ In general, local social organizations¹⁵ do not undertake much collective action.

(2) Formation and Nature: The history of NGOs, understood in the modern sense of the term, started with the birth of Bangladesh. The devastating natural disaster of 1970 and the war of liberation in 1971 necessitated massive relief works operations throughout the country. The capacity of the new state apparatus seemed inadequate to meet the challenge of reaching the victims of the disaster as well as the civil war, which continued for about nine months. It was at this time of great national need that various individuals and groups, indigenous and foreign, came forward with new ideas and plans of action.

Immediately after the independence, the tasks facing the new government were vast and the priorities were so many that the government found it extremely difficult to handle all of them alone. Help from all possible sources was welcomed by the state. NGOs took full advantage of the situation and came forward to extend their cooperation to the new government.

Most of the people who were involved with the NGOs in the initial years

were associated with the national liberation war of 1971. It is this experience of helping the liberation forces and the war-affected and distressed people that inspired them to continue with voluntary activities even in the aftermath of the liberation war. Immediately after the war, their major concern was with relief and rehabilitation works for the war-affected people. Some emergency medical centres, formed during the liberation war, also continued their services after the war was over.¹⁶

Understood literally, NGOs include all clubs, associations, trade unions, international organizations, and political organizations.¹⁷ In Bangladesh there are about 6,000 national and regional clubs, associations, and voluntary organizations registered by the Ministry of Social Welfare. But, by NGOs here is meant only the service-oriented and developmental organizations. The number of such organizations is not exactly known, as figures vary from source to source; it may be within the range of 200 to 300.¹⁸

Some main characteristics of such NGOs in Bangladesh are:

(1) They are engaged in service-oriented, educational or developmental activities, internationally, nationally or regionally;

(2) They are registered under the Foreign Donation Voluntary Activity Regulation Ordinance, 1978 by the Dept. of Social Welfare, and receive funding from foreign countries through the External Resources Division (ERD) of the government of Bangladesh;

(3) Sources from which they get fund include: (a) various organizations

of industrialized capitalist societies, like USAID, CIDA, NORAD, etc., (b) various international relief organizations, like OXFAM, INTERPERES, CUSO; (c) various church groups ; (d) though they are non-governmental, they come into existence with the approval of the government.¹⁹

Kamal Siddiqui et al. classify NGOs operating in Bangladesh into five categories: (1) donor agencies, (2) international action NGOs, (3) national action NGOs, (4) local action NGOs, and (5) service NGOs. Donor agencies include Ford Foundation, Asia Foundation, OXFAM, etc., and are primarily engaged in financing local development efforts. International action NGOs include: CARE-International, Save the Children Fund (UK), Radda Barnen (Sweden), Concern, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS), Heed-Bangladesh, etc. The central offices of the above categories of NGOs are based in Dhaka, and their development projects are spread throughout the country. Not only their working capital is external, but their plans and programs are also externally determined. As opposed to international-action NGOs, the national action NGOs are controlled by Bangladeshi individuals, though they receive their funding from various external sources. Some examples of these types of NGOs are: Gonoshasthya Kendra (GK), Proshika, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Caritas-Bangladesh, The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), Nijera Kori, etc.²⁰

Local-action NGOs receive their funding mainly from the government

and private donations. Compared with both international and national-action NGOs, their scope is more limited. NGOs of this type are confined mainly to particular localities. Examples include: Gono-Unnayan Prochesta (GUP), Gono-Unnayan Kendra (GUK), Village Education Resource Centre (VERC), etc. Service-oriented NGOs are more concerned with providing technical and support services than in the practical implementation of development programmes. Though run by Bangladeshis, they receive funds from both national and international sources. Some examples of this category of NGOs are: the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), Voluntary Health Services Society (VHSS), Micro-industrial Development Assistance Society (MIDAS), etc.²¹

The Main Functions of NGOs

There seems to be an agreement among NGOs operating in Bangladesh that development in the context of an agricultural society like Bangladesh means rural development, though they follow different strategies to promote it, and most NGOs have programs meant for the poverty alleviation of the poorer sections in the society. Their activities range from (1) group formation through 'conscientization', (2) income generation, (3) credit operation, (4) health and family planning, (5) literacy, (6) skills training, (7) appropriate technology to (8) human rights.

Not all NGOs undertake all the activities listed above. While some may

do so, others combine a suitable mix, and many undertake just one of the above functions, depending on their particular interests, resource availability and circumstances. F. R. M. Hassan classifies the NGOs working in Bangladesh into three groups: those with consciousness-raising programs only; those without any consciousness-raising program and those with consciousness raising as well as other programs.²² Instead of focussing on the details and soundness of the classificatory scheme, we will rather highlight the eight main functions performed by various categories of NGOs, that we have listed above, and will confine ourselves to some representative examples only.

(1) Conscientization: Of all the activities performed by various categories of NGOs, probably the most important is 'conscientization.' It refers to raising the consciousness of the poor so that they can form their own groups to defend their own interests. Group formation occupies an important place in NGO strategies because of its obvious importance to the poor. In societies where the poor have no access to resource allocation and decision-making, efforts on an individual basis are not likely to make any impact on the centres of power. It is this plain fact that NGOs try to bring to the attention of their target groups in order to make them realize their limitations and potential strengths.

F. R. M. Hassan puts forward some interesting criticisms of the NGO approach to 'conscientization.' First, to him, the consciousness-raising activities of NGOs are mostly concerned with the immediate environment, and try to avoid confrontation with the state, the ultimate oppressor; therefore, the level

of consciousness remains partial. Secondly, NGOs, because of a lack of phasing-out strategy, make the clients more dependent on than independent of NGO credits. Thirdly, NGO credit programs undermine group solidarity because it is the ambitious in the society who receive bank credits. They help promote competition. Fourthly, competition among NGOs for target group loyalty may undermine, not help, formation of group solidarity.²³

Hassan argues that 'conscientization' is a method, not a goal, as understood by NGOs. In his words:

One of the principal arguments of this study is that the conventional NGO human development programs do not permit mobilization. To my mind, the most critical failure of the NGOs has been their inability to see 'mobilization' essentially as a political process and 'conscientization' as the methodology for developing this process. By mobilization, most NGOs have understood organization, and by organization, group formation. Conscientization has been seen as a goal, but not as a method which permits an understanding of the immediate conditions of oppression, and at the same time, an awareness that solidarity is an instrument in the development of a countervailing force against the powerful section. However, the level of consciousness that is aimed at or reached, is mysteriously served from a consciousness that the immediate conditions of oppression are in fact sanctioned by the state which nevertheless continues to make exhortations to curb, if not eliminate poverty, inequality and oppression.

Therefore, preparing to fight the rich at the local level must mean ultimately undermining the nature of the State. If this separation of the State from the process of conscientization is due to a lack of understanding on the part of the NGO workers of the role of the state and the ruling class; or if it is due to their inability to articulate the issues in a way the rural poor can understand; or if this is intended, or a price the NGOs choose to pay for working at the village level, is not clear.²⁴

In Bangladesh, recently the government has allowed the NGOs to

participate in the distribution of khas (government) land. Some NGOs are involved in organizing peasants into groups for the purpose of taking possession of the khas land. The khas land available for distribution is estimated to be 720,000 acres. But, by the end of 1988, it was found that only 5% of the total available land was distributed among the peasants. NGO efforts in the matter of helping the peasants gain possession remained more on paper, and to certain extent conscientization. When actual confrontation arises between the local elites and the landless, with regard to possession of land, in most cases the NGOs shy away from standing by the side of the peasants and accept compromises, in favour of local influentials. As Hashemi puts it:

It was interesting to also note that though NGOs purport to conscientize for transformations in the system of oppression, they have been visibly absent from national movements for democracy, for increasing minimum agricultural wages for access to khas (governmental) lands, for debt settlement boards to curb financial pressures on poor peasants from repayment of high interests and credit on formal and informal loans.²⁵

Moreover, NGOs also failed to do anything significant about the gender inequality. In the 1987 distribution of khas land, women were, in fact, excluded.²⁶

NGOs which attach more emphasis to 'conscientization' than other programs like income and employment generation, appropriate technology, etc. are: Nijera Kori (NK) and Ganashahajya Sangstha (GSS). Nijera Kori, the English translation of which is "we do it ourselves," is a strong advocate of self-help. "Contrary to the objectives of the GBP [Grameen Bank Prokalpa], NK

pushes the ideas of BRAC and PROSHIKA to their logical conclusion. Creating people's awareness means giving them the tools of social analysis, mobilizing them politically and launching them in their struggle for social justice."²⁷

NK emphasizes the importance of groups and group conscientization, because it believes that it is only through well-organized groups that the poor can effectively face the privileged groups in the existing power structure. NK tries to assist groups of the poor in their struggle against the powerful vested interests.

NK is strongly opposed to the practice of lending credits to the target groups. They believe that credit facilities may make the poor more dependent on credit institutions than to help them stand on their own feet. They also argue that lending credit to the target groups is contrary to the NGO principle of helping the people to help themselves. According to them, "we must choose our roles; we cannot tell the people to fight for their dues and then oppress them by collecting loans; a factory owner cannot be a trade unionist at the same time."²⁸

NK, however, strongly supports the need for helping the poor with moral and social support. For example, NK renders help to target groups in their fight for the possession and holding of khas land. As NK wants the affected people to defend their own interest, it tries to conscientize the poor through various training suited to their needs, and also through peoples's theatre, puppet shows, etc. In contrast to many NGO, NK does not rely on adult education, functional

education, and credit. NK even does not support sustained group development, because its leaders argue that this kind of involvement results in excessive supervision and overhead costs.²⁹

Though NK used to organise exclusively destitute women for conscientization, it is now including men belonging to the same stratum also. Its leaders have learnt from experience that without involving men and making them realise their own position vis-a-vs the exploiters and their own oppression of their female counterparts in society, it would be extremely problematic to advance the cause of women in a male-dominated society.³⁰

The GSS, though an NGO itself, is opposed to the general model of NGO. Initially, it was opposed to any income-generating programs. However, its leaders have modified their strategies recently. They now recognize the need for collective income generation activity, instead of individual-based income generation.

The GSS is trying to conscientize, in a sense mobilize, agricultural wage workers and also slum dwellers. It appears to be very radical, but does not agree to declare itself a political party. Despite its left-radical image, it is not only working as an NGO, but also receiving foreign aid. OXFAM is one of the main financiers of GSS activities.³¹

(2) Employment and Income Generation: This has been one of the major activities of NGOs in Bangladesh. NGOs have paid special attention to create employment and generate income for landless labourers, destitute rural women,

small-land peasants, fishermen, etc. The NGOs, and also the Grameen Bank which started as an NGO, have shown significant success in creating job opportunities and raising the incomes of the rural poor by combining credit with group formation, skill training and employment.³²

(3) Credit to the Rural Poor: The role of institutional credit operations in the rural areas, as we have seen above, is not without controversy. Traditionally, rural money lenders had exploited the peasants by lending money at an exorbitant interest rate. The inevitable result was either heavy indebtedness of poor peasants or loss of their landed property to big landlords or moneylenders. Institutionalised credit operations by commercial banks have provided some alternative to the rural people who were previously the ruthless victims in the hands of money lenders. But what is found in rural Bangladesh is that credit operations by nationalised commercial banks mostly benefit the large and medium landowners. Small-land peasants and landless people, as they were unable to pay any collateral, were deprived of the credit facilities. It is in this area that some NGOs came forward and demonstrated with ample success that the landless and small peasants are credit worthy. The name of the Grameen (Rural) Bank (GB) is worth mentioning in this context. The GB was especially meant for the landless, to provide credit facilities without collateral. Most of the clients of the GB are women.

The GB has been successful in reaching the target group, the landless and destitute women, with timely credit delivery. The bank has also demonstrated

considerable success in promoting the saving habit among clients and in inculcating discipline in loan repayment. The bank's success in making the clients use the credit for asset development is also noteworthy.

NGOs, especially the GB, have clearly demonstrated that institutional credit, designed according to the needs of villagers, can go a long way in poverty alleviation. Groups formed for the purpose of receiving credits provide a unique opportunity for the concerned individuals to learn skills of organization, democratic management and also qualities of leadership.³³

In a recent study on the impact of Grameen Bank intervention in the economy, Atiur Rahman (1987) finds that GB members develop significant consciousness with regard to their status, rights and exploitation. And the opportunity of access to institutional credit helps the landless to acquire remunerative self-employment, especially during the slack season. Refuting the argument that the GB pursues only 'economism', Rahman states:

It [GB] is creating a sound economic base for the rural poor so that they themselves can one day take up the responsibility of political mobilization and ensure their participation in development. GB does never claim that it is pursuing a political goal. So it should not be accused of not achieving something that it has never set in its agenda. But one should certainly be cautious if its activities go against the long term interest of rural poor. We have not yet found such evidence.³⁴

(4) Health and Family Planning: The Gonoshaystya Kendra (GK), which came into existence in the aftermath of independence, has demonstrated a reasonably good model of health care and family planning for the rural areas

of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre, as it was called in the initial period, was renamed to Gonoshastya Kendra (People's Health Centre). In the beginning years, the main objectives of the GK were: (1) to make modern medical treatment available in rural areas, (2) to train paramedicals, and (3) to help with family planning.³⁵ The scope of the centre has, however, expanded gradually and now includes many functions other than health. As of February, 1985, the GK had 23 projects, which included, among others, Monthly Gonoshyastha (newspaper), Gono-prokashoni (Peoples Publishing), Gono-Mudran (printing press), Gono-Patshala (People's Library), Gono-Krishi Khamar (People's Farm), Gono-Karukendra (People's Handicraft), Gonoshaystha Bakery, Gonoshaystha Jute Plastic, Gono-Paduka (People's Shoe Factory), Gono-Pracharoni (People's Advertising) and Gonoshaystha Pharmaceutical.³⁶

The main objective of the GK, however, is to make health services more accessible to the villagers. In Bangladesh, the health care system is too much urban-centred. Almost all qualified doctors of Medical Colleges and also private practitioners are urban-based. Again, only a limited percentage of the urban population has access to whatever facilities are available in the urban areas. The availability of a good health care system remained a dream to the villagers. It is this situation that the initiators of the GK wanted to change by their firm determination. The task is, of course, extremely difficult in a resource-poor country. Taking into account the limitations in terms of resources, financial and

human, the initiators of the GK designed a system of health care which could be affordable with the available resources.

The initiators of the GK model clearly understood that it was not possible on the part of a few physicians to look after the health care needs of an entire upazila, even supposing that a proportional number of physicians were available for each upazila. In practice, however, the number of physicians is very unevenly distributed. In view of this situation, where qualified medical practitioners are scarce and in most cases unwilling to work in the village areas, the authors of the GK model considered it feasible to produce some paramedics, instead of doctors. The latter is not only expensive, but also time consuming. Therefore, the GK recruited rural youth with secondary-level education for the job of paramedics.³⁷

In summary then, since its inception the GK has been trying to respond to the health care needs of the rural people, by taking into account the existing socio-economic realities.³⁸

(5) Literacy: Most NGOs play an educative role to the rural people, especially to target groups. The role of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is worth mentioning in this respect. The BRAC, regarded as the pioneer of NGO movement in Bangladesh, attaches great importance to non-formal primary education and adult literacy.³⁹ BRAC started with a sectoral approach, but soon they realized that most of their programmes benefited the rural elites, instead of the poor, which was not their objective.

Therefore, they adopted the a programme approach, designed to serve the target groups. BRAC's programme approach is known for its emphasis on education and some innovative educational methods. BRAC educational programmes seek to promote the skill and competence of their own field staff, at the same time raising the consciousness of the target population.⁴⁰

(6) Skills Training: BRAC provides some skills training to the rural poor, especially women for craft development. Another NGO which has made a significant contribution in the field of skills training in rural Bangladesh is CARITAS. One of the most successful CARITAS projects is the Jute Handicraft project. The project not only provides employment to destitute women, but also contributes to badly needed export earnings.⁴¹

(7) Appropriate Technology: NGOs in Bangladesh have come up with various inexpensive technologies for the agricultural as well as non-agricultural sectors. NGOs which have contributed to the development of appropriate technology suited to the local needs are: Rangpur/Dinajpur Rehabilitation Service (RDRS); Mennonite Central Committee (MCC); Mirpur Agricultural Workshop Training School (MAWTS) and Village Education Resource Centre (VERC). The RDRS has developed a simple pump tube-well, using locally available bamboos. This inexpensive technology has provided support to the farmers, especially small farmers for small-scale irrigation. The MCC is involved with the development of a pump called, rower pump, manufactured by

MAWTS. The pump, used for hand irrigation, is very helpful for the cultivation of winter vegetables and wheat. The pump can also be used for the irrigation of other crops. The VERC has also made some contribution to the development and promotion of some appropriate technologies for farming, domestic use and cottage industries. Development of water-lifting pumps is the major contribution of the VERC in the field of farming. Technologies developed by the VERC for domestic use include: solar dryer, cooking box, water jar-cum grain storage, latrine slab, improved kitchen oven and poultry feeding box. A bee keeping device and a special dye for batik printing are some of the main contributions of the VERC in the field of cottage industries. In addition, the VERC has developed some educational toys, tools and models, which include earthen alphabet, educational ludo, clock and calendar.⁴²

(8) Human Rights: Human rights is a relatively recent item in the list of activities usually undertaken by NGOs; however, it seems to be gaining importance gradually. Of course, there are several organizations concerned only with human rights, but they are "understandably preoccupied with the grossest violations of human rights by repressive regimes, resulting in systematic torture, disappearances, assassinations, and rule by fear, denying all civil and political rights. For the most part they have not had the time or the resources to dig deep to ascertain the underlying causes of these monstrosities."⁴³ The International Commission of Jurists and Human Rights has been trying for a long time to promote and protect the Rule of Law and human rights in all parts of world.

Before 1984, the Commission had organized seminars in Dar-es-Salaam (1976), Barbados (1977), Dakar (1978), Bogota (1979), Kuwait (1980), Penang (1981), and Lucknow (1984). Niall MacDermot, the Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists, in his introductory remarks in the Lucknow Seminar (1984), states:

True development is the development of human persons in all aspects of their lives. People and individuals are the active subjects, not the passive objects of development. Development assistance means helping and enabling people to develop themselves.⁴⁴

A UN seminar held in 1981 also emphasizes the intimate links between human rights, peace and development. Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security."⁴⁵

In Bangladesh, the development of the human factor is a major goal of most NGOs, and some of them have involved themselves more directly with the issue of human rights. In the rural areas, poor people can hardly assert their rights, and in case of wrong-doing cannot afford legal redress. Only a limited number of NGOs come forward to assist the poor in the case of legal abuse and wrong-doing. Some of these are: The Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (based in Dhaka), the Madaripur Legal Aid Society, and CARITAS. CARITAS

assists poor tribal people in land-related disputes.⁴⁶

NGOs in Agricultural Development

Despite a broad agreement on the importance of agriculture for the economy of Bangladesh, only a few NGOs have involved themselves directly in agriculture-related programs. It is important to look at how the NGO activities are contributing to the agricultural development of the country.

At the present time three types of activities are important in the context of agriculture in Bangladesh: agricultural research on improved crops and cropping systems, agricultural extension, and irrigation. Though all three types of activities are of crucial importance for a sound development of agriculture, the local NGOs so far have paid little attention to the first two types of activities. This is mainly due to their financial limitations.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that of Anu Mohammed's estimated 300 developmental NGOs, only 40 are involved with agricultural production.⁴⁸

The Government and NGOs

The government is gradually coming to terms with the NGOs and is providing a legal climate for their necessary interaction. Intense pressure from donor countries/agencies to provide adequate roles to NGOs is one of the key factors behind the government's coming to terms with them. Most aid-giving agencies, including the World Bank, IMF, USAID, CARE, CIDA, etc. have

made it clear to aid-recipient countries that they want to channel a part of their resources through NGOs.

Partly in response to donor pressures, and partly in response to the necessity of keeping voluntary organizations under control, the government of Bangladesh issued Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulations Ordinance on November, 1978. Later, the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Rules, 1978 were issued by the Political Branch of the Ministry of Homes. In 1982, the Ordinance was revised.⁴⁹ Since 1988, the government has been paying more attention to NGO matters. The Standing Committee under the External Resources Division which used to look after NGO affairs has been placed under the Cabinet Division. The Committee is composed of high ranking officials of various ministries, Directorates, and the Planning Commission.⁵⁰

According to the provisions of the Ordinance, each Ministry will form a steering committee under the supervision of the secretary of the ministry, to deal with NGO matters. There will be an NGO cell in the Cabinet Division to implement decisions regarding NGOs. The NGO cell, in addition to providing secretarial services to the Standing Committee, has been vested with several important functions, such as:

- (1) approval of project proforma for the NGOs;
- (2) approval of projects submitted by various steering committees;
- (3) approval and observation of overall activities of NGOs;

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(4) co-ordination among various Ministries/Departments regarding NGO activities;

(5) evaluation of NGO activities on the basis of reports from various steering committees, head of the district administration, the Bangladesh Bank, and other related organizations;

(6) determination of principles regarding the appointment of foreign employees in the NGOs; and

(7) determination of any other principles regarding the NGOs.⁵¹

Also, the government has set several principles with regard to the implementation of NGO projects, and their audit. The principles demonstrate the government's intention to collaborate with NGOs but at the same time control their activities. The principles are:

1. If not opposed to the government policies and national security, participation of NGOs in development activities will be encouraged;
2. To ensure that NGOs can implement their programmes within the laws set by the government;
3. Any project included in the government plan or a part thereof can be completed through the NGOs;
4. The registration of an NGO, financed by foreign countries, is vested in the Social Welfare Division. Approval of the Ministry of Home is also required;
5. NGOs will keep their projects limited to what has been approved by the government;

6. In their respective areas, Deputy Commissioners of districts will take care of NGOs. If needed, the DC will visit NGO projects and send reports on a three-monthly basis to the Standing Committee and relevant Steering Committees;
7. The Bangladesh Bank will send a detailed report on foreign exchange which will be made available to the Cabinet and External Resources Division;
8. The related ministries, after consultation with the Ministries of Home and Foreign Affairs, can release appointment letters to foreign experts/advisors to NGOs.⁵²

Though NGOs are required to operate within the guidelines set by the government, events during and after the 1987 and 1988 floods show that they can easily bypass governmental instructions, if they so want. During those periods of national disaster, the government was badly in need of help. NGOs came forward with massive assistance and worked side by side the government, although many NGOs did not get their total work-plans approved by the relevant government Departments.

In addition to government efforts at coordination, there were some efforts on the part of an NGO also to make the relief operations by NGOs coordinated. It was the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) which undertook this function. The ADAB opened a Disaster Monitoring Unit immediately after the flood for the above purpose. It was found from the reports submitted to the Unit that many NGOs did not coordinate their activities with the government properly. Some major NGOs like

OXFAM and Proshika (Comilla) also had various anomalies in their operations. OXFAM had a budget of TK. 132.9 million for relief and rehabilitation, which was supposed to be spent in five phases. During the 1st phase, Tk. 12.8 million was spent, but the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation was informed of a work-plan of 4.9 million and 20 thousand taka only. Proshika (Comilla) worked with a budget of Tk 60 million - 30 million for relief and 30 million for rehabilitation. However, Proshika got a work-plan of only Tk. 3.1 million and 12 thousand Tk. approved by the government ministry.⁵³

Reports sent by various NGOs involved in the relief operation to the Disaster Monitoring Unit of the ADAB revealed some more interesting information. It was found that one NGO named ARBAN collected a fund of Tk..4 million and 65 thousand which, according to their report, was spent for relief and rehabilitation purposes. Surprisingly, it was later found that no NGO by that name was ever registered with the government's Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. ADAB sources also reported that in the aftermath of the flood, an unprecedented interest was found among political party workers, professionals and unemployed youths to start new NGOs; as many as 100 applications were filed.⁵⁴

Lack of coordination between NGOs and donors/ aid agencies manifested itself on other occasions also. At times it was found that relief materials sent to Bangladesh included: tomato paste, date juice, vegetable pickles, cheese, and big-sized shoes. As the flood victims could not make any good use of these

items, they later found their way into the big city markets.⁵⁵

However, despite many problems, the government seems to be favourably responding to the NGO role. Though government recognition of NGO activities is growing, there seems to be some widespread resentment in various quarters, especially government officials. One high-ranking government official, closely familiar and involved with the rural scene and rural development of the country, alleges that many so-called NGOs have provided unique opportunities to a section of city-bred elites, as he calls them, to make their own fortune in the name of rural development. He believes that this parasitic elite group draws exorbitant salaries and allowances for services similar to those performed by their government counterparts. As a result, the morale of the government servants has been severely hit.⁵⁶

However, Kamal Siddiqui *et al.* in a comparative study, sponsored by ADAB, of the salaries and benefits received by functionaries of GOs and NGOs in Bangladesh, did not find any alarming differences. By using a common type of work as the basis of comparison, the authors of the study conclude that differences between GO and NGO benefit packages are not as great as it is generally assumed. Organizations involved in rural development activities were chosen for comparison. The study also shows that the assumption that NGOs spent more money on establishment and administrative heads is unfounded. Of course, there are some areas where NGOs are ahead of GOs; for example, NGO staffs receive better pay, house rent and transport facilities. The study also

shows that differences in staff-officer pay and other emoluments are not as marked in NGOs as they are in GOs.⁵⁷

Another conclusion of the study is that despite low expenditure on functionaries, NGOs seem to have a better performance record; however, the authors cautiously argue that it would be erroneous to assume that everything is perfectly all right with the NGOs. They further argue that much more needs to be done in respect of training, participation in the decision-making process, scope of work, and benefits, if the morale of employees is to be kept high.⁵⁸

NGOs and Upazila Administration

It is widely held that NGOs as intermediaries between the government and the disadvantaged groups can play a significant role for the benefit of the latter. This is certainly true in the context of decentralized administration at the upazila level in Bangladesh. One of the main purposes behind the creation of the upazila, as we know, was to bring the administration closer to the people, so that they can not only participate in the implementation of policies and programmes, but also contribute to their formulation. However, decentralization at the local level does not seem to have decreased the power of local elites over different aspects of the society; on the contrary, it has added to their power. As local elites are the main beneficiaries of many governmental programs, including agricultural subsidies, the food distribution system, etc., there is no good reason to assume that decentralization of administration as such will

benefit the poorer sections automatically. The fact can not be ignored that rural elites, for obvious reasons, will not give up so easily the undue privileges to which they have been accustomed so long. It is because of this that there should be some special measures directed to the most needy people in the rural areas. And it is here that NGOs can come into play.

A recent World Bank report suggested an alternative organizational arrangement, suited to the needs of the rural poor. Under its arrangement there would be set up Upazila Employment Resource Centres (UERCs), under the management of some international NGOs. The heads of these NGOs would be appointed by the program financiers (government and donors). In the long run, the UERCs would be expected to be financially independent. One of the purposes for their creation would be to minimize governmental interference at the local level and also to avoid new bureaucratization.⁵⁹

Among the functions proposed for the UERCs, the following are salient:

1. act as a focal point for non-farm employment generation for target groups at the Upazila;
2. facilitate the formation of productive groups (formal and informal);
3. facilitate provision of services to target groups such as skill training, technology, market information and credit by acting as an intermediary between target groups and sources of necessary services;
4. coordinate activities of target groups as well as teaching aids needed for initial motivation and training in literacy and numeracy necessary for group formation;
4. assist in identification of productive activities, in linking local productive activities with a wider network by providing infrastructure on raw material procurement, marketing and improved technology...⁶⁰

The Report recommends that the UERC should be self-financing within

3 to 5 years. It also recommends autonomy for the UERC, with representation on its governing council, from UZP, NGOs and target groups.

The UERC is still an idea and it is not at all clear whether this suggestion of the Bank will at all materialise.

Perceptions of Upazila-level Actors with regard to NGOs

It is interesting to note how the NGO phenomenon was perceived by the relevant actors at the upazila level. In order to have some ideas, we asked both the elected members and the public officials about the likely role that NGOs can play in rural development in Bangladesh. The response of the concerned groups can be seen in the table below.

Table 1: Role of NGOs as seen by elected members and officials

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Essential and constructive	7	33.33	14	56
Some usefulness	13	61.90	4	16
Not very essential	--	--	4	16
Harmful	1	4.76	--	--
Others	--	--	--	--
No answer	--	--	3	12

It is interesting to note that more public officials (56%) than elected members (33%) perceived the NGO role in rural development to be constructive and essential. But an overwhelming majority of elected officials (62%) simply approve the idea of NGO involvement in rural development, by recognizing that NGOs have some usefulness. One of the reasons for the low acceptance of the NGO role by the elected officials may be that they are not quite sure what exactly NGOs can accomplish in promoting the welfare of rural areas. Further, elected members may also feel threatened by NGO success in poverty alleviation programs and also with other programs with limited target group. NGOs because of their limited involvement with selected target groups and also because of substantial resource availability, mainly from external sources, can perform better than the local government organizations or governmental bureaucracy. This relative NGO success may be a cause for alarm to the locally elected members. It means that NGOs by virtue of their superior performance can better influence the poor people and to that extent elected members are likely to lose their hold on people in their own constituencies. Compared to elected members, public officials seem to be less concerned with the growing influence of the NGOs. They are not very enthusiastic about the NGO role, though a majority of them do not foresee NGO interference in their own jurisdictions (see Table 2).

Table 2: NGO power (Do NGOs want to interfere in administrative affairs?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of totals
Yes	4	19.04	8	32.00
No	14	66.66	15	60.00
No answer	3	14.28	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

NGOs, as we know, work under governmental regulations and thereby are supposed to abide by the principles set by the government. But the works that NGOs undertake, mostly related to the protection of the poor's rights and interests, may well bring them to clash with rural elites, the main beneficiaries of the government supplies and services. It is inconceivable how NGOs could protect the interest of the poor without coming to confrontation with these vested interests, because there is no doubt that existing local elites will not give up the privileges to which they are already accustomed. Possession of the khas land is a case in point.

A majority of the upazila level actors, both elected members and officials, do not report of any clashes with NGOs, and also they admit that NGOs do communicate with the Upazila administration with regard to their various activities, as required by law. A sizable number of public officials (56%) report that NGOs keep local administration informed about their activities

(Table 3).

Table 3: NGO communication (Do NGOs communicate with the Upazila administration with regard to their relief and rehabilitation, health and family planning, educational, etc. activities?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	14	66.66	14	56.00
No	6	28.57	7	28.00
No answer	1	4.76	4	16.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

Even if communication exists between local bodies and NGOs, there seem to be greater concern for coordination among elected members and public officials on the above matters.

A good majority of both elected members (67%) and officials (56%) agree that NGOs communicate their activities to local bodies. There is a consensus among the elected members that NGO activities must be coordinated with the government programs. A vast majority of public officials (88%) also feels the same way (Table 4).

Table 4: NGO coordination
(Is coordination between GO and NGO activities necessary?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	21	100.00	22	88.00
No	--	--	1	4.00
No answer	--	--	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

When asked to point out some main problems of NGO activities, a majority of both elected members and public officials said that NGO solution is temporary. They also pointed to the need for coordination. Also, many of them felt that NGOs fail to understand the complexities of local situations (Table 5).

Table 5: NGOs: Some main problems
(What are some of the main problems related to NGOs?)

	a	b	c	d	e
Elected Members (21)	4	14	2	7	3
Officials (25)	6	15	8	13	3

[Note: a= ignore complexities; b= provide temporary solutions; c= create social inequality; d= lack of coordination; e= no answer.

Respondents listed more than one choice; therefore, total will not add up to 21

for elected members and 25 for public officials].

As regards the solution to the problems emanating from the NGO participation in rural development, both elected members and public officials felt that NGOs should have their budgets and schemes approved by the government. They also felt that local government should also have adequate control over the functions of the NGOs. Only a small portion of the interviewees felt that NGO activities should be forbidden, while a few of them declined to answer the question (Table 6).

Table 6: NGOs: Solutions

(What solutions would you recommend for the problems arising out of the NGO intervention in the development of rural areas?)

	a	b	c	d
Elected Members (21)	15	14	4	2
Public Officials (25)	19	13	3	2

[Notes: a= all NGO activities should be approved by the government; b= local governments, in this case upazilas, should be empowered to oversee NGO activities; c= NGOs should be forbidden; d= no answer.

As respondents listed more than one choice, the total will not add up to 21 for elected members and 25 for officials].

It was also interesting to note how NGO officials feel about their own role. Invariably all NGO officials interviewed⁶¹ thought that NGOs could play a constructive role in the development of the country, including rural areas. A

majority of the NGO officials thought that NGOs try to interfere in administrative matters for the sake of the poor. It is probably 'because of their assumption that without some degree of interference, NGOs can not protect the interests of the people for whom they profess to fight.

Asked whether, the NGOs keep the upazila administration informed about the activities they undertake, all of them said 'yes.' On the question about the necessity of coordination between NGO and government activities, all interviewees asserted that it was necessary. Also, NGO officials did not find any problem with local governments having control over their activities and they also did not have any problems with the prior government approval for their projects.

Conclusion

Though differently viewed by conservative theorists of crisis and the new left, the general trend in both developed and developing countries seems to be the increasing recognition to privatization and NGOs. The Bangladesh scenario is not at all different. However, there seems to be some ambivalence, both on the part of the locally elected leadership and the government functionaries on the impact the NGOs may have on different aspects of the society. It is important both for the elected leadership and the NGOs to make sure that their jurisdictions are not in conflict. Again, due caution is necessary with regard to the benefit package offered to NGO employees and the civil servants; a drastic difference in this regard may adversely affect the morale of the latter. The cautious opinion of Hasnat Abdul Hye, a senior civil servant and one time Director General of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), is worth remembering in this respect. To quote him:

The solution to the problem lies in integrating the NGOs into the framework of the government programme and making their expenditure pattern, particularly under the administrative head, comparable to that of government agencies. Furthermore, to revive the spirit of social service, they should be made to mobilise resources through their own efforts. Sustained rural development can't take place through fragmented efforts of numerous agencies operating on their own. Neither should rural development be considered as the happy hunting ground for fortune seekers. If NGOs are committed to rural development they should agree to work within the common framework decided by the Government. Besides, they should mobilise resources outside the official development assistance to prove their seriousness and dedication.⁶²

In any case, there are some good reasons to believe that in the face of any substantial transfer of resources from the urban to the rural areas, the NGOs can make some contribution to the betterment of the rural poor. Various examples of NGO activities, referred to above, amply testify to this fact.

As voluntary activities in the socio-cultural milieu of Bangladesh are at a conspicuously low level and many of them are religiously demarcated, there is an urgent need to encourage and promote NGOs as a mode for interest articulation for the purpose of development. Though the importance of NGOs as channels for the protection of target group interest is debated not only in outside circles but also among themselves, there is still no valid reason to dismiss the role of NGOs in rural development as meaningless or counterproductive.

As of now NGO activities are confined to only 5000 of 68,000 villages.⁶³ This situation represents an extreme illustration of the limited coverage, segmentary character and also urban-centeredness of NGO operations in the national context. The government should use all its power of control and manoeuvrability to change this situation in favour of a geographic dispersal of NGO activities. NGOs should be encouraged and persuaded by the state to undertake more agriculture-related projects. Various scrutiny mechanisms at the discretion of the government to oversee the activities of NGOs can be used in this respect.

The UERC proposed by the World Bank also deserves a try, at least on

an experimental basis. Local governments should also be empowered to exercise some control over NGO activities for the purpose of coordination as well as realization of development objectives. Controls at all levels, it must be noted, should be meant for soliciting NGO collaboration and coordination with the government efforts, not to discourage them from participating in development activities.

There are many ways in which NGOs can extend their cooperation to government programs. Firstly, NGO expertise in conscientization, management and skills training can be fruitfully utilized by the government for implementation of its various programs. Secondly, NGO skill in group formation can also be used in various strategic sectors like agriculture, fisheries, livestock and forestry. NGOs can effectively link various target groups with the government's extension programs. Thirdly, NGOs can play a mediating role in matching the demand of the poor with available resources.⁶⁴

If the right environment can be promoted, there is a good chance that NGOs can become worthy partners in rural development and can make their contribution more meaningful. This will require sincere moves on the part of NGOs as well - they must agree to minimise the secretive nature of many of their operations and be ready to operate within the legal framework established by the government, as far as possible, of course, not sacrificing the interests of the people whom they wish to serve.

In the next chapter we will look at how the decentralized upazila

administration and the NGOs are trying to get the local people involved in planning, implementing and evaluating the plans and programs which are meant for the localities. How is the concept, people's participation, perceived by upazila-level GO and NGO officials? Is there a real prospect for the local people to participate in the decentralized administration or is participation just a fashionable bit of jargon used in the GO/NGO reports and publicity materials?

Endnotes:

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4. Paul Cook and Colin Kirkpatrick, "Privatization in Less Developed Countries: An Overview," in their ed., Privatisation in Less Developed Countries (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp.4-5.
5. The North-South Institute, Bridges of Hope: Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World (Ottawa, 1988), p. 6.
6. Michael M. Cernea, NGOs and Local Development - A World Bank Discussion Paper, 1988, p. 43.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 17.
9. Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ACARRD), The State of NGOs in Rural Development and Selected NGO Perceptions of Rural Development (Sitang, Cavit, Philippines, 23-27 March, 1987), p. 7.
10. World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), The Report, Rome, 12-20 July, 1979, p. 41.
11. Of several works on this theme, the following three deserve special mention: (1) World Bank, First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in the Developing Countries (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); (2) Robert Chambers, Rural Development: Putting the Last First (London: Longman, 1983), and Michael Cernea, Putting People First - Sociological Variables in Rural Development (World Bank: Washington D.C., 1986).

12. Barbara D. Miller and Showkat Hayat Khan, "Incorporating Voluntarism into Rural Development in Bangladesh," Third World Planning Review, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1986, p. 141.

13. Ibid., p. 149.

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17. Anu Mohammed, The Crisis of Development in Bangladesh and the NGO Model (Dhaka: Prochinta Prokashan, 1988) (in Bengali), p. 9.

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19. Anu Mohammed, op. cit., p. 9.

20. Kamal Siddiqui et al., op. cit., pp. 30-31.

21. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

22. F. R. M. Hassan, "Processes in Landless Mobilization in Bangladesh: Theory and Practice," ADAB News, Vol. 13, No. 6, November-December, 1986, p. 2.

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27. Aditee Nag Chowdhury, Let Grass-Roots Speak: People's Participation, Self-Help Groups and NGOs in Bangladesh (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1984), p. 173.
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54. Ibid., p. 27.
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56. Hasnat Abdul Hye, "Privatising Rural Development," in his Dateline Gram Bangla: Notes from Rural Bangladesh (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1986), pp. 178-180.
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59. Abu Abdullah, "Local Level Planning and Participation: Possibilities and Limitations," in The Young Economist (Journal of the Bangladesh Young

Economists' Association) Upazila Seminar, held in Dhaka. April, 1986, p. 39.

60. World Bank, Bangladesh: A Framework for Additional Efforts to Address Rural Poverty and Employment (mimeo, undated), pp. 14-15, quoted in Abu Abdullah, op. cit., p. 39.

61. As NGO operations are limited in particular regions, not all upazilas have NGOs in their own jurisdiction. Of our two sample upazilas, one has NGOs working in it, while the other does not have any NGO within its area. Again, the NGO office working at the upazila level is not very big. Four of the NGO officials responded to our structured questionnaire. In addition I had some free discussions with NGO high officials of Agricultural Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) and Association for Social Advancement (ASA), located in the capital - Dhaka. The interpretation presented here is based on both the structured questionnaire and free discussions.

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Chapter VII

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION AT THE UPAZILA LEVEL

People's Participation in Theory

With the growing realization that production-centered development, which relied mostly on social techniques like command-system forms of organization, "value-free" methods of decision-analysis, and functionally defined production systems, did not bring much for the poorer sections in the society, there emerged the need for a people-centered approach to development. This approach shifted its emphasis to different factors. Korten puts the main points of the new approach succinctly:

They feature forms of self-organization that highlight the role of the individual in the decision process and call for the application of human values in decision-making. Its knowledge-building processes are based on social learning concepts and methods. The territorial rather than the functional perspective dominates the planning and management of its production consumption systems. And its use of frameworks of human ecology in analysis of production choices and performance not only internalises people and environment but makes them the very foundation of the analytical process.¹

In brief, the very essence of people-centered development is the people's participation in decision-making. But people's participation as a concept and as a practice is not at all easy. One authority (Dharam Ghai) classifies participation into three types: (1) mobilization; (2) decentralization in governmental organizations; and (3) a process of employment of the deprived and excluded. In the case of the first type, projects are designed from above and the people

are mobilized to participate in them. In the case of the second type, decision-making powers may be decentralized to the local level, but the masses remain outside the decision-making process. It is in the case of the third type that the masses enjoy the power to participate in the decisions that affect them.²

The idea of participation has increasingly been recognized as an important requisite to the development programmes. A resolution taken by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (Resolution 1746 (LIV) of 16 May 1973) on social and economic changes needed for social progress in member countries is worth mentioning in this case. The resolution reads:

that appropriate measures should be taken at all levels to ensure more active participation by the entire population, including the working force, in the production, preparation and execution of economic and social development policies and programmes designed to achieve far-reaching social and economic changes for the purpose of social progress, taking into account the experience of other governments in this field.³

Participation has implications for all aspects of the society: economic, social and political. On the economic side two net benefits could be higher wage rates, and improved prices for raw materials. On the social side, benefits derived from the participatory practices could be enormous. Important social benefits would, among others, include: improved social services and cultural amenities; improved family relations, emancipation of women, etc. On the political side, probably the best advantage derived out of participation is the realization of democracy. Participation can be an effective means to learn democracy in the real life situation.⁴ "Grassroots participatory organizations

may be regarded as foundations of a democratic society."⁵

However, people's participation may have enormous variations, ranging from zero participation to total popular participation. These two are, however, extreme cases; real life situations correspond to positions somewhere in between. Total popular participation is difficult to achieve and may be desirable only in certain specific instances; in some cases, the urgency of a situation may call for decisions without much popular participation. A comprehensive land reform, for example, may require decisions with possible total participation in order to be effective, whereas decisions regarding armed invasion or a natural disaster, may not permit the authority to allow for total participation, because they need to be responded to on an emergency basis.⁶

Therefore, in order to decide which decisions are amenable to popular participation and which are not, it is important that associated variables are taken into account. In our case, what we have meant by people's participation in decision-making is not necessarily total popular participation, but adequate representation of group interests. Here again, it has to be kept in mind that adequate representation is a matter of degree and remains an issue of contention.

Development Planning at the Upazila Level: People's Participation Aspects

The administrative reorganization of 1982, as we know, has transferred considerable functions to the upazila level. Though there is room for further

decentralization of functions, both in respect of developmental and traditional (law and order, and revenue), there is no denying that already transferred functions need careful and deliberate planning. The Upazila Parishads (UZPs) still do not have the technical means and experts to handle their planning and implementation needs.

Section 40 of the Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, provided that the government would specify the manner and also the agencies through which plans would be financed, executed, and implemented. Following the provisions of the Ordinance, the Planning Commission, in consultation with the Ministries, issued guidelines for the upazilas in 1983, which were subsequently revised in 1985 and 1988. The guidelines, it was claimed, were prepared for helping the upazilas to properly utilize the development assistance fund provided by the central government through better planning and implementation of projects undertaken by the UZPs. With regard to strategies for planning and implementation, the guidelines say:

(i) UZPs should prepare an Upazila Development Plan and maintain a Plan Book on the lines so long maintained by most of the development circles and keep it continuously updated, and for each financial year should prepare an Annual Upazila Development Programme (AUDP). (ii) Experience and expertise being limited at the Upazila-level, development activities to be planned and implemented by the UZPs at this stage will mainly centre around: (a)

agriculture and irrigation and industry: (b) physical infrastructure; (c) socio-economic infrastructure; (d) sports and culture and (e) misc. activities.⁷

The Planning Process

Government guidelines, provided by the Planning Commission and the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C), require each Upazila to undertake Five Year Plans, and Annual Development Plans. In order to enable the Upazilas to undertake the functions like identification and selection of schemes, allocation of funds, and implementation of projects, the guidelines provide for a mechanism, which includes:

- (a) setting up of a Project Selection Committee by the UZP;
- (b) formation of a Sub-Committee for scrutiny and technical feasibility of the schemes;
- (c) preparation of project proforma for each scheme according to prescribed format, and submission of the same to the Parishad or to the Project Selection Committee for consideration,
- (d) preparation of a list of implementable schemes, by the Parishad for which schemes are to be selected every year.⁸

In order to comply with the above requirements, UZPs have to undertake some planning functions. But most of them centre around: (a) spending the fund received; (b) picking up schemes against which the fund is to be spent. Long

term plans are hardly undertaken because of the lack of technical support and experience.

Though the UZP is empowered to approve development projects through a consensus or, in the absence of consensus, a majority vote, the process of project selection does not seem to have sufficient inputs from the public, whom the plans affect in various ways. The guidelines provide for a "Project Selection Committee" in each Upazila, to be composed of not more than seven members, including elected members and government officials. For the identification and selection of projects at the Union level, the guidelines provide that the Project Selection Committee visit the concerned unions to consult the chairmen and members and also important local members.⁹

The guidelines also provide for the constitution of sub-committees from amongst the members of the Parishad or by co-option from outside to look after the technical aspects of various plans. Furthermore, the guidelines require that UZPs follow a prescribed project proforma (for a sample, see Appendix) for the preparation of plans. In addition to ensuring the technical viability of the project to be undertaken, the proforma requires that related socio-economic considerations will also be taken into account; another requirement is to collect information on the origin of the project idea and to see whether any survey/study on a particular project has been made before?¹⁰

There are specific instructions with regard to the implementation and evaluation phases as well. Here again, the guidelines provide the UZP with

powers to nominate one person as in charge of a project and to constitute a Project Committee to look after the implementation of various projects. The project committee may include both officials and non-officials. As per the guidelines, the UZP has the power to review various projects. And it has the right to constitute review committees for closer scrutiny and monitoring, if needed.¹¹

As in the project selection, the common people have little say in the implementation and evaluation phases. Whatever say they have in various phases of the plan cycle - selection, formulation, monitoring, and review of projects - is through their representatives and is very indirect. It is not only the input from the citizens which is absent, but also whatever system is in place does not work well because of the lack of resources and trained personnel. For the lack of adequate statistical information, the UZPs follow the easy way out. What actually happens at the Upazila level in the name of the Annual Upazila Development Plan (AUDP) is a mere listing of several projects for the next fiscal year. Furthermore, Upazilas prefer to undertake projects related to physical infrastructure. This is because projects related to physical infrastructure are easy to identify and implement. Moreover, undertaking such projects gives the elected members a chance to quickly utilize the development fund available to them and also to demonstrate to their constituencies that as representatives of the people they are working for their localities. Boosting popular support is perhaps one of the main objectives.¹²

Under the current arrangement the Upazila plan is nothing more than an amalgam of projects proposed by the Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen. As the UP chairmen have to satisfy their own constituencies, they are usually concerned about short-term goals of their respective areas. In most cases, what matters most to them is to gain more benefits for their own constituencies or unions. UP chairmen are less concerned about the overall affairs of the Upazila and issues which are inter-union in nature.¹³ "Thus upazilas are not implementing upazila plans as such but projects of unions without any coherent and integrated framework."¹⁴

Hye argues that upazilas should have their own priority projects, and they need to be uniformly pursued. In his words:

A list of core projects can be identified for the Upazila within the transferred subjects through a bench mark survey of the socio-economic conditions of the upazila. This will be in addition to the union projects coming through the Chairmen. For the implementation of the core projects a part of the development fund should be earmarked. The remaining fund can be allocated among the unions for implementation of the union projects. Upazila plan will thus consist of two parts. the core projects and the union projects which together will have greater threat in the development process.¹⁵

The politics of the UP chairmen is not the only factor hampering the development of an effective planning mechanism at the upazila level; there are other major problems as well. The Monitoring and Evaluation Cell of the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, in its audit report on Upazilas for 1985-86, found the following anomalies:

- (1) distribution of grants to various cultural organizations/clubs without any particular projects;
- (2) undertaking of projects exceeding guidelines ceiling and undertaking of unnecessary and excess project identification, selection, and approval.
- (3) expenditure on prizes for students, teachers, and farmers;
- (4) allocation of funds to Union Parishads, disregarding the size and population of a Union;
- (5) failure to submit evaluation reports of development projects (in prescribed forms);
- (6) failure to adopt projects, following the project proforma, prescribed by the Planning Commission;
- (7) failure to allocate funds to prescribed sectors (9 in total);
- (8) failure to adopt Annual and Five Year Plans (FYPs);
- (9) failure to adopt the necessary projects in the urban areas;
- (10) construction of buildings for schools and colleges without the necessary survey;
- (11) purchase and repair of Upazila Parishad (UZP) jeeps and purchase of motor cycles by using the UZP Development Fund. Jeeps and water vehicles are sometimes heavily misused.
- (12) construction of Upazila Training and Development Centre (UTDC) drains by using monies from agriculture and irrigation sectors.
- (13) undertaking of projects in one sector by using monies from another sector;

- (14) failure to submit statement regarding the revenue receipt;
- (15) failure to approve the revised and additional expenditures by the UZPs;
- (16) failure to submit various proceedings of the UZP meetings, copies of budgets, manpower, etc. to the Ministry.¹⁶

The problems are wide ranging and they have serious implications for the planning and implementation of development projects at the upazila level. Some observers of Bangladesh society attribute the poor performance of the government and also local bodies to structural inadequacies at various levels of administration. To them, a lack of proper institutional structure has been hampering the evolution of a truly democratic planning practice in the local areas. Khan and Khan, for example, argue that in an exploitative society, like that of Bangladesh, conventional practices of democracy will never be able to give a fair chance to the disadvantaged sections in the society. To remedy this situation, the authors put forward a model, what they call 'participatory democracy' where all occupational groups would be given opportunities for participation in the decision-making processes. For the upazila level, the authors propose a structure of administration which would include representatives of Union local self-government (one from each Union), and representatives of Wards (one from each Ward), cooperative peasantry, agricultural workers, women, and government agencies (one from each agency).¹⁷

Another model of participation advanced by Abu Abdullah, a research economist with the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, is also of

interest in this regard. He argues that the Upazila Employment Resource Centre (UERC) proposed by the World Bank as an alternative organizational arrangement, which would include Government Organizations (GOs) and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) for the formation of groups at the upazila level, would be of some help in promoting participation. But, to him, UERCs would be inadequate as organizations to ensure participation of a substantial majority.¹⁸ In Abdullah's opinion, it is the union of laborers that can be the effective and viable organizational vehicle for the poor people at the upazila level. Abdullah believes that the elected executive committees of the laborers unions should have membership in the Upazila Parishads, though he does not specify the mode of their appointment, or election. His suggested measures, he argues, are meant for giving the rural poor some say in the decision-making process. Abdullah also favours an employment (or income) guarantee scheme which would strengthen the position of the poor in the decision-making process.¹⁹

With this brief introduction to the issue of people's participation in the planning and implementation processes at the local level, particularly the upazila level, in Bangladesh, let us now look at two vital sectors of the Bangladesh society - irrigation, and health and family planning - to see the overall conditions of these sectors and how people are involved in their planning and implementation processes.

Irrigation

In order to analyze the problems and prospects of irrigation, we will first consider agriculture, in general, as it is with reference to agriculture that the problems of irrigation can be understood properly. Agriculture in Bangladesh, as we know, is the main contributor to the GDP and also employment. Therefore, the development of Bangladesh seems virtually impossible without a steady development of the agricultural sector. Also, given the serious land shortage and the shrinking land-man ratio, the most feasible option left is for Bangladesh to develop its irrigation sector to increase food production. Irrigated agriculture could be an effective means for promoting not only the development of the rural areas but also the entire country. As the Agriculture Sector Review Team observes:

There is no way the country can overcome the dilemma of feeding itself until and unless growth in agricultural output is sustained across a wide range of crops for a considerable period of time. This need for strong and stable growth is underlined in Bangladesh since population growth provides the agriculture sector with at least 2m additional mouths to feed each and every year.²⁰

Bangladesh's agriculture, so crucial to the nation's survival, is usually said to be a gamble of the monsoon. It is so said because harvest in Bangladesh depends mostly on the mercy of the monsoon rains. Recently, frequent floods, almost every year, have added to already existing uncertainties. Though there is an abundance of water in the monsoon, water supplies in the dry season are not at all sufficient. These uncertainties of water supply for seasonal crops have made irrigation perhaps the best possible option for a steady agricultural

growth; however, as of now only about 20% of the arable land in Bangladesh is under irrigation.²¹

In Bangladesh, there are three principal crop seasons: (a) the bhadoi or spring season; (b) the rainy season or the aman season; and (c) the winter rabi season.²² Depending on local requirements, irrigation can be used in varying degrees in all the three seasons. As the rainfall in the spring season is sporadic, there may be a need for additional water supply for spring crops like rice and jute. During the rainy season, 36% of the land goes under knee-depth water and another 25% is usually flooded to waist-depth;²³ therefore, during this season the problem is one of control rather than of supply. It is in the winter that the need for water is greatest.

In Bangladesh seasonal irrigation needs are usually met through two main sources: (1) surface water, and (2) ground water. The scope of the first source is limited because of the fact that not enough water can be diverted from the rivers for irrigation purposes. It is necessary that a steady flow of rivers must be maintained for navigation during the dry season. In that case, requirements for irrigation water during the dry season can be met by constructing ponds, which can provide an additional advantage in that they can be used as fisheries as well.²⁴

The other source of irrigation, groundwater, has a comparative advantage over the surface water in the sense that it does not occupy any land surface. However, the ground water needs to be lifted either manually or by means of

power pumps.²⁵ In Bangladesh, both traditional and modern methods are in use for lifting ground water. The traditional methods, which are labour intensive, include: (1) Doon, (2) Swing Basket, (3) Dug Well. The Doon is basically a canoe and is simple to operate. The swing basket is made of a bucket, basket or kerosine tin and has a little more capacity than the Doon. Dug wells are meant for lifting underground water with a bucket.²⁶ The modern methods include: (1) Low Lift Pump (LLP), (2) Deep Tubewell (DTW), (3) Shallow Tubewell (STW), (4) Hand Pump, and (5) Large canal schemes. The LLP, also called a power pump, was started by the East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (EPWAPDA) 1959. LLPs were the first type of irrigation equipment introduced in Bangladesh.²⁷ Initially LLPs were sold at a very low rate; as a result, many LLPs found their use in activities other than irrigation, for example, paddy husking, de-watering of ponds, boats, etc.²⁸

DTWs need to be around 300 feet deep and their installation needs heavy drilling and expert handling. Though private ownership of DTWs was allowed after 1980, their purchase was heavily subsidized by the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC).²⁹ DTWs have been promoted by the government of Bangladesh on both efficiency and equity grounds. STWs are usually owned by individuals and groups and their sale is not usually subsidized; however, the BADC supplies spare parts on payment.³⁰ The technology used for making the hand pumps is relatively simple. The pumps can be obtained through the BADC as well as through the private sector. But

the problem with the Hand Pump is that its capacity is rather limited in terms of the coverage of a viable command area.³¹ Large canal schemes are broader in scope, if compared with the other methods, and they seek to achieve multiple objectives: flood control (embankments), drainage and irrigation. These projects are undertaken by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and are completely subsidized.³²

Modern mechanised irrigation methods, however, have given rise to several social problems. One such problem is the widening gap between the large and small farmers. Whereas in 1977, 29% of the small farmers and 33% of the large farmers had access to irrigation facilities, by 1983-84, the corresponding figures stood at 40% and 60% respectively. The figures show that the rate of increase of access to irrigation facilities is more than two times for the large farmers than the small farmers. Given this trend, it is quite obvious that the income gap between the small farmers and the large farmers will worsen in the future.³³

Landless peasants have been the victims of exploitation for a long time in the Bangladesh countryside; modern irrigation techniques have added to the problem. This time it is the waterlords who are taking advantage of the modern irrigation facilities for their own benefit. The reason for the emergence of the waterlords is not very far to seek. At present the requirement to get a LLP from the BADC is through a cooperative, which, in most cases, is found to be dominated by the local influentials. "These persons are generally the biggest

land owners in the areas to be irrigated."³⁴ The key position holders in the cooperatives decide who will get water and who will not. A patron-client relationship emerges between the waterlords and water users. The waterlords sometimes seek political support from their clients. Another problem arises from the small and fragmented land-holdings: it is quite difficult to form a group of owners to constitute a technical command area for irrigation; an economically viable command area needs a sizeable area of land.³⁵

The two most important government agencies responsible for the planning and implementation of water development projects are: Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC). The BWDB is the successor of EPWAPDA, created by Order # 1 of 1959; the organization was meant for the development of water resources and power. The EPWAPDA was renamed as BWDB in 1972 by a Presidential Order; the same Order provided for the bifurcation of the EPWAPDA into the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). It is the BWDB which is responsible for the surface water irrigation, drainage, flood control, erosion control, town protection, and river training.³⁶ "Its expanded role includes land reclamation, salinity control, and the maintenance of unobstructed water channels."³⁷

Planning operations undertaken by the BWDB are very ad hoc; they are mostly project-oriented rather than integrated, probably because of the donor

requirements. Moreover, there is very little input from the people in the project planning, except for some small projects. Further, many projects disregard their ecological impact. Sometimes projects do not show adequate linkages with the national plan.³⁸ In view of these problems, the question has been raised of how far the BWDB can be the appropriate agency for water development and the delivery functions related to water resources. The Bangladesh Agriculture Sector Review Team recommended that local bodies (Union or thana) should be given the responsibility for the maintenance of small schemes located within their jurisdictions.³⁹ The Agriculture Sector Team considers the Upazila Project Identification and Selection Committee to be a right forum for the planning and implementation of water development projects.⁴⁰

While the Upazila can be a good forum for the project planning and implementation of projects regarding water resources, especially irrigation, its usefulness in relation to the operation and maintenance of equipment is in doubt because, under the current government regulations, Upazilas are not entitled to spend much on the maintenance functions. In this case it is desirable that direct beneficiaries of water projects be involved in some ways so that they can take care of the equipment they use for irrigation. According to a World Bank report:

In the case of pumped irrigation, this can best be done by selling the equipment to user groups and encouraging the private sector to provide repair or maintenance services. For other types of irrigation schemes, it may require the formation of water users groups which have the authority to levy water charges and use the proceeds for maintenance purposes.⁴¹

The other organization, the BADC, directly associated with agriculture and irrigation, also plays a crucial role. The BADC came into being in 1962 as a result of the recommendation of the Food and Agriculture Commission; it was created with a view to expedite the distribution of agricultural inputs and also to undertake some development functions related to agriculture.⁴² The prime reason behind the creation of the BADC was to develop market infrastructure; it was not intended to be a market agency by itself.⁴³

The BADC was entrusted with the task of introducing modern irrigation; it used to distribute DTWs, LLPs, STWs. The organization also used to provide services like delivery, installation, repairing, and maintenance for the first two types of irrigation machines.⁴⁴ In order to get the services, the farmers were required to form cooperatives of their own.⁴⁵ However, in the year 1979/80, the government decided to privatize the sale of irrigation machines with the following main objectives:

- (a) to increase irrigation coverage per machine;
- (b) to reduce costs of irrigation;
- (c) to improve maintenance by owners of machines; and
- (d) to reduce the costs of management on the part of BADC.⁴⁶

How far the government will succeed in meeting its objective in this field is questionable. In his study Abul Quasem, an economist with the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, found that the new system of privatization is not at all an improvement over the previous rental arrangement. He found the

latter method better in terms of capacity utilization, total cost and cost of operation. He also found that cooperative ownership had an advantage over individual ownership on all counts.⁴⁷

The government policy of selling irrigation machines to private individuals, as Abul Quasem reports, benefited primarily the rich farmers, thereby furthering the already existing imbalance in the rural power structure. Though the government policy tends to favour the medium rather than the large farmers, the outcome does not seem to be very encouraging. Owners of the newly acquired irrigation machines are found to be more interested in being waterlords than water distributors. Abul Quasem, therefore, suggests that while the sales of STWs may be continued without restriction, sales of heavy equipments to small groups should be discouraged.⁴⁸ Quasem also argues that the BADC should exercise strict control over the siting of projects.⁴⁹

In addition to the government efforts, some NGOs have also been trying to participate in irrigation activities by involving farmer groups. Several NGOs, like BRAC, Proshika, etc. discussed the issue of giving the landless and unemployed villagers more access to irrigation facilities with the Ministries of Local Government and Rural Development, Agriculture, and the World Bank. NGOs also contributed to landless groups by giving support programs, especially credit to buy pumps and sell irrigation water. They are also being helped with fertilizers, pesticides, pump repair, and maintenance of spare parts. Several NGOs have given training to certain farmer groups so that they can

operate as pump groups.⁵⁰ In their effort to help the irrigation agriculture, NGOs have introduced a kind of pump, called Treadle pump (produced locally), which has got increasing acceptance among the farmers because of its affordability.⁵¹

However, the experience of experiments with irrigation pump groups by NGOs suggests that the projects need strict supervision and assistance. BASR is of the opinion that this supervision and assistance are worth undertaking, despite the cost involved,⁵² because they serve the vital function of group formation, badly needed for strengthening the power-position of the rural poor.

Health and Family Planning

Health and Family Planning have been and still are considered to be two of the most important areas in the context of Bangladesh. Though they existed as separate sectors for quite sometime, the sectors have been merged into one with the launching of the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85). They have been functionally integrated at the upazila level and below.⁵³ Whatever might be the rationale for the functional integration of the two sectors, there is no room for dispute that Bangladesh should strive for developing a healthy work force like other countries in the world. For Bangladesh, population control is an utmost necessity in view of the country's shrinking land-man ratio. Successive governments in Bangladesh have recognised the importance of the health sector and have emphasised Primary Health Care (PHC) as a means to improving the

general health conditions of the population. " The global strategy of 'Health for All by the year 2000' has been accepted by the government as one of the national objectives.⁵⁴

The health care system closest to the rural people is the Union level Health and Family Welfare Centre, the next is the Upazila Health Complex. The former is considered to be the nucleus of primary health care delivery. These government efforts are, of course, necessary and helpful for the promotion of a good health care system in the rural areas. Under the present health care system, the field-level health and family planning workers go to homesteads for counselling on subjects relating to health and family planning, including preventive and promotional aspects of health, and marginal treatment of simple and common diseases.⁵⁵ But, government initiative alone is not enough to meet the gigantic needs of the health care system for the millions of villagers; co-operation and involvement of the people is crucial, if the system is to be successful. Recognizing this fact, the Third Five Year Plan of Bangladesh observes:

People need to come up with their problems and resolve those problems within their means. Efforts are, therefore, necessary to enlist involvement of people of all walks of life, including communities, local government bodies, non-governmental organizations and other voluntary associations of people towards development of health awareness and skill, mobilization of resources and management of PHC programs. Initial efforts will be to assist/include committees through mass education, health, family planning and nutrition education campaigns and other motivational approaches and also provide technical supports for local health institutions. The direction will be to gradually shift the present state of indifference regarding personnel as well as

community health to a position of active participation or self management in health care. The UZP [Upazila Parishad] and UPs [Union Parishads] are already being involved in the maintenance and management of UHCs [Union Health Centres], and UHFWCs [Upazila Health and Family Welfare Centres] and in the process of strengthening PHC [Primry Health Care] in their respective areas.⁵⁶

Vigorous educational efforts are necessary to educate the people about the health needs and the necessity of population control and family planning. Though the overall population growth rate has declined from 2.7% in 1961 to 2.37% in 1981, there exists a big difference between the demographic behaviour of the urban and rural population. Though characteristics like illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment, preference for son, and early marriage are common to both urban and rural population, the problem is more severe in rural areas.⁵⁷ Increasing the number of physicians is, of course, a necessary but not the sufficient condition to solving the problem of health care in the rural areas. Again, health problems need to be addressed both at the curative as well as preventive levels. The success of all these efforts is heavily dependent on a free flow of information, and most importantly, sensitization of the public to the basic needs. Also, the health care system, to be successful at the upazila level, needs an adequate statistical base, particularly for planning, operating, monitoring and evaluating the health system.⁵⁸

The Upazila can be an effective forum not only for the health support services, but also for population control purposes as well. The Third Five Year Plan of Bangladesh proposes that the newly constituted Upazila Parishads could

be fruitfully used to mobilize the community in favour of a "small family norm, social legitimacy of contraceptive practice, late marriage and women's emancipation and their participation in broad social life."⁵⁹

The Plan also envisages to promote the role of NGOs in the field of population control.⁶⁰ According to the Plan, both the GOs and NGOs can have a partnership in the distribution of health and family planning devices. But the plan attributes priority to an intensive community awareness about the socio-economic problems.⁶¹ There is no doubt that population programmes could make a significant headway if the people could be made aware of the benefits of the small family norm. Another suggestion of the plan, in respect of population control, is to introduce a system of community awards for small families as a means to generate popular interest.⁶²

Perceptions of Upazila-Level Actors with regard to Planning, Implementation, and Sectoral Performance (Irrigation, and Health and Family Planning)

The Upazila-level actors were asked whether there is any need for people's participation in the planning process, and in the implementation and evaluation of plans. The response received is quite interesting. A vast majority of the elected representatives felt that the involvement of citizens in both planning and implementation is necessary; a good majority of the officials also felt that way (Table 1). However, a sizeable number of public officials (32%) felt that involvement of the people is necessary in the implementation phase

only, whereas only about 5% of the elected members thought that way.

Table 1: The Need for People's Participation
(Is people's participation necessary for planning and plan implementation?)

Elected Members (21)			Public Officials (25)	
Y	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
e				
	P	--	1	4.00
s	I	1	8	32.00
	B	18	14	56.00
No	--	--	1	4.00
No answer	2	9.52	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

[Notes: P= Planning, I= Implementation; and B= Both planning and implementation]

In their suggestions for increasing participation for planning and implementation, a great majority of both elected members and public officials felt that increasing literacy rates and publicity for raising consciousness would be the two most effective ways for the purpose (Table 2).

Table 2: Suggestions for increasing people's participation in planning and implementation

(If people's participation in the local affairs is not adequate, how can that be increased?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	15	71.42	15	60.00
b	15	71.42	14	56.00
c	5	23.80	4	16.00
d	-	--	-	--
e	2	9.52	1	4.00

[Notes: a= by increasing the literacy rate; b= by publicity and consciousness raising; c= keeping alive the process of democracy; d= others; e= No answer. Totals won't add up to 100%, as the respondents listed more than one choice].

Irrigation

As one of the primary purposes of decentralization measures is to bring the administration closer to the people, to empower the local bodies and to make easier the supply of government- provided goods and services, we felt that the impressions of the concerned actors with regard to agricultural supplies would be of help in understanding the impact of decentralization on the agricultural sector. Table 3 shows the perceptions of the upazila-level actors on the above issue.

Table 3: Agricultural supplies(How has decentralization affected agricultural supplies at the Upazila level?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
As before	4	19.04	9	36.00
Decreased	1	4.76	4	25.00
Increased	15	71.42	11	44.00
No answer	1	4.76	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

As the Table suggests, a majority of both elected members (about 71%) and public officials (44%) felt that the supply of agricultural inputs has increased as a result of decentralization. However, a significant number of public officials took a contrary view. This may be an indication of their unhappiness with the overall state of affairs at the upazila level. A similar negative sentiment has been echoed by the public officials on the question of whether decentralization has eased the distribution of agricultural inputs at the upazila level. Though 40% of officials approved that decentralization has made the distribution process easier, a significant portion of officials (32%) disagreed and, to them, decentralization has made the process of distribution difficult and cumbersome instead. Only about 10% of the elected members feels that way. An overwhelming number of elected members not only agree that the supply

of agricultural inputs has increased, but to them, their distribution has also become easier (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of agricultural inputs

(How has the distribution of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizer, and insecticides been affected by decentralization?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of	% of total respondents	No. of	% of total respondents
As before	8	38.1	7	28.00
Easier	10	47.62	10	40.00
More difficult	2	9.52	8	32.00
No answer	1	4.76	-	
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

When asked specifically about the irrigation sector, a majority of both elected members (43%) and public officials (44%) did not think that decentralization had any significant impact on the irrigation at the upazila level. About 38% elected members and 24% of public officials reported marginal increase (Table 5).

Table 5: The impact of decentralization on irrigation
(What is the impact of decentralization on irrigation?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
As before	9	42.85	11	44.00
Little	8	38.1	6	24.00
Up-to-the mark	3	14.28	6	24.00
Disappointing	-	--	1	4.00
No answer	1	4.76	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

When asked to identify some main problems in the irrigation sector, the interviewees identified several factors. Lack of coordination among various government departments, lack of orientation with modern agricultural practices, delays in the supply of agricultural inputs, and lack of adequate land reforms were identified as some of the main problems in the agriculture sector, particularly its irrigation component (Table 6).

Table 6: Some main problems of agriculture and irrigation as indicated by Upazila-level actors

	Elected members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	10	47.61	20	80.00
b	15	71.42	22	88.00
c	15	71.42	20	80.00
d	13	61.90	15	60.00
e	--	--	5	20.00

[Notes: a= delays in supplies, b= lack of co-ordination, c= lack of orientation with modern agricultural practices, d= lack of incentives, e= others. Total won't add upto 100% as respondents listed more than one choice].

Health, Family Planning, and Population Control

A majority of both the elected members (71%) and the public officials (52%) did not feel that there were adequate health care facilities at the upazila level (Table 7). Probably, the elected members are more concerned than officials about health facilities in their own localities; elected members seem to be in favour of seeing more facilities available to their voters at the upazila level and below.

Table 7: Health Facilities available at the Upazila-level
(Are there adequate number of doctors and nurses and sufficient medical supplies at the UZ level for the health care?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	6	28.57	12	48.00
No	15	71.42	13	52.00
No answer	--	--	--	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

To a majority of the respondents, both elected members and officials, decentralization measures, undertaken by the government, have not yet been able to attract enough M.B.B.S. (licensed medical graduates) doctors at the upazila level (Table 8).

Table 8: Availability of trained medical graduates at the Upazila-level
(Do you think that enough M.B.B.S. doctors have been attracted to the upazila level?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	6	28.57	10	40.00
No	14	66.66	14	56.00
No answer	1	4.76	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

Elected members and officials, however, seem to be closer in terms of their opinion with regard to family planning and population control facilities available at the upazila level. While a majority of the respondents felt that the facilities available at the upazila level are not bad, fewer than 30% felt that the existing facilities could be regarded as satisfactory (Table 9).

Table 9: Facilities available at the Upazila-level for population control and family planning

(How would you evaluate the condition of the population control and family planning facilities available at the upazila-level?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Not bad	12	57.14	14	56.00
Satisfactory	6	28.57	7	28.00
Not satisfactory	3	14.28	4	16.00
No answer	-	--	-	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

Some of the main problems of population control and family planning as identified by the concerned actors are: weakness of the government policies, failure of the GO/NGO sectors in creating adequate facilities, urban-centeredness of doctors and nurses, and corruption in distributing the health and family planning materials (Table 10).

Table 10: Some main problems of population control and family planning as indicated by the Upazila-level actors

(What, according to you, are some of the main problems of the health, population control and family planning sector? Please rank your response in order of importance).

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	11	52.38	16	64.00
b	18	85.71	16	64.00
c	13	61.90	23	92.00
d	17	76.91	18	72.00
e	1	4.76	--	--

[a= weakness of government policies, b= failure of GO/NGO sectors in creating facilities at the UZ level, c= urban-centeredness of doctors and nurses, d= corruption with health and family planning materials, e= others. Total won't add up to 100% as respondents listed more than one choice]

We also surveyed the opinion of the respondents as to the solution to the problems facing the health, population and family planning sector at the upazila level. Several suggestions were put forward by the respondents (Table 11).

Table 11: Some suggested solutions to the problems facing the Health, Population and Family Planning sector at the Upazila-level
(In the light of your experience, please mention some solutions to the above problems)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	17	80.95	19	76.00
b	19	90.47	23	92.00
c	12	57.14	18	72.00
d	--	--	--	--
e	--	--	2	8.00

[Notes: a= qualified doctors and nurses shall be forced to go to villages by law, b= Instead of legal provisions, there should be facilities at the governmental and non-governmental levels, c= Upazilas should be empowered to increase their financial solvency, d= No answer, e= others. Total won't add up to 100%, as respondents listed more than one choice]

Perceptions of NGO Officials

NGO officials interviewed⁶³ feel that the involvement of citizens in both the planning and implementation stages of the plan-cycle is necessary. In their response to the question how to increase the participation of the people in the planning process, the respondents felt that increased publicity to raise consciousness among the common people may be one of the best ways. Some of them felt that increasing the literacy rate may be another way of promoting participation. Keeping alive the process of democracy, both at the central and local levels, was considered to be still another factor.

All the NGO officials interviewed felt that the supply of agricultural inputs, as a result of decentralization, has increased, and their distribution has also become easier than before. NGO officials also felt that irrigation has improved as a result of decentralization. They considered delays in supplies and services of agricultural inputs, lack of coordination among various government departments, and lack of the rural population's orientation to modern agricultural techniques as some of the problems of the irrigation sector. A majority of them considered lack of incentives on the part of farmers due to the absence of any meaningful land reforms to be a major problem also.

The opinion of NGO officials with regard to health and family planning does not seem to be very encouraging; 75% of the officials interviewed, working at the upazila level, reported that they did not think that there were sufficient medical doctors, nurses, and medical supplies at the upazila level; also 75% of them did not think that enough M.B.B.S. doctors have been attracted to the upazila level after the decentralization. NGO officials consider that the health care system at the upazila level is somehow muddling along: they don't consider it as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A majority of them consider weakness of government policies, failure of GO/NGO sectors in creating sufficient facilities, urban-centeredness of doctors and nurses, and also corruption with family planning materials to be also partly responsible for the unsatisfactory condition of the health and family planning sector. As suggested solutions to the problems, they placed equal emphasis on government measures

forcing the medical graduates to accept employment at the upazila level, and creating adequate facilities at the upazila level so that medical graduates are automatically attracted to take employment, and also making the UZPs sufficiently solvent so that they can support and encourage qualified medical practitioners at the upazila level.

Conclusion

Participation of the people in the planning and implementation processes at the upazila level is very indirect and, in some cases, very inadequate. Groups are not yet organized enough to articulate their interests to make an impact on the decision-making process. The decision-making process at the local level is still dominated by the local power elites. Though the government recognizes the importance of more input from the citizens for effective planning, implementation and plan success, the forum provided at the local level does not go far enough to meet the expectations of the great majority.

Compared with the government, the NGOs seem to be doing better in respect of citizen involvement in community affairs and the decision-making process. However, the NGO activities are very insignificant in the context of the total societal requirements.

Concerned upazila-level actors, though admitting that decentralization has made some positive impact at the upazila level in terms of supply and services, are however cautious to point out that much needs to be done in respect of planning and implementation, and people's participation in them. Formation of groups should be encouraged and they should be involved in various stages of the plan cycle. In the case of irrigation, group efforts can be promoted by forming Water Users Associations and Pump Groups.

Success in the Health and Family Planning sector, like other programs, is dependent on technical expertise as well as social awareness. Health care

needs cannot be divorced from the peculiar social needs of the community. As Zafarullah Chowdhury, the founder of the People's Health Care Centre (Gonoshasthaya kendra), observes:

...The task of medicine is to promote health, to prevent disease, to treat the sick when prevention breaks down, and rehabilitate them after they have been cured. These are highly social functions and we must look at medicine as basically a social science. However, the accoutrements of "modern" medical care - western medical school training, foreign textbooks, imported drugs and urban-oriented, highly specialized hospital 'units - are unable to cope with the reality of diseases of poverty (malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, tetanus, diarrhoea, etc.).⁶⁴

Probably the mere decentralization of developmental functions at the upazila level is not enough, unless organic mechanisms are evolved through which citizens can be involved in the various phases of the plan cycle. Government and non-government organizations need to work for and with the people. Though the people's participation has been recognized to be important by all categories of upazila level actors, the situation does not seem to be satisfactory in the sectors on which we focussed - irrigation, and health and family planning.

In the case of the former, it is the so-called waterlords who are dominating the scene, whereas in the case of the latter, it is the urban-centered medical practitioners who are making their fortune. However, a majority of the urban poor, like the majority of villagers, as Zafarullah Chowdhury rightly pointed out, do not have access to the modern medicare system that is available in the urban centres. To what degree the rural people will have access to modern

medical facilities, including the service of qualified medical practitioners, is dependent on a myriad variables; mere decentralization of functions with only one or two government-provided health centres are not enough in this respect. Ultimately, it should be the pressures of the organized interest groups which should keep the concerned authorities, including the central government and the upazila administration, attentive to the various needs of the community.

In the next chapter we will examine how the ideological apparatuses of the state, especially the education and the training systems, are working to reduce or reinforce the rural-urban gap in the context of recent decentralization measures at the upazila level in Bangladesh.

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Chapter VIII

EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE IMPACT OF DECENTRALIZATION

The issue of the transference of power to the upazila administration by the Local Government (Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance, 1982, has been discussed in detail in Chapter V. Here we will look at how the central government is dealing with the country's education and training systems, to meet the requirements of decentralization at the local level.

The education and training systems are powerful instruments in the hands of modern governments for socializing citizens. If geared to the requirements of the society and handled with due care, they can prove to be highly effective for the above purpose.

However, in the case of Bangladesh, the education and training, especially the school system, still seem to be heavily influenced by the bygone colonial practices. The school system during the colonial period, devised mainly for keeping in view the interests of the colonial power, produced mostly clerks for the job market. The system produced 'gentlemen,' who preferred an office job to manual work. Instead of becoming assets to the country, the majority of the output of the school system became a burden on the economy.¹ "It hardly ever created a sense and a need for national/rural development amongst students and teachers and actually contributed towards situations opposed to it."²

The British Indian education system was criticised even by the British.

To quote a British writer:

The School has become not a combination and complement of the home, but an unreal dream of six hours in the day, during which a language was heard spoken quite different from the language of the real home life; birds and animals and events and phenomena were described which were remote from the student's experience and perhaps his rosier ambitions, and customs and institutions were held up for his admiration, which had no connection with his life.³

It is ironic that the system still continues to be a product of the colonial rule in India, with some modifications. There are two main reasons for this situation. One is that the British introduced a modern system which still has a great appeal, at least to the majority of the urban middle class. Second, was the failure of the post-colonial leadership and intellectuals to devise a new system geared to the needs of the society.

The Third Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (1985-90) rightly points out that the education system not only proved useless in terms of job market, but it has resulted in serious imbalances between the rural and urban sectors and also male/female literacy. As the plan says:

..., it has created a serious urban-rural imbalance. The rate of literacy in the rural areas was 17% in 1981 against 35% in urban areas. Periodically, however, the urban-rural gap has declined between 1961 and 1981 due to influx of rural population to the urban areas. In 1961, urban and rural literacy rates were 38.7 and 16.0 per cent respectively.⁴

However, with independence, the successive governments have placed considerable priority on the issue of literacy. the Government of Bangladesh has committed itself to the goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in its

Second Plan (1980-85). But due to shortages of financial and human resources, accomplishments fell far short of the expectation.

A World Bank study points out that even if population growth rate declines, it will still be difficult to achieve the goal of universal primary education. At a population growth rate of 2% (which is less than the current 2.6%), the potential number of children seeking entry to the first grade could be 3.4, 3.8, and 4.2 million for the years 1990, 1995, and 2000 respectively.⁵ However, the government has been pursuing this ambitious goal with limited resources.

In order to meet the gigantic needs, the government must come forward to build more classrooms and increase the number of teachers. These measures are, of course, necessary, but they cannot address one of the fatal flaws of the education system: the lack of an agricultural orientation of education in a country where more than 50% of the GDP comes from the agricultural sector. It must be repeated that agriculture is the backbone of the Bangladesh economy. Without an efficient agricultural sector, Bangladesh can probably never meet the food shortages in the face of the growing population. Agriculture here is used in a broader sense to include cultivation and cropping, livestock, fisheries, tree plantation, maintenance, processing and marketing, etc. Therefore, agricultural education would include science and technologies related to agriculture, veterinary science, animal husbandry, agricultural engineering, fisheries, agricultural economics, and forestry.⁶

In order to achieve progress in the above fields, the people must be made aware of the existing problems of the agricultural sector. Also, there is an acute need to create a general awareness of and to motivate the concerned population for undertaking, appropriate agricultural technologies. Some of the main problems facing Bangladesh agriculture which need serious attention are: lack of capital, fragmentation of land ownership, soil erosion, traditional land tenure, defective use of lands, low quality livestock, lack of proper animal foods, lack of knowledge about animal reproduction, fish production, storage and processing. Inappropriate management of farms is another factor hampering agricultural development.⁷

It is important to examine how far the education and training systems have been geared to fulfilling the above needs. Let us first begin with an enquiry into the education system, with reference to agriculture and rural development.

Education for Rural Development

The state approves the school curriculum and exercises financial control over local schools in Bangladesh. The Constitution of the country provides the state with substantial authority in this regard. Article 17 of the constitution of Bangladesh states:

The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law;

- (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs;
- (c) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.⁸

In Bangladesh, education at all levels - primary, secondary and higher - is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.⁹ The authority of the state goes as far as to include the primary level education. With respect to primary education, the 1982 decentralization, very much in keeping with the spirit of the constitution, sought to achieve two main objectives: (a) to increase enrolment and reduce drop-out through effective supervision and proper implementation of development programmes and (b) to reduce inequality between urban and rural areas in respect of educational facilities.¹⁰ These objectives are yet to be realized and will need vigorous efforts on the part of both central and local authorities.

Primary Level

It should be mentioned here that education in the rural areas is basically confined to the primary and secondary levels; higher educational institutes are located in the large urban centres.¹¹ The primary level education (grades 1 to 5) needs five years of studies. At the primary level, some references are made to agricultural topics, for example: plants, soil and weather. However, because of non-attractive teaching methods and lack of trained teachers, the system can hardly make any good impression about the importance of agriculture in the minds of children.¹²

The literacy and numeracy provided by the formal school system is found to be highly inadequate for application in everyday life situations. According to one assessment, the mathematics taught at the primary level has little relevance for practical accounting and record-keeping. Also, social studies education at that level failed to provide sufficient information on backyard agriculture, nutrition, population crises, and local government. What is more, curriculum at the primary level showed very little concern for the developmental needs of girls, and neglected life education.¹³

Criticising the formal education system, a World Bank study notes:

The formal education system is elitist in its priorities. Its relevance to the existing and changing economic structure and skills requirements is questionable. The system is highly theoretical and poorly designed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. It functions to produce students, mainly urban males, able to obtain the H.S.C. upon passage of public exam. after grade 12, enter college or university and apply for limited civil service posts and private sector positions.¹⁴

The Bangladesh National Education Commission Report of 1988 also found the education system deficient in many respects, especially in respect of agricultural education. The report recommended that agricultural education should be strengthened at the primary level. More examples and illustrations related to agriculture should be used to impress upon young minds the importance of agriculture. At the elementary level, children should be introduced to the general condition and environment of garden, field and agricultural farms. It is expected that this orientation may be of some help even to those dropping out at the primary level; there remains a chance of their

getting involved in agricultural activities in the rural areas, instead of migrating to the cities. Such an orientation would also help students proceeding to secondary and higher secondary education to develop an interest in agriculture and agriculture-related education.¹⁵

Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

Secondary education is for seven years (grades 6-12). Education at the secondary level does not seem to be very different from the primary level in its emphasis on agriculture and rural development. The Education Commission Report, 1988, is of the opinion that the main objectives of agricultural education at the secondary level should be to familiarize students with general knowledge about agriculture and to give them elaborate knowledge on a particular subject. This practice, the Commission believes, may be of tremendous help. The orientation to agriculture that the students would receive at the secondary level, it was assumed, would help them develop interests in agriculture, and some might take agriculture as a profession. An introduction to agriculture at this level, the members of the Commission felt, should include general education about soil, crops and fruits, plants, animals and fish production and maintenance, introduction to agricultural equipment, nutrition, agricultural management, finance and marketing, etc.¹⁶

Also, the Commission found that teachers at the secondary level were not sufficiently trained to handle the above job because many of them did not have

adequate background in agricultural sciences. This deficiency, the Commission felt, could be met through extensive training programs like the Bachelor of Education or through short-term training at the Agricultural University.¹⁷

The Commission found agricultural education at the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level also deficient in many respects, and recommended that agricultural education at this level should include: themes on foodgrains, theories of agriculture, soil science, agricultural equipment, crop maintenance, forestry, agricultural economics, animal husbandry, veterinary science, and fisheries.¹⁸

The Commission felt that at the HSC level, students should be familiarized with the use of lands and ponds. Colleges having lands and ponds could easily implement policies regarding this measure and the colleges which do not own lands and ponds of their own should try to acquire some for the above purpose. The Commission put special emphasis on the practical side of agricultural education and recommended that the applied side of the curriculum should be designed in such a way that students could use the farmers' lands, ponds, animals, and households for training purposes. It was the expectation of the Commission that an orientation along the above lines would be of help to students going for engineering, medicine, applied science and other branches in that students, in the meantime, would develop enough familiarity with the problems of farmers and rural society. It was also hoped that a close familiarity with rural life would be helpful in preventing the development of a negative

attitude about rural life among students,¹⁹ which is unfortunately the case at the present time.

Graduate Level

For graduate-level agricultural education, there is one full-fledged University and two affiliated colleges in the country. The Bangladesh Agricultural University offers courses in all fields of agriculture at the post-bachelor level. The Agricultural University, located in Mymensingh, enrolls students in six departments: (1) agriculture, (2) veterinary science, (3) animal husbandry, (4) agricultural economics and rural sociology, (5) agricultural engineering and technology, and (6) fisheries.

Recently, an Institute for Post Graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) has been set up in Ghazipur, near Dhaka.²⁰

At present there are 11 Agricultural Training Institutes (ATIs) and one Higher Agricultural Extension Training Institute in the country. The ATIs offer two-year certificate courses. The clients of the ATIs are usually the block-supervisors in the government service who hold certificates in agriculture; they are sent to the ATIs for a one-year course. The training courses mostly emphasise agricultural extension.²¹

But the rural sector is getting little benefit from the graduates coming out of the Agricultural University and Training Institutes because most of them, due to the flaws in their socialization processes, hardly develop any commitment to

the cause of rural development. "Most of those who are literate in rural areas prefer to live in cities."²²

However, the government seems to be paying some attention to primary education, which has received top priority in the Education sector during the Third Five-Year Plan period. It has received 47% of the total allocation for education. Under the 1982 decentralization scheme, the government has transferred considerable authority to the Upazila Parishad with regard to primary schools in the expectation that this would ensure more community participation and also be helpful for the development of needed infrastructure for the primary schools. The 1982 decentralization scheme has given some power to the Upazila Parishads with regard to the management of the secondary schools as well.²³

Adult Education

The government is also relying on the Upazila Parishads for the promotion of the adult literacy programme. There is no denying that adult literacy bears a special significance in the context of Bangladesh because of the obvious limitations of the formal school system. "Modernization of agriculture, population planning and expansion of industries and other techniques of progress could hardly be materialised without a literate population."²⁴

A comprehensive adult literacy program was introduced by the government even before the introduction of the upazila system. The Second Five-Year Plan (SFYP) of the country set an ambitious target for removing

illiteracy through adult education. The target was to make 400 lakh (40 million) people, 10 to 45 years of age, literate by 1985. The government, however, stopped the program shortly after its introduction, mainly because of the slow pace of its development. In view of the difficulties faced during the SFYP, the TFYP set a more realistic target for the plan period, 1985-90. The TFYP set a target of making 24 lakh (2.4 million) people literate, instead of the 40 million set by the SFYP.²⁵ In respect of adult literacy, the TFYP favours giving an important role to the Upazila Parishads. The Plan suggests that they should be supported by grants, books and learning materials for the purpose.²⁶

Also, at the upazila level, the government has been experimenting with the Community Learning Centres. They have been introduced in 50 upazilas; and if found useful, they could be expanded in other upazilas in phases. The purpose of this centres is to provide necessary knowledge to parents, including aspects of childhood education.²⁷

Female Participation in Education and Rural Development Activities

It has been noted that the Government has been trying to promote female participation in the education system. So far the dismally low rate of female literacy has proven to be one of the main stumbling blocks for the economic development of the country. Mainly because of the lower literacy rate and unfavourable social conditions, representation of women in the labour force has remained disproportionately low.

At present two in every three girls can't afford to go to school. And the percentage of women who go to universities is only 2%. Their representation in professional jobs is also very poor - only 3 out of a thousand.²⁸ According to the World Bank study which investigated the status of women, female literacy must be promoted if Bangladesh is to undergo socio-economic development. The study argues:

Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are critical starting points for raising the status of women in the society and the economy of Bangladesh. They could best be acquired by the majority of women through the formal system of primary education. Secondary education as well as vocational and technical education (VTE) could provide further essential skills for equipping women to enhance their participation as well as to improve their income-earning prospects. However, educational opportunities have been inequitably tilted towards males, particularly urban males, with female human capital being severely wasted in a country that must rely on human resources for its future development.²⁹

At the end of 1989, the government announced a plan regarding formal education. Under the plan, primary education would be compulsory for all able-bodied children of age 4 to 10. The plan incorporated special consideration for rural girls. Also, the plan provided that girls up to grade VIII would receive free education in the rural areas.³⁰

These seem to be steps in the right direction. If the government can pursue these aims with consistent priority and manage adequate resources to finance them, the efforts will bear fruit in the long run. Though resource constraints are tremendous, discontinuation of these programs may adversely affect the contribution that the female segment, almost 50% of the population,

can make to the national economy, including the rural economy. Here we will briefly show the scope of the women's involvement in the rural agricultural sector (used in the broader sense).

Rural Bangladeshi women have always been participants in various agricultural activities, though they have been denied their rightful place in many cases. In terms of agriculture, the usual practice has been that male members of the family work in the field whereas female members work within the homestead. But as more and more households are becoming landless, and many who are not landless yet, but are failing to be self-employed because of growing impoverishment, are becoming wage laborers. Economic necessities are also forcing women to take employment outside their homestead, mainly to supplement their family income.

According to the Labour Force Survey of 1984-85, the female participation in the labour force was 8% (active women age 10 and above) against 78% of male.³¹ However, a subsequent study by Safilios-Rothschild and Mahmud show a substantially higher female participation rate. Some specific aspects of their findings can be seen below (Table 1).

Table 1: Involvement of Women in the Agriculture Labour Force, 1989 (%)

Agricultural Activity	Primary Occupation	Secondary Occupation
Agricultural Production		
Direct Involvement		
Working in Own Fields	17.6	4.8
Homestead Agriculture	4.7	3.1
Livestock	4.2	1.1
Agricultural Wage		
Labour	12.3	3.1
fisheries	0.7	--
	----	---
Subtotal	39.5	12.1
Processing Involvement		
Rice Husking	3.0	3.3
Food Processing	0.1	--
	---	---
Subtotal	3.1	3.3
Total Involvement	42.6	15.4
Non-farm Employment	11.8	5.6
	----	---
Total Labour Force		
Participation Rate	54.4	21.0

[Source: Constantina Safilios-Rothschild and Simeen Mahmud, Women's Roles in Agriculture - Present Trends and Potential for Growth, Appendix II, Table 1, cited in WB, Bangladesh: Strategies for Enhancing the Role of Women in Economic Development (Washington D.C., 1990), p. 82]

In addition to normal domestic work like fetching water, collecting fuel-wood, cooking, cleaning and child care, women members of a household contribute in a major way to homestead agriculture. Women's involvement

ranges from fruit and vegetable production to poultry and livestock raising, fish cultivation, tree planting and crop processing.³²

Women are generally more involved in horticultural activities than men. It has been found that women familiar with modern agricultural practices (HYVs, irrigation, fertilizer) are more involved than other farm women. Involvement in groups was found to be another contributing factor in the development of interest in homestead production.³³

Women's involvement in livestock and poultry is significant.³⁴ They have also participated in the fisheries sector, primarily in fish net repairing and fish processing.³⁵ Women also play an important role in the field of homestead forestry. They not only participate in nursery work and tree planting, women, along with children, collect fuels and fodder for household consumption.³⁶

Women participate in sericulture too, especially in silkworm rearing and cocoon reeling.³⁷ In crop processing, the involvement of women has been extensive; processing activities include threshing, winnowing, soaking, seedling and/or seed selection, and seed preservation.³⁸ Women also participate in crop production in the field. Poor women, belonging to landless and near landless households, work as agricultural wage labourers.

As attaining self sufficiency in food is one of the main objectives of the Government, it has put considerable emphasis on irrigation, water control, agricultural extension and research, and agricultural credit. However, the government programs have not been very successful in soliciting the

participation of women effectively, for several reasons. First, the number of female extension workers is inadequate. Second, extension workers are usually city-bred and mostly unwilling to leave district towns. Extension workers fail to provide assistance to rural women in respect of field agricultural crops, horticulture, fisheries, livestock and poultry - the fields where women need help.

The support available to women for increasing agricultural productivity is highly inadequate. This lack of attention has several implications: first, women farmers have remained isolated from institutional support. Second, homestead production has suffered. Third, extension networks have become unsustainable. Fourth, positive and negative impacts of technological change on women have not been properly assessed.³⁹

However, the government has taken some concrete steps for promoting female participation in the public sector: 10% of posts in officer rank and 15% of posts in the staff rank have been reserved for women. The age limit to enter public services has been raised from 27 years to 30 years for women. Some attention has also been given to credit and skills development programs. Some other important measures undertaken by the government include: scholarships for females, reservation of 50% vacant primary teachers positions, nationalization of girls' colleges in larger districts, establishment of a National Women's Training Academy for the purpose of non-formal and vocational education and skills training, and an Agricultural Training Centre for

Women.⁴⁰

A World Bank study suggests that ways should be found to get the community involved in managing their own affairs. To promote enrollment of girls in the schools, the study suggests that some incentives could be used for the purpose. One such incentive would be to provide assistance to girls for school uniforms. Regular health checkups and inoculations may be considered as additional incentives. A further incentive in this regard, according to the study, may be a food-for-education program, along the lines of the food-for-work program, already in use throughout the country. The study also suggests that the program should be tried in selected rural areas and the target population chosen from the girls coming from low-income families. The study highly recommends the involvement of the community in the education-related matters of the children.⁴¹

Non-formal Education in Bangladesh

According to recent reports not more than 56% of primary school age children enroll in the government primary schools, and 48% of those who enroll drop before completing the fifth grade. Rates of non-enrollment and drop-out are higher for girls.⁴² Decentralization of functions at the upazila level, with respect to primary education, does not seem to be helping much so far.⁴³

It is precisely the limited coverage and success of the formal school system that makes non-formal education important for Bangladesh. Non-formal

education means education outside the formal system that is not rigidly structured.⁴⁴ The involvement of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the primary-level education is not yet very significant. A picture of the extent of NGO involvement in the national context can be seen from the table below.

Table 2: Number of primary schools and teachers in Bangladesh in 1986

No. of primary Schools in Bangladesh

Government Primary Schools	36,422
Non-Government Primary Schools	7,290
Total	----- 43,712

No. of Primary School Teachers

Teachers in Government Primary Schools	154,446
Teachers in Non-Government Primary Schools	30,172
Total	----- 184,618

[Source: UNICEF, The BRAC: Non-Formal Primary Education Programme in Bangladesh (1989), p. 1]

Both government and non-government organizations are involved in the non-formal education, especially in vocational training education (VTE). The governmental organizations involved in the VTE include: Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC), Directorate of Women's Affairs, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industry Corporation (BSCIC), Small Cottage Industries Training Institute (SCITI). Non-formal VTE programs of NGOs include: St. Joseph School for Industrial Trade, Rural Handicrafts and Cottage Industries, Dhaka Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Ayesha

Foundation, and Savar People's Health Centre.⁴⁵ Here, because of our primary concern with education for rural development, we will keep ourselves confined to the discussion of primary education for its special relevance and significance in the context of rural Bangladesh society. Also, we will delimit the area further by focusing on the success of NGOs, especially the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) which has shown remarkable success in this field.

BRAC attaches enormous importance to the concept of self help and appropriate institutions for rural development. "BRAC believes the reason behind underdevelopment lies not so much in inadequate technology as in inappropriate institutions and poor policies."⁴⁶ Therefore, the BRAC has targeted the children whom the formal education system has failed to reach. All of the schools run by the BRAC are located in the rural areas, and students selected for the schools come from the lower socio-economic strata of the rural society. It should be mentioned here that about 70% of the rural families are landless with virtually no opportunity for wage employment other than some part-time work on farms.⁴⁷

BRAC's objective is to enroll 70% girls. So far the organization has been successful in meeting this objective and enrolment for girls is 69,85%. The reason for the BRAC's special focus on girls is that BRAC believes, in the Bangladesh context, females can contribute tremendously in respect of child care, health, nutrition, and hygiene. Also, research findings show that female

education has a positive correlation with the process of modernization. Even women with a low education are found to be more receptive to new ideas than uneducated women.⁴⁸

The BRAC has experimented with two models of primary schooling, meant for 2 different age groups. The first model is called the Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE). It is a three- year program for children of age 8 to 10. Usually, those children who have never enrolled in school before and who have dropped out during the first year are admitted in the NFPE program. The second model which is a fairly recent experiment is meant for a higher age group. Usually children, 11 to 14 years of age, who never attended school before are chosen for this programme. The programme is called Primary Education for Older Children (PEOC). About 3/4 th of the students enrolled are unmarried girls.

The curriculum for the BRAC schools was designed with due consideration to the socio-economic background of the targeted groups. The main objective sought by the BRAC curriculum is to provide students with elementary knowledge in literacy , numeracy, and social awareness. The social awareness component is basically need-oriented and includes health, including nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, safety, and first-aid, eco-systems, community, country, the world, and basic science.

Unlike the formal school system, the BRAC doesn't rely on the annual examination. Students are evaluated through a system of continuous assessment.

Furthermore, the BRAC follows a participatory and learner-centered method of teaching. The BRAC is more interested in the functional use of learning than in success in formal examinations. The social studies program of the BRAC differs significantly from that of the formal schools. The focus of the BRAC program is on practical issues like health concerns, values of co-operation, relationships with neighbours, population problems, problems of early marriage, dowry and so on.⁴⁹

BRAC's demonstrated success in reaching the disadvantaged segment of the population, mostly the female segment, in respect of primary education, points to the fact that non-governmental organizations can make meaningful contributions to the cause of rural development. If NGO programs can be made to complement the governmental programs, the latter will get a helpful boost.⁵⁰

Now we will turn to look at what kind of rural development training facilities are made available to the upazila level actors to equip them to perform their duties in the field.

Training for Rural Development (With Reference to Decentralization)

The government realized at an early stage that in order for decentralization to be effective, training for public officials posted at the Upazila level would be vital. A decision to this effect was taken by the government in December 1982, immediately after the decentralization scheme came into effect. (Vide Chief Martial Law Administrator's (CMLA's)

Secretariat NO. 7111/7/Imp - I/561 dated 12 December, 1982). It was decided that two training institutes - the Rural Development Academy (RDA) at Bogra and the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) at Comilla would impart training to concerned Upazila level officials. Officials belonging to the Rajshahi and Khulna Divisions would be trained at RDA and those belonging to Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions would be trained at the BARD. At the initial stage the following categories of officials were supposed to be included: (a) Upazila Nirbahi Officer; (2) Upazila Agriculture Officer ; (3) Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer; (4) Upazila Education Officer; (5) Upazila Engineer; (6) Upazila Planning and Finance Officer.⁵¹

For our purposes here we will touch upon only three selected training institutions - Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, and National Institute of Local Government. As training institutes are meant for specific clientele groups, their programs seem to be more focused and need-oriented. This, however, does not mean that training programs conducted by the institutes are flawless. Here we have considered only one aspect of the training imparted by the institutes, i.e., rural development training, with reference to decentralization.

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)

The BARD has been involved with training and research in rural development since its birth in 1959.⁵² The Academy's rich background in the

above fields is fairly well known. After intensive experimentation, the Academy has developed a list of components which an Academy official chooses to call 'seven pillars' of rural development (shown in Table 3). He also maintains that the components are independent of the form and ideology of the government.⁵³

Table 3: Components of Rural Development

1. Agricultural Production	5. Social Justice and Security
-Crop	Mobility (Participation)
-Vegetables	Equal Opportunity
-Forest	Security to Life and Property
-Fisheries	Group Cohesiveness (Fraternity)
-Livestock	
2. Non-Farm Production	6. Community Institutions
Trade	Community Services
Industry	Schools, hospitals,
Financial-institution	Markets, graveyards
	Religious Services
	Social Ceremonies
	Community Planning
	Local Govt. Institutions
3. Physical Infra-structure	7. Recreational Facilities
Roads	Games & Sports
Electricity	Cultural Events
Water	Theatre
Postal and Telephone Services	Cinema
Sewerage	Cultural Shows
	Clubs and Restaurants
	Recreational Gadgets (Radio, Television, etc.)
4. Health & Education	
Health Care	
Family Planning	
Hygienic Living & Nutrition	
Food	
(including drinking water)	
Housing & Sanitation	
Living Habits	
Functional Literacy	
Skill Formation	
Attitude Building	

[Source: Saadat Husain, "BARD and Rural Development," Journal of Rural Development, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, July 1988, Appendix - I, p. 10]

The above components represent the comprehensiveness of the BARD's approach to rural development. While trainees are introduced to the requirements of an integrated approach to rural development, specialized training with emphasis on particular components is also offered. In addition to playing a pioneering role in developing rural development models, the Academy has made a significant contribution in training various clientele groups as well.

Being required in the context of decentralization, the BARD, in co-operation with the RDA, developed a syllabus for training the Upazila level actors, keeping in view the requirements in the changed context. After the necessary reviews by the CMLA Secretariat, the syllabus was approved with some changes.⁵⁴

On the basis of the syllabus, the BARD began training upazila level officials from 6th February, 1983.⁵⁵ In addition to imparting regular training to upazila officials, the BARD also got involved with training officials belonging to a special project called the Noakhali Rural Development Project-II (NRD-II). The NRD-II started as the Noakhali Rural Development Project (NRDP) in 1978 with Danish assistance. With the increase in the scope of the original project, it was renamed the NRD-II project. After the decentralization of functions at the upazila level in 1982, the NRD-II project felt the necessity of training the officials working within the project areas on participatory management. Several organizations were reached by the NRD-II for help in this regard. The organizations approached included: Jutland Technological Institute

(JTI) of Denmark, the BARD and BRAC. It was decided that BARD would offer training to the officers and BRAC to the assistant officers.⁵⁶

Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC)

The BPATC, a fairly recent organization, plays a pivotal role in the field of public administration training. It came into being as a result of the amalgamation of the previous training institutes - Bangladesh Administrative Staff College (BASC), National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Civil Officer's Training Academy (COTA), and the Staff Training Institute (STI).⁵⁷ The Centre with the available resources has the capacity to train all levels of civil servants: beginner, mid-career, and senior executive.⁵⁸

The BPATC was asked by the Government for help in training the upazila level officials, as other training institutes could not cope with the requirements. Another reason why the government asked the BPATC was that by mid-1984, the government felt that the training imparted to upazila-level actors needed to be qualitatively better. It was the expectation of the government that the BPATC could give a meaningful direction to the training program needed for upazila-level actors by using its experienced personnel and logistic support facilities. In view of the above, the Ministry of Establishment, Government of Bangladesh, set the following objectives for training for decentralized administration:

- (a) To familiarise trainees with the bottom-up planning mechanism of Government as part of decentralized administration.

- (b) To provide basic knowledge regarding comprehensive Upazila level planning and implementation thereof, financial procedures, fund distribution and allocation and local resource mobilization - like revenue collection from hat/bazaar, etc.
- (c) To provide skills on technical aspects of the planning process, like project formulation, priority fixing, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, etc. in order to perform coordinating and supervisory roles.
- (d) To organize people's participation in planning and development work.
- (e) To act as implementors of schemes both planned at local level and at national level.
- (f) To evaluate the results of development plans in terms of sectoral growth/ per capita income.
- (g) Collection of statistics and submission of periodical reports and returns to all concerned by using specific forms, forms to be designed.⁵⁹

The Ministry also helped design a syllabus for training.⁶⁰

Initially it was planned that the BPATC would train two officials from each upazila, and the programme would be completed in 15 batches; each batch would be comprised of 60 members. However, the BPATC couldn't continue after training seven batches.⁶¹

Because of the already existing overload, the BPATC can hardly undertake the gigantic tasks of training thousands of upazila-level officials and representatives in its own campus. That the BPATC wouldn't be able to become involved in training upazila level officials was pointed out by a report on training needs. The report suggested that a training needs assessment was badly needed and the BPATC and Regional Public Administration Training Centres (RPATCs) could undertake such a study/studies, in consultation with appropriate ministries/agencies.⁶² The report also suggested that

There should be a follow up and supplementary training to some of the training programmes already being imparted to by the Rural Development Academies, NILG and STI. And that follow up

training should be more detailed and so designed as to improve the on-the-job skills of the officers and staff concerned. The government can utilise the expertise of the PATC, other agencies and experts, if necessary to design and prepare guidelines and training methods for such a training programme. However, the PATC and RPATCs with their existing resources cannot physically implement such training programmes. The government can delegate the responsibilities of actual implementation of such training to the district administration. However, the PATC and RPATC, can monitor and evaluate such training activities for the decentralized administration.⁶³

National Institute of Local Government (NILG)

The NILG has also been involved in the training of the upazila-level officials. It was entrusted with the responsibility of imparting training to the target groups following a course design prepared by the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives. The course was called the Upazila Parishad Management Course. The main objectives of the course were as follows:

- (a) familiarise students with the theoretical and historical background of upazila system and its organizational structure;
- (b) give basic knowledge about the general administration, financial administration and development administration of the Parishad;
- (c) highlight the need of coordination and communication in the management of the Parishad;
- (d) determine the role of concerned officers in the management of the Parishad and explain its importance;

(e) determine importance of seniority and evaluation in the preparation and implementation of a project;

(f) enhance quality and efficiency in the management of the Parishad.⁶⁴

In the first course imparted by the NILG in 1987, 18 newly appointed Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) participated. The course was two weeks long, and was divided into seven modules:

Module I: Decentralization, background and general ideas about local government.

Module II: Organizational structure of the UZP;

Module III: Administrative Management of the UZP, Coordination and Communication;

Module IV: Financial Management of UZPs

Module V: Development Management of UZPs

Module VI: The Role of the UZP Chairman and the UNO

Module VII: Monitoring and Evaluation of UZP activities.⁶⁵

In general, the course sought to achieve three main objectives: (i) to provide ideas about the Upazila structure; (ii) to provide ideas about working within the UZP structure; (iii) to master the expertise for local-level planning.⁶⁶

The NILG offered the second course from 20 March to 2nd April, 1988. Fourteen newly appointed UNOs participated. The syllabus of the training remained the same as for the first training course.⁶⁷

Training is of course important for the development of skills for the upazila level actors - officials and public representatives alike. But, as we can see from the above descriptions, training institutions are failing to cope with the work load. In the section that follows, we will see what the upazila-level actors think about the education system in general and the utility of the training system in particular for the purpose of handling their responsibilities at the local level.

Perceptions of Upazila-level Actors

(1) Elected Representatives and Public Officials

According to a majority of elected representatives, the situation of education at the upazila level, after decentralization, has improved; to them, it has increased considerably (67%). The same view has been expressed by a majority of the public officials (44%) also. But quite a sizeable number of both public representatives (24%) and public officials (40%) feel that decentralization doesn't have any significant impact on the education at the upazila level. A small percentage of concerned actors expressed negative reaction as to the effect of decentralization on education at the upazila level (Table 4).

Table 4: Opinions on the impact of decentralization on the quality of education at the upazila level

(Do you think that the quality of education has increased at the upazila-level, as a result of decentralization?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	14	66.67	11	44.00
b	5	23.81	10	40.00
c	2	9.52	2	8.00
d	-	-	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

[a= quality has increased significantly; b= as before; c= quality has decreased; d= others]

One likely reason why more elected members have viewed the impact of decentralization at the upazila level favourably than have the officials may be related to the transference of powers to the Upazila Parishad, in respect of Universal Primary Education and also Secondary education. This means that the governmental bureaucracy which used to look after these matters almost exclusively before the 1982 decentralization measures, have lost some controlling power.

With regard to their opinion about the impact of decentralization on adult literacy, the two categories of respondents differed considerably (Table 5). Though a majority of the elected members agreed that decentralization has had some impact on education at the upazila level in general, they didn't find any

considerable impact of decentralization on adult literacy. About 62% of the elected members said that decentralization has had no impact on adult literacy whatsoever. Public officials, on the other hand, expressed a very different opinion not only about education at the upazila level in general, but also about adult literacy too.

It seems that governmental policy changes with regard to adult literacy may have been perceived differently by the two groups of actors interviewed. It can be recalled that the government stopped the adult literacy program a year after its introduction in 1980. The program, however, was reinstated in 1988.

Table 5: The impact of decentralization on adult literacy
(Do you think that decentralization is helping the eradication of adult literacy?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	1	4.76	11	44.00
b	7	33.33	10	40.00
c	13	61.90	2	8.00
d	-	-	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

[a = helping significantly; b= of some help; c= of no effect; d= others]

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STATISTICAL REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(USGPO GO TEST CHART No. 2)

In their response to the question whether the existing education system is promoting awareness about agricultural education, a majority of both the elected members (71%) and the officials (56%) said 'yes' (Table 6).

Table 6: Opinions about the Existing Education System
(Is the existing education system helpful in promoting a sense of awareness about the need for agricultural and rural development education?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	15	71.42	14	56.00
No	5	23.80	11	44.00
No answer	1	4.76	-	--
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

But the percentage of respondents who disagreed is also quite sizeable, especially for public officials - 44%; the corresponding figure for elected members is 24%.

In their diagnosis of the problems of the education system, the majority identified the want of trained teachers and teaching equipment as the number one problem facing the education sector. The expense of education was identified as the second major problem by both categories of respondents (Table 7). Their identification of problems seem to agree with the findings of the National Education Commission, 1988, and various studies by the World Bank.

Table 7: Problems facing the education system at the Upazila Level
 (What, according to you are some of the main problems facing the education system at the upazila level?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	16	76.19	21	84.00
b	12	57.14	19	76.00
c	21	100.00	22	88.00
d	9	42.58	16	64.00
e	1	4.76	-	--

[a= education is expensive; b= existing education fails to highlight national problems, especially rural problems; c= want of trained teachers and teaching equipment; d= lack of control over educational institutions by local governments]

The third major problem pointed out by the respondents was that existing education has failed to highlight national problems. The problem which ranked fourth, according to respondents, was that local governments lack effective control over educational institutions. Though respondents realized the importance of local government control, the reality of the Bangladesh scene is a bit surprising. Primary teachers here prefer to be government servants than to be under the payroll of the local government. It may be due to a lack of tradition in this regard; also the uncertainty about the financial ability of local bodies makes it difficult for the primary teachers to rely on them.

The elected members in their suggested solution to the problems facing the education sector ranked the free distribution of books as the most important. It is interesting to note that public officials also share the same view. The elected members ranked partial local government control and expenses as the second major solution, whereas public officials ranked emphasis on rural development in the school curriculum and training programs as the second.

Table 8: Suggested solutions to the problems identified
(In the light of your experience, please suggest some solutions to the problems identified)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
a	20	95.23	25	100.00
b	17	80.95	20	80.00
c	16	76.19	23	92.00
d	12	57.14	24	96.00
e	1	4.76	-	-

[a= free distribution of books among primary level students; b= partial local government control over administration and expenses; c= emphasis on rural development in the school curriculum and training; d= more training for Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate teachers; e= others]

The solution considered to be the most important by both categories of respondents, i.e., free distribution of books among primary-level students, may

be subject to debate. There are strong justifications for distributing books free of charge to the children from needy families, but justification for free distribution of books among children coming from well-to-do families does not make much sense.

Decentralization of functions at the upazila level requires that actors at the upazila level- representatives and officials -be prepared for handling the responsibilities entrusted to them. This means that a comprehensive reorientation for both groups is of utmost necessity in the context of decentralization and also of democratization at the local level. But in the two upazilas we surveyed, fewer elected members than officials were found to have received any training after assuming office; the percentage for the former was about 48%, and for the latter it was 68% (Table 9).

Table 9: Exposure to Training
(Have you received any training after assuming office at the upazila level?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public Officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	10	47.62	17	68.00
No	11	52.38	7	28.00
No answer	--	--	1	4.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

As to the usefulness of training for the planning and implementation of

projects with which upazila-level actors are involved, 100% of the elected members and 83% of the officials who received training reported that the training they had received is helping them perform their duties. While no elected members said that training was of no use, about 6% of public officials took that stand, and another 11% declined to answer the question (Table 10)

Table 10: Utilization of Training
(Is training helping in p'anning and plan implementation?)

	Elected Members (10)		Public officials (18)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	10	100.00	15	83.33
No	--	--	1	5.55
No answer	--	--	2	11.11

[Note: Only 10 elected members and 15 officials, out of a total of 21 and 25 respectively, received training]

It is important to note that all of the elected members interviewed (100%) and an overwhelming majority of the public officials (92%) felt that training is

necessary (Table 11).

Table 11: Necessity of Training

(Is training necessary for performing administrative duties, planning and plan implementation in particular?)

	Elected Members (21)		Public officials (25)	
	No. of respondents	% of total	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	21	100.00	23	92.00
No	--	--	--	--
No answer	--	--	2	8.00
Total	21	100.00	25	100.00

Compared with the percentage for public officials (44%) who said the adult literacy rate had increased as a result of decentralization, the percentage for public representatives was small - only about 5%.

(2) NGO Officials

All the NGO officials we interviewed at the upazila level agreed that the quality of education had increased as a result of decentralization. They also thought that adult literacy had not only improved, but it had improved significantly. It is not quite clear why they said that the existing education system was helping in creating awareness among students about the need for rural development, an opinion which they seemed to contradict later while answering the question on problems of education at the local level. The high-ranking NGO officials, posted in Dhaka, however, did not share this view; they

strongly felt that newer approaches were necessary for introducing students to the socio-economic realities of the country. The example of BRAC that we have cited before at length amply demonstrates that NGOs can fruitfully contribute to the spread of education and literacy, given the proper scope. It can be mentioned here that the BRAC received UNESCO's NOMA prize for its contribution in the field of adult literacy.⁶⁸

NGO officials tended to agree with elected members and public officials on the problems facing the education sector. They too saw the expense of education as a major problem. Even though they admitted, in response to a previous question, that the education system was contributing to the creation of a sense of awareness about rural development among students, they seemed to differ from their previous stand while answering the question on problems of education. Here they pointed out that the existing education system had failed to highlight national problems, especially the rural ones.

NGO officials also listed the lack of trained teachers and teaching equipment as a major problem. Furthermore, they identified the lack of local government control over educational institutions as a major problem for education at the local level. In their suggested solutions to the problems, they again concurred with the elected members and public officials. One minor variation was with regard to the distribution of free books for the primary students. Some respondents argued that priority, in this respect, should be given to students coming from the poorest families. Other solutions considered

important were local government control over educational institutions, more emphasis on rural development in the curriculum, and more training for primary and secondary level teachers.

With regard to training, it was found that all NGO officials we interviewed had received some training at regional and central offices of their respective organizations. Asked whether the training they received was helpful in performing their duties, they said 'yes.' Also, an overwhelming majority (75%) of the NGO officials interviewed at the local level agreed that training was important and necessary.

Conclusion

The education and training systems need to be modified and reoriented according to the changing needs of the society. Though the training system, being specifically program-oriented, seems to be performing better than the school system in terms of realizing the government's various objectives, training institutes need to be further strengthened in the face of growing demands for training in the context of decentralization at the upazila level. We have seen that all categories of upazila level actors we have interviewed agree on the usefulness of training for handling their assignments.

However, in no circumstances can the importance of the formal school system be undermined. As one writer puts it:

Primary education becomes the lever of development, because the basic skills in reading, writing and computation imparted in the primary stage are indispensable for the formation and development of specific skills. The end result of primary education is 'effective permanent literacy' which leads to mobility, productivity and innovativeness.⁶⁹

Also, non-formal education is tremendously important in the context of Bangladesh, given her socio-economic level of development. The facilities that the 1982 decentralization has made available at the upazila level should be used to the maximum extent for the promotion of formal as well as non-formal education, and also for agricultural extension training. However, there are some problem areas which will need concerted efforts on the part of all concerned in order to be solved. One example is the primary teachers' unwillingness to work under the local government payroll. This can not be considered as a good sign

for the practice of participatory democracy at the local level. It points to the fact that much needs to be done by both the central and local governments, with the use of ideological apparatuses along with legal means, in order to build a climate of trust to reverse this situation.

As it appears from our perception survey, upazila-level actors are concerned about the lack of qualified teachers and teaching equipment, the distribution of books and school supplies, and also the control of local government bodies over the school system. The Upazila Parishads can work towards fulfilling some of these needs by carefully utilizing the power available to them. Involvement of the community, in general, in education-related matters and enhancement of female education, including assistance to women for domestic agriculture are areas to which more attention should be devoted.

Also, NGOs should be given sufficient scope for experimentation with community education and skills development programs. If a conducive environment exists, there is no doubt that NGOs will be able to contribute to the government's objective of realizing universal primary education and also skills training programs. It would be beneficial for the whole society if the government were to adopt some of the successful models developed by NGOs for replication throughout the country.

In the final analysis, unless the education and training systems are geared to the requirements of the agrarian economy of Bangladesh, many vital objectives sought by the state will be quite difficult to achieve.

Endnotes:

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- 2.Ibid.
- 3.T. N. Sequieura, The Education of India, p. 207, cited in Zahurul Hassan Sharib, The History and Prospect of Rural Education in India (Bombay: All India Institute of Local Self-Government, 1982), p. 21.
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- 5.World Bank, Bangladesh: Public Expenditure Review (Public Resource Management During the Fourth Five-Year Plan, FY 91-95), March 13, 1989, p. 205.
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CONCLUSION

In their pursuit of rural development, Third World Countries (TWCs) have developed a strong fascination for decentralization as a strategy for rural development. High hopes and expectations have been aroused among the people about the usefulness of decentralization and the contribution that it can make to the cause of rural development. Various organs of the United Nations and donor agencies have been collaborating with various nation states to study the problems and prospects of decentralization in the developing countries. One major justification shown in favour of decentralized rural development is that decentralization programmes would promote the much desired local participation in the planning and implementation of various development policies and programs. While this expectation is not devoid of logic, there are shortcomings and problems which vitiate the state and non-state initiatives in this respect.

Academic analyses are now seeking to find out the inhibiting factors to decentralization for rural development and trying to put them in perspective for a better understanding of the process in the new countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Scholars studying the working of decentralization in various parts of the world now seem to be preferring a socio-historical approach to understanding the dynamics of decentralization. The approach taken by Anthrope and Conyers, in a recent article, is illustrative of this trend. To quote them:

Our general position is that the intelligibility of particular as well as general issues in the debate would be improved if matters were first put into historical perspective, so that critical assessment of the status quo or a preceding state of affairs may be taken into account, instead of merely considering the proposed institutional reform - mainly decentralization - in isolation.¹

In our study of the Bangladesh case we have tried to follow a similar approach. To be precise, one of our main concerns in this dissertation has been to set the issue of decentralization in its broad socio-historical context, in order to make sense of the main variables and to analyze the present status and future promise of decentralization at the upazila-level.

We will now put together the main findings of various chapters in order to relate them and to draw some generalizations. Then we will briefly touch upon two cases - India and Pakistan - to examine the relevance of our generalizations to other countries.

Summary of the Main Findings

The pre-colonial state in India was heavily dependent on land revenue for financing various expenditures. In most cases, the demand of the state was substantial. Apart from the maintenance of the royal household, other major heads of expenditure included the salaries of the nobilities, the military, and the civil bureaucracy.

Though various types of cities - religious, commercial, military camps - existed, a commercialized relationship with the rural sector did not emerge. Cities remained parasitic upon the land revenues from villages.

During the colonial phase in India some qualitative changes took place, especially in the later part of the British rule. However, the colonial rule by its very nature was centralized for obvious reasons. Though it is claimed that the tax burden of the peasants was reduced, their overall situation did not improve much. A new urban middle class, a product of the British rule, became the main beneficiaries of the development that took place during the British period. Some attempts were made, especially after World War II, to give more power to the localities, but they did not go far enough, for appointed officials dominated the local bodies. Everything centred around the district administration, where the district officer, a civil servant, became the symbol of government at the local level. However, the need for rural development was increasingly recognized among official as well as non-official circles. Mahatma Gandhi, among others, became the leading voice for a village-oriented approach to development for India.

After the departure of the British, successive governments in Pakistan became involved with the development of rural areas. New beginnings were made. Despite political turmoil following independence, a series of measures was undertaken to promote the rural areas. Of the measures taken by the predecessors of the military government of 1958, two are of special importance: the Land Tenancy Act of 1950, by which the zamindari system of land tenure was abolished, and the Village Agricultural and Industrial (V-AID) Program. The governments during this period, however, gave more protection to the

industrial sector than the rural sector. Agriculture, in general, could not prosper.

The military government of Ayub Khan, which came to power in 1958, took various measures for the development of the rural economy. Ayub's Basic Democracies system was a shrewd attempt at linking the villages with the centre and was, to a large extent, successful in exercising central control over the rural sector. Though some improvements were made in terms of representation by elected members, the district remained the key player in the local government hierarchy. The Basic Democracies system politicized the masses but local bodies remained dependent on the central government, financially and administratively.

The establishment of Rural Development Academies signified the regime's interest in village development, and it also marked the beginning of a new era in the area of rural development efforts by state initiative. The East Pakistan Academy for Rural Development at Comilla devised a new model for rural development which has come to be known as the Comilla model of rural development. It was in this Comilla model that the germ of the later upazila administration lay. Later the government of Pakistan decided to proliferate throughout the country the model developed in Comilla, under the title Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). However, soon after the introduction of the programme, the eastern wing of the country separated from the western wing after a bloody civil war.

The leaders in the newly independent Bangladesh had to pay most of their attention to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy. However, they presented the country with a constitution, and a Five-Year Plan. Also, an Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC) and a Pay Commission were set up. Both submitted their report, though the recommendations of the former were not implemented at all by the regime in power. The Constitution and the ASRC made a passionate plea for the development of rural areas and the promotion of local self government; however, the regime's performance in this regard was very unsatisfactory. Instead of empowering the sub-national governments through decentralization of functions, the regime pursued a policy of high centralization. A one-party system was introduced and with it came a system of new local government. Under the new system, the districts were given the main thrust for development and provisions were made to provide them with appointed governors.

Also, there were suggestions from the Planning Commission for a participatory approach to rural development by involving students and the rural population; the regime, however, failed to implement these recommendations as well.

The first government in the post-independence Bangladesh was overthrown by a military coup; and after a brief interlude, Ziaur Rahman emerged as the de facto ruler. The concept of self-help received an unprecedented importance during this period; and Zia, as an ardent advocate of

the self-help approach to rural development, made a significant contribution to this cause by mobilizing the people to undertake canal-digging programs on a massive scale. Another program called 'Own Village Development' was introduced, under which top-ranking government officials were sent to their own villages in order to have practical exposure to problems faced by their fellow villagers. Probably, the most ambitious of all programs undertaken by Zia was his Gram Sarkar (village government) scheme which did not get enough time to mature, because of the overthrow of the government by another military coup in which Zia was killed. Zia's Gram Sarkar scheme paid attention to the lowest tier of administration, i.e., villages. Despite its noble intentions, the scheme encountered some serious difficulties. Moreover, Zia did little about the democratization of local bodies above the village level.

After Zia's fall from power, an interim government took over, but nothing significant took place as far as rural development is concerned. It was with the takeover of the military government of H. M. Ershad that some important measures were taken for the promotion of rural development. The creation of the upazila administration is by far the most important. As mentioned earlier, the upazila administration can be considered as an extended version of the Comilla model of rural development. The justification of thana (present upazila) as the most suitable seat for the administration of rural development was convincingly proved by the Comilla model of rural development. However, the provision of civilian supremacy under the present

arrangement has made the upazila model distinct from the Comilla model. On the one hand, the upazila model has provided for civilian supremacy; on the other hand, it has strengthened the bureaucracy posted at that level.

Traditionally, the civil bureaucracy has enjoyed considerable power at all levels of local government and administration. Though steps were taken during the Ayub period to give equal representation to elected members in the local bodies, they never succeeded in establishing their supremacy, primarily because the legal framework did not provide for it. Though under the Upazila scheme the services of some government officials have been placed under the Upazila Parishad, Upazila's control over them is not total; hence, they are not totally obliged to the local leadership. However, for the first time, senior-level government officials have been forced to live in the rural areas by the Upazila Ordinance. Our perception survey shows that both the elected members and government officials are supportive of the presence of the central bureaucracy at the upazila level for the necessary technical support.

In addition to providing for civilian supremacy, the Upazila Ordinance has provided for the transfer of considerable functions from the central government to the upazila level. Some financial bases have also been transferred; however, the bases seem to be inadequate in comparison with the responsibilities given to the upazilas. As a result, what has happened is that despite the transfer of developmental functions, the central government still holds a firm grip over the upazilas, financially and also administratively.

Though the government has been trying to bring the administration closer to the people, mainly through strengthening local government and bureaucracy, the space left for NGOs is very small. So far, NGO activities are confined to a limited number of upazilas. However, NGOs have amply demonstrated that they can be partners in rural development in a meaningful sense.

If one of the main objectives of the upazila administration is to achieve a participatory pattern of rural development, it is yet to be achieved. Participation of the people affected by the upazila programs at various stages of planning, implementation and evaluation is not at all adequate. Local people are lacking effective organizations and therefore are failing to make sufficient pressure on decision-making bodies. Only certain selected groups are reaping most of the benefits of development activities.

The education system in Bangladesh seems to be falling short of expectation in creating awareness about the country's developmental problems, especially in respect of agriculture. The training system, however, being specific and program-oriented seems to be performing better, though it needs strengthening in view of the recent decentralization program. As the National Education Commission report and various studies by international organizations demonstrate, the education system has yet to be geared to the needs of a predominantly agricultural society.

From the above main findings from the Bangladesh case, we can derive the following generalizations:

(1) Historically, in the area that is now Bangladesh, underdevelopment of the civil society, in comparison with the state organization, has led the former into a dependent relationship on the latter.² Weak local authorities have always been viewed favourably by the strong centre;

(2) The form of field administration and its relationship with the local bodies help the centre strengthen its hold over the localities. A satisfactory working relationship between the elected local members and appointed government officials has not evolved. Local bodies lack power to assert their authority over the officials deputed from the centre;

(3) The preponderance of the state has hampered the emergence of NGOs as alternative channels for the articulation of societal demands. However, given a conducive climate, NGO intervention in development activities can be made complementary to the government efforts;

(4) People's participation in development activities, a vital input for successful planning and plan implementation, is found to be minimal. Well articulated grass-roots organizations have the potential to make a significant difference in the process of development.

(5) State-sponsored rural development through local government seems to have benefited selected groups only. The benefits of rural development have remained very marginal to disadvantaged groups, for example, small peasants, and women.

A more elaborate explanation of our findings and generalizations will be

given at the end of the chapter, after we highlight developments regarding decentralization and rural development in India after its independence in 1947, and Pakistan after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Developments in India

Though independence came in 1947, it was not until 1952 that India launched comprehensive programs for rural development. Immediately after independence, the new government was mainly preoccupied with the formulation of a constitution for the governance of the new country. But, the concern for rural development became fairly widespread long before the British withdrawal. It was primarily Mahatma Gandhi's efforts which brought the issue to the forefront.

In independent India, Constitution makers faced a problem as to how to incorporate the Gandhian ideal of village development within the constitutional framework. Dr. Ambedkar, the main architect of the Indian constitution, was opposed to giving any emphasis to the village Panchayats (Councils) in the Constitution. Instead of Village Panchayats, the Draft Constitution rather gave primacy to the individual.³ However, Ambedkar had to make a compromise with the supporters of the Panchayati Raj (composed of district, sub-district and village level local bodies) in the Constituent Assembly, who were in an overwhelming majority. A clause regarding Panchayati Raj was moved and adopted by a majority vote and was included in the Constitution as Article 40.⁴

The article reads:

The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.⁵

However, it was with the recommendations of the Balvantray Mehta Committee Report of 1957 that the Panchayati Raj system took a concrete shape in India. The Committee recommended a three-tier system of local government bodies for the purpose of rural development. The three tiers proposed by the Committee, in order of ascending size, are: the village panchayat, panchayat samiti, and the zilla panchayat. Of the three tiers, the village panchayats were to be the main local bodies for developmental activities.⁶

In India, the Village Panchayat is a directly elected body, whereas the Panchayat Samiti is indirectly elected. The latter is composed of elected Village Panchayat members and other co-opted members. The co-opted members include women and scheduled caste and tribes, if their representation exceed 5% of the population in the region.⁷ Members of the panchayat samiti elect a chairman from among themselves.

The Balvantray Mehta Committee recommended for the direct election of the village panchayat members, with representation from women, scheduled caste and tribes.⁸ Functions proposed for the village panchayat included water supply for domestic use, sanitation, lighting, maintenance of village roads and tanks, management of primary schools, and collection of statistics.⁹

The functions to be entrusted to the panchayat samiti were quite elaborate. They include agriculture in all its aspects, local industries, public health, management of primary schools, welfare work, and collection of statistics. In addition, special schemes could also be entrusted to them by the state government.¹⁰ The allocation of functions to the above two tiers of local government shows that they have some concurrent jurisdiction.

Government officials belonging to various departments have been made available to the panchayat samitis. The Block Development Officer, a member of the government bureaucracy, head of the extension services at the block level, works under the administrative control of the prodhan, the elected chairman of the panchayat samiti.

The placement of a bureaucratic staff under the administrative control of an elected head is, of course, a practice conforming to democratic ideals. However, there are reports of frequent clashes between the elected and official elements in the working of the panchayati system.¹¹ In addition, the power enjoyed by the Panchayat samiti and its head has also given rise to some problems. For example, members elected to the state and national legislatures are not very supportive of the degree of power enjoyed by the Panchayat samiti prodhans in their constituency.¹²

The Committee also proposed a Zilla Parishad (District Council), to be composed of members of the Panchayat Samitis, the members of the state legislature and the Parliament. The purpose of the interlocking membership of

Panchayat members was to ensure a functional linkage between the two tiers of administration proposed by the Committee. Also this mechanism would serve the purpose of co-ordination of the lower bodies in a particular zilla (District). District-level officials belonging to various nation-building departments, for example, public health, agriculture, engineering and education would also have membership in the Zilla Parishads. The executive head of the general administration for the district - the collector - would be the head of the Zilla Parishad.¹³

The panchayati raj system is not uniform throughout the country. States vary in their emphasis on a particular unit of the Panchayati Raj - in some states it is the Panchayat Samiti, in others it is the Zilla Parishad.¹⁴ The intention of the Balvantray Mehta Committee was to make the village panchayat the most important unit. The emphasis on lower levels or grassroots, though very democratic in spirit, has some problems, especially with regard to planning. At the village panchayat level, in particular, lack of trained personnel and sufficient material resources work as obstacles to bottom-up planning.¹⁵

There are allegations that the panchayati raj institutions have failed to reflect adequately the interests of weaker sections in the society.¹⁶ This concern was shared by two later major committee reports - the Dantwala Report and the Ashok Mehta report. The former was appointed by the Planning Commission on 5 November, 1977, for examining block-level planning, and the latter was appointed by the central government in December 1977 to suggest

measures to strengthen the Panchayati Raj institutions. Voicing skepticism about the performance of the Panchayati Raj institutions, the Dantwala Report stated:

... the weaker sections of the rural community do not feel that their interests will be fully protected under the Panchayati Raj institutions. A strong version of this feeling is that the leadership of the Panchayati Raj institutions acts as a gate-keeper and prevents the flow of benefits to the weaker sections of the rural community.¹⁷

The Ashok Mehta Committee's recommendations are very pertinent in this regard. The committee favoured a two-tier system of local bodies in place of the three-tier that came into operation on the recommendation of the Balvantray Mehta report. The Ashok Committee concluded that the revenue districts should be the first point of decentralization because, to the committee, it was the unit where technical expertise of a high order could be ensured for rural development.¹⁸ The Committee also recommended a tier below the Zilla Parishad, to be called the Mandal Panchayat, which would be the composite of a number of villages. The Ashok Mehta report, unlike the Balvantray report, did not find village-level local bodies, directly elected by the people, necessary for the purpose of development.¹⁹ The recommendations of the Committee, however, received a very cool reception, both at the central and the state levels.

The Mehta Committee also favoured open participation by political parties in Panchayati Raj affairs, thereby seeking a bold and deliberate departure from the convention under which political parties followed a gentleman's agreement not to contest election to Panchayati Raj institutions.

The Ashok Mehta Committee expressed skepticism not only about the structure of the Panchayati Raj, as it came into being as per the recommendations of the Balvantray Mehta Committee Report, but also its performance. The Committee found the system to be under the control of the privileged groups, corrupted, and inefficient.²⁰ A member of the Ashok Mehta Committee went so far as to say that the failure of Panchayati Raj institutions may be traced to the imperfect conception of local democracy in the Constitution:

The Constitution itself, according to me, failed to envisage an integrated administration in which apart from the centre and the states, there will be elected bodies which will control the permanent services at the district and lower levels - this is the essence of Indian polity as spelt out in the Constitution.²¹

This remark clearly reveals that much needs to be done with respect to democratization of local bodies. This particularly applies to Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads, where the election of their heads needs to be further democratized.

Also much more is desired with respect to people's participation in the decision-making process. Decentralization of development functions to the Panchayati Raj is not enough in itself to organize and motivate the people to get involved in the various phases of development planning and plan implementation. Though India has a background in community development and elected local bodies, i.e., the Panchayati Raj, local efforts in development programmes are few and far between. According to S. Guhan:

...this indeed is one of the serious failures of Indian planning and political evolution. At worst, politicians

and bureaucrats tend to be hostile to local bodies, co-operatives, and NGOs; at best, they treat them with benign neglect. There are, however, some signs of change.²²

States where leftist parties are in power, as in West Bengal, have introduced partisan elections at the local level. However, a recent study on popular participation in local government and rural development in West Bengal finds that the effort put by the parties into political education was not adequate enough to get communities involved in collective efforts..²³

Recent Developments in Pakistan

As we have already discussed the major events in respect of rural development and decentralization in Pakistan, 1947-1971, in Chapter III, there is no need for repeating them here. The focus here will be on the post-1971 period only. However, a summary statement of previous developments will be needed to set the events in perspective.

Though it became independent in 1947, Pakistan took an unusually long time to adopt a constitution. However, immediately after independence, some efforts were made for the development of rural areas. The Village Aid (V-AID), Pakistan's version of community development, was introduced in 1953. The local government system inherited from the British remained in place until the reforms brought about by Ayub's Martial Law government, which came to power in 1958. Till 1959 the local government system in the country remained as an appendage to the district administration. In the absence of a popularly

elected local government system, the V-AID program, remained mainly as a bureaucratic operation. Even after the introduction of the Basic Democracies system in 1959, the system of local government remained under tight central control. This scenario prevailed till the disintegration of Pakistan in 1971.

The new Pakistan, which resulted after the separation of eastern wing, inherited a bureaucratically-dominated administrative system. The socialist-oriented Pakistan People's Party (PPP) tried to deal with this issue by following a political approach, as we will see below. The PPP was committed to a people-centred administration in its election campaign in 1970 (the last election campaign in the United Pakistan). The party promised a drastic reform for the rural areas of the country.

With its coming to power, Bhutto's PPP introduced a series of measures to fulfill the party's electoral promises. In 1972, the Ministry of Finance and Planning undertook a programme meant for providing employment to the rural poor, called the People's Works Program. As a matter of fact, the program was designed following the Rural Works Programme introduced during the Ayub period.²⁴ Another measure introduced under the auspices of the Ministry of Production was the development of 'agrovilles.' It was patterned after the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) in the then East Pakistan.²⁵ Still another attempt was the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), undertaken by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Its main purpose was to: (a) slow down polarization in the rural areas through agrarian reforms; (b)

create institutions; and (c) promote participation of the rural people in development activities. But none of the objectives were achieved satisfactorily because the program was mainly bureaucracy-initiated and administered without local government support. The program ended up only with a few pilot projects.²⁶

Measures undertaken during the Bhutto rule, especially in the first half, for the amelioration of poverty in the rural areas, met with little success. One of the main reasons for this was the failure of the regime to create local bodies to back up its policies at the field level. Bhutto abolished the Basic Democracies system, introduced by Ayub Khan, but could not substitute any other form. However, from the mid-1970s there was an increasing realization among the PPP High Command that rural development policies, to be effective, needed the support of the local government. The PPP attempted to fill the institutional vacuum that emerged after the abolition of the Basic Democracies system by making use of the party apparatus. In 1975, the party was restructured with a view to making it more responsive to the societal requirements. Party cells were established at all levels of administration - from the village to the provincial level. A national-level executive Committee was also established for co-ordination purposes. The PPP party cell structure, in many ways, resembled the Basic Democracies system of Ayub Khan. The main difference, however, was that Ayub's system enjoyed more functional autonomy.²⁷

Though Bhutto introduced a land reform, lowering the ceiling of land-holding, the domination of large and middle landlords continued in the countryside. As the interests of landlords were not affected by Bhutto's measures, he continued to get the support of the land-owning class in the rural areas.²⁸

After coming to power in 1977, through a military coup-d'etat, Zia-ul Haq brought some major changes in the country's administrative system. The new regime inherited two programs of rural development from the previous regime: the People's Works Program and Integrated Rural development Program. Both the above programs were merged into one program under the title Rural Development Program in 1979.²⁹ In the same year, Zia also revived a local government system to back up rural development functions. A vacuum in this respect had existed since the abolition of the Basic Democracies system by Bhutto.³⁰

Local government Ordinances under Zia provided for variations from province to province. Despite variations, a three-tier system emerged in all the provinces. The tiers, in ascending order, were: union council, tehsil/taluka council, and district/zila council. The composition of the councils was very much the same as for the Basic Democracies units. The lowest body, the union council, was directly elected, while the immediately higher unit, the tehsil/taluka council, was composed of the chairmen of union councils, town committee chairmen and government officials at that level. The highest tier in the local

government hierarchy, the Zilla Parishad, was composed of elected representatives of union councils, tehsil council chairmen, and officials. A special feature to be noted under the Zia system was that he made provisions for minority representation in the local bodies. Minority representation included: women, religious minorities, peasants, tenants, and workers - a feature absent in Ayub's Basic Democracies system. Another difference from the Ayub system was that bureaucratic control in local bodies diminished during the Zia rule. Also of importance is the fact that the local government structure was kept out of the electoral forum for national election.³¹ Another feature to be noted is that Panchayats (Councils) were also introduced at the village level in Sind, in addition to Union and District Councils.³²

The absence of effective intermediary organizations, other than the government ones, is conspicuous in Pakistan too. As a result, identification of needs and problems of the rural population, and mobilization for development activities is very difficult.³³ However, some NGOs are now emerging. The Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) has demonstrated considerable success in the northern areas of Pakistan. The performance of this organization and its achievement so far have been evaluated as impressive in a recent study by the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department.³⁴

In the final analysis, we can see that the three countries, after their independence, have been trying to promote rural development through local government institutions. In Bangladesh the upazila (sub-district) has been found

to be the most suitable unit for the administration of rural development. In India, though the village panchayat has been given the primary emphasis, it is the panchayat samiti (corresponding to Upazila Parishad in Bangladesh) which has the elements present in the upazila scheme. At this level of local government, technical experts belonging to government departments have been made available to the panchayat samitis. The main difference which stands out is that the upazila has a directly elected chairman. The corresponding level in Pakistan, i.e. the tehsil level, still lacks an elected representative, directly or indirectly elected.

The relative weakness of the civil society, compared with the state, is manifest in all three countries. Local initiatives for development and peoples' participation in them are far from satisfactory. People's reliance on the centre for the solution to local problems seems to be a common feature. Given this fact, it appears that alternatives for local development are indeed limited and the main drive and initiative will have to come from the upper levels. Referring to this situation, in the South Asian case, Anil Bhatt writes:

More than three decades of decentralization and rural development in South Asia seems to clearly suggest that if decentralization is to bring about the development of the rural poor, it would have to be steered by the highest and most central levels of the political and administrative leadership. Ironical as it might seem, if the lowest and the poorest stratum of the society is to benefit and develop from decentralization, it is the highest stratum of politics and administration which would have to ensure this.³⁵

The presence of the central bureaucracy at the local levels and the heavy dependence of local bodies on them for technical support are also common

characteristics. Despite the higher level of politicization in India, people's organizations are not strong enough to participate in the process of development. This has been found to be the case even in the states ruled by the leftist parties, for example West Bengal. Lack of NGO participation also emerges from the same root problem, the inadequate development of organizations in the civil society to countervail the powers of the state.

It is also true in the case of the countries in question that the poor and disadvantaged are benefitting minimally from the process of development. In Pakistan, during the Ayub period, the Basic Democrats and rich farmers reaped the major benefits of development. During the Bhutto period, it was the rural elites associated with the PPP, including rich farmers. During the Zia period, the picture was hardly different. In India, despite the presence of the panchayati raj, a more democratic form of decentralized local government, the Ashok Mehta Committee and numerous other studies have found that the benefits of rural development do not reach the rural poor the way they should. The story is the same in Bangladesh, as we have seen.

Thus, we can maintain that our generalizations from the case study of Bangladesh also apply to both India and Pakistan. This should not be surprising because all three countries shared a common background until 1947. Also, post-1947 developments have more structural similarities than differences.

Our generalizations from the Bangladesh case will also apply to many other Third World countries where, in their historical evolution, the civil society

has been in a subservient position to the state. This root cause has had impacts on local initiatives, the participation of NGOs, and the distribution of resources at the local level.

The Relevance of our Findings: A Further Explanation

Though political leaders and intellectuals in TWCs are recommending decentralization of governmental functions and strengthening of local government as policy options for rural development, there are several problem areas which need serious examination. Historically, we have seen that the pattern of evolution in non-western countries was different. This fact necessitates a realistic assessment of decentralization as a strategy for rural development in TWCs. Though there are many forceful arguments in favour of decentralization, its universal applicability has been questioned by many scholars, mainly on the grounds of the peculiar historical experiences of different nation-states.

As we have seen, in the case of India, a centralized state was superimposed upon a decentralized society. Even frequent foreign invasions and changes of dynasties hardly affected the social structure.³⁶ The state's involvement in the rural areas was through non-economic coercion, without involvement in the production process, although there were occasional involvements, like the digging of canals and reservoirs, and the granting of government loans. Social conflicts remained confined to the distribution and

redistribution of surpluses, without affecting the relations of production. In sharp contrast to India, social conflict emerged in the very production process in medieval Europe. The resolution of the crisis involved the rural society as well. Transformation took place with the redistribution of production relations and the rise of the new classes.³⁷

In the case of the Indian subcontinent, a centripetal tendency existed, as we have seen, even before the colonization of India. Because of the centre's heavy reliance on land revenue as a source of income, some degree of control was necessary for its smooth collection from the countryside. Given the absence of a developed transport and communication network, the central authority was limited in terms of enforcing its authority in the far-off regions of the empire. The system of land grants, by which the centre used to give the right of tax-farming to distinguished state officials, helped the state in this regard.

Recruitment of officials mainly on the basis of patronage, and what may be called 'patrimonialism' in Weberian terms, meaning a system of traditional authority of the patriarchal type, with an administrative staff, gave the king or emperor an unique position to exercise control over the system.³⁸ In exchange for their land grants, state officials provided military service and a share of tax collections to the state. This was a kind of system which Max Weber called 'prebendalism.' Feudalism and prebendalism differed from each other in important respects; they had parallel but different social structures. Though both systems were subject to different centrifugal forces, in the case of the prebendal

societies, centripetal forces seem to have overridden the centrifugal forces because of the very nature of the social structure.

During the colonial rule, partly due to the development of transport and communication networks, the centripetal tendencies of the state continued. Of course, there were also practical reasons for the colonial power to be more centralized. The chief one was that only a handful of people used to administer the major functions of revenue collection and the maintenance of law and order for a vast empire. In this respect, the British got some help from the Indian middle class, a product of the British Indian education policy. A bureaucracy, based on legal-rational authority, called the Indian Civil Service (ICS) emerged and proved so effective as an institution for governance that it came to be known as the 'steel-frame' of the British Indian empire. In addition, the British relied on local zamindars in the countryside for revenue-collection purposes. In short, developments in technology, transport and communication, and the creation of a group like the ICS made it possible for the British to impose central control in a vast empire.

In the Indian region, a satisfactory working relationship between the elected leadership and the bureaucracy has always posed a difficult dilemma, especially at the local level. In the pre-colonial India, especially during the Mughal period, the military-feudal bureaucracy was always dominant at all levels of administration; during the British period, it was the civil bureaucracy. The sub-national administration and also the local government system revolved

around a 'district overlord.'³⁹ In the post-independence period, the situation has not changed much, because of the structural continuities. Many observers are hoping that democratic decentralization at the local level will gradually give rise to a new relationship.

However, the very idea of decentralization has come under serious criticism from some scholars. To them, the advocacy for decentralization in developing countries is more emotionally-charged than rationally calculated. V. Subramaniam, for example, argues that decentralization as a mode of sharing power arose in Britain during the formative phase of parliamentary democracy in that country. The landed aristocracy played a prominent role in establishing the rights of the Parliament over the King, while the country squires used to look after the field administration of the countryside. The country squirearchy also developed a democratic tradition of governing regional affairs, mainly on the basis of local resources. The tradition of minimum intervention by the centre in the management of local affairs was maintained even at later stages in the historical evolution of British society.⁴⁰ All these developments, Subramaniam argues, took place in Britain as interrelated events, as a total package, helping and reinforcing each other. A replication of a part of this package may not be possible in a different socio-cultural setting. In his discussion of the Indian case, Subramaniam shows some other reasons against the rhetorical attachment to decentralization. Of them, misperception about Gandhian advocacy of decentralization is important but subject to debate. He

argues that Gandhiji's support for decentralization was mainly a tactical move; it was a means for fighting centralized policies of an entrenched colonial government and to withdraw support from it by calling for decentralization of power at the local level.⁴¹ This seems to be different from the usual interpretation of Gandhiji's philosophy of rural development and decentralization, which would maintain that Gandhiji's concern for the above was real. This interpretation is supported by the resolution of the Panchayati Raj issue in the Indian Constituent Assembly, immediately after the independence, whereby decentralized local government was provided in the Constitution.

Another important point made by Subramaniam is that, in the age of advanced technology, decentralization of governmental functions may not necessarily be required for effective execution of plans at the local level.⁴² From the viewpoint of democracy, centralization by means of technology may not sound very conducive, but new developing countries have to face this crucial issue with adequate caution. Though technology is important as a factor determining the spatial strategy of a state, there are other compelling factors which new states cannot ignore. Perhaps the most important one is the issue of national integration. A. T. R. Rahman puts the point succinctly:

The process of modernization in the West did not involve deliberate development of national integration and other non-political structures; the foundation of political and administrative development in the West was laid during a period when mass politics had not arisen and the task of economic development was carried out autonomously by industrial and commercial classes. The situation is the reverse in new countries. The demands on political systems for modernization are great, particularly for

economic benefits, social justice, and political participation. Further, the bonds of national integration are tenuous and the foundations of government are very weak. Thus it appears that new states have to attain simultaneously, primarily through the political system, objectives of stability and institutionalization, national integration, economic benefits, social justice, and increasing participation, all of which were achieved in Western democracies at different periods of history and by different evolutionary processes.⁴³

From the above description, it is clear that developing countries have difficult constraints with regard to decentralization. Political regimes in such countries often capitalise on these constraints to retain central control over local matters. Though the issue of national integration is of great importance in many developing countries, it should not be used as a scapegoat to evade a fair sharing of power with the local governments. The spatial strategies of a state should be determined in accordance with the objective realities faced by that state. A universal formula may not be applicable to all states because of their peculiar historical experiences and current situational givens.

Compared with both India and Pakistan and many other developing countries, Bangladesh has a relative advantage in this respect. Bangladesh being more or less a uniform country, linguistically and culturally, is in a very favourable position to experiment with decentralized models of rural development. In Bangladesh, the upazila as a decentralized institutional mechanism can go a long way in the cause of rural development. Its promise is not only confined to rural development, but also to the democratization of local-level politics and administration.

As institution-building is a slow and painful process, sufficient time should be allowed so that this institution can mature. The presence of central senior bureaucratic staffs at the upazila level, we believe, will be helpful and should continue until the time comes for their withdrawal. The government could appoint a Committee to look into this matter and suggest measures. In the meantime, however, the central government can assist local governments by financial grants and by legal measures to develop their own financial and administrative capabilities.

My analysis leads me to conclude that the cause of rural development, in other words development of villages, a crucial concern of Gandhiji, will be best served not by a Gandhian methodology of keeping them self-sufficient, but by breaking their self-sufficiency, by making them interdependent through a system of commercialised agriculture. This is very much a Marxian prescription for breaking the isolation of Indian villages. After studying Indian village organizations Marx came to the conclusion that development of villages is possible only by blowing up their economic bases.⁴⁴ Interestingly, though Marx relied on some incorrect data on the nature of the Indian land-tenure system, his conclusions about the development of villages can be retained. To the extent that the decentralization of development functions to the upazila level in Bangladesh can accelerate the process of commercializing agriculture by breaking up the self-contained nature of villages, the upazila scheme can be considered as a positive step in the country's rural development history. In

addition, it can also serve as a training ground for local-level democracy. But, local democracy without a democratic central structure is certainly an uneasy combination; still, if local democracy can take firm roots, the search for a democratic order at the upper level may be more successful.

Endnotes:

1. Raymond Anthrope and Diana Conyers, "Decentralization, Recentralization, and Popular Participation in Developing Countries: Towards a Framework for Analysis," Development and Peace, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1982, p. 47..

2. Here we have used the concept "civil society" in the Gramscian sense. Gramsci's approach differs significantly from that of Marx on this subject. Marx treated civil society as structure (relations of production), whereas Gramsci treated it as superstructure. To Gramsci, civil society is "the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private," and the state is "political society." Gramsci as cited in Martin Carnoy, The State and Political Theory (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 68.

3. R.S. Rajput, "The Concept of Village Republics and the Spirit of Article 40," in R.S Rajput and D.R. Meghe (eds.), Panchayati Raj in India: Democracy at Grassroots (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1984), p. 49.

4. Ibid., p. 52.

5. Ibid., p. 53.

6. B. B. Misra, District Administration and Rural Development In India: Policy Objectives and Administrative Change in Historical Perspective (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 324.

7. Ibid., p. 323.

8. Henry Maddick, Panchayati Raj: A Study of Rural Local Government in India (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1970), p. 55.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 54.

11. P. R. Dubashi, "Decentralization for Rural Development in India," in Anil Bhatt et al., Building from Below: Local Initiatives for Decentralized Development in Asia and Pacific, Vol. 3, (Kuala Lumpur: Asia and Pacific Development Centre, 1988), p. 86.

12.Ibid.

13.B. B. Misra, op. cit., p. 324.

14.M. A. Muttalib, "Decentralization: Local Self Government Institutions and Resource Mobilisation - The Indian Experience," in Hasnat Abdul Hye (ed.), Decentralization, Local Government Institutions and Resource Mobilisation (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1985) p. 176.

15.B. B. Misra, op. cit., p. 337.

16.Ibid., p. 339.

17.Report of the Working Group on Block-Level Planning (New Delhi: Planning Commission, 1978), p. 8, Cited in Shriram Maheshwari, op. cit., p. 55 (note # 2).

18.Thrity D. Patel, "Panchayati Raj - An Overview," in R. S. Rajput and D. R. Meghe (eds.), op. cit., pp. 63-64.

19.Ibid.

20.R. S. Rajput, "The Concept of Village Republic and the Spirit of Article 40," in R. S. Rajput and D. R. Meghe (eds.), op. cit., p. 55.

21.Shriram Maheshwari, Rural Development in India: A Public Policy Approach (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1985), Note # 2, p. 55.

22.S. Guhan, "Aid for the Poor: Performance and Possibilities in India," in Valeriana Kallab and Richard E. Feinberg, Strengthening the Poor: What Have We learned? (New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Books, 1988), p. 205.

23.Kristen Westergaard, People's Participation, Local Government and Rural Development: The case of West Bengal, India. CDR Research Report No. 8 (Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research, 1986), p. 89.

24.S. J. Burki, Pakistan Under Bhutto, 1971-1977 (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), p. 140.

25.Ibid.

26.Ibid., pp. 140-141.

27.Ibid., pp. 161-162.

28.Ibid., p. 139.

29.Inayatullah, "Decentralization for Rural Development in Pakistan: A Critical Review" in Anil Bhatt et al., Building from Below: Local Initiatives for Decentralized Development in Asia and Pacific, Vol. 3, (Kuala Lumpur; Asian and Pacific Development Centre, 1988), p. 251.

30.Ibid., p. 254.

31.Charles H. Kennedy, "Rural Groups and the Stability of the Zia Regime," in Craig Baxter (ed.) Zia's Pakistan: Politics and Stability in a Frontline State (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 45.

32.Abu Razi Shibli, "Decentralized Administration in Pakistan: Theory and Practice" in K. M. Tipu Sultan ed., Administrative Decentralization in SAARC Countries - The Report of a Training Seminar (Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1987), p. 71.

33.Sartaj Aziz, "A Turning Point in Pakistan's Rural Development Strategy," in Valeriana Kallab and Richard E. Feinberg et al., op. cit., p.116.

34.Ibid., p. 117.

35.Anil Bhatt, "Decentralization for Rural Development: An Overview of South Asian Experiences" in Anil Bhatt et al., Building from Below: Local Initiatives for Decentralized Development in Asia and Pacific, Vol. 1, (Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Centre, 1988), p. 62.

36.Inayatullah, op. cit., pp. 229-230.

37.Harbans Mukhia, "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society," Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3, p. 246.

38.For an elaborate discussion of traditional authority, see Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. ed. by Guenther Roth and Clauss Wittich (New york: Bedminster Press Inc., 1968), Vol. I, pp. 226-241.

39.For an overview of the district overlord, see V. Subramaniam, "Conclusion," in his ed., Public Administration in the Third World; an International Handbook

(New York: Greenwood, 1990), pp. 385-387.

40.V. Subramaniam, "The Rhetoric of Decentralisation and the Reality of Centralisation," Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 24, Nos. 3-4, 1978, p. 764.

41.Ibid., p. 765.

42.Ibid., p. 767.

43.A. T. R. Rahman, " Theories of Political and Administrative Development," Journal of Administration Overseas, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1969, p. 254.

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Appendix 1

Decentralization for Rural Development in Bangladesh

Questionnaire

- Confidential
- For Academic Purposes only

[Please put tick mark in appropriate places. Use additional sheets, if needed]

Section A:

1. Name (Optional):
2. Designation:
3. Upazila in which posted:
4. Zila:
5. Sex:
6. Educational qualification:
7. Age:
8. Marital status:
9. No. of children:
10. Previous administrative experience:
11. If yes, in which post?, Year.....

Section B:

1. How has the distribution of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer, insecticides) been affected by decentralization?
 - a. As before __
 - b. Easier __

- c. More difficult ____
- d. Others (please specify) ____

2. What is the impact of decentralization on irrigation?

- a. As before ____
- b. Little ____
- c. Up-to-the-mark ____
- d. Disappointing ____
- e. Others (please specify) ____

3. What is the impact of decentralization on the distribution of agricultural equipment?

- a. As before ____
- b. Has become easier ____
- c. Has become more difficult ____

4. What, according to you, are some of the main problems of the agriculture and irrigation sector? (Rank in order of importance).

- a. Delays in supplies ____
- b. Lack of coordination among various government departments ____
- c. Lack of orientation with modern agricultural practices ____
- d. Lack of concern on the part of concerned parties because of the land tenure system ____

Section C:

1. Are there adequate number of doctors and nurses and sufficient medical supplies at the upazila level?

- a. Yes ____

b. No ___

c. Others (please specify) ___

2. Do you think that enough M.B.B.S. doctors have been attracted to the upazila level?

a. Yes ___

b. No ___

c. Others (please specify) ___

3. How would you evaluate the condition of the population control and family planning facilities available at the upazila level?

a. Bad ___

b. Not very bad ___

c. Satisfactory ___

d. Others (please specify) ___

4. What, according to you, are some of the main problems of the health, population and family planning sector? (Please rank your response in order of importance).

a. Weakness of government policies ___

b. Failure of GO and NGO sectors in creating facilities at the upazila level ___

c. Urban-centeredness of doctors and nurses ___

d. Corruption in the distribution of health and family planning materials ___

e. Others (please specify) ___

5. In the light of your experience, please mention some solutions to the above problems.

a. Qualified nurses and doctors should be forced to go to the rural areas by law ___

- b. Instead of forcing through legal measures, enough facilities should be made available to qualified doctors and nurses ____
- c. Upazilas should be empowered to increase their financial solvency so that they can deal with these problems ____
- d. Others (please specify) ____

Section D:

(1) Do you think that the Chairman of the UZP has enough power to handle his duties?

- a. Not enough ____
- b. Enough ____
- c. Excess ____

(2) Do you think that elected members should have the right to interfere in departmental administration at the upazila level?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____
- c. Others (please specify) ____

(3) Should the centrally recruited officials deputed to the UZP have a voting right in the Parishad deliberations?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____
- c. Others (please specify) ____

(4) Do you think that functions of the UNO should be under the control of the UZP chairman?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____

If the answer is yes,

- a. In some respect ____
- b. In all respects ____
- c. Others (please specify) ____

If the answer is yes, please specify some sectors:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Section E:

(1) Is this possible to hand over the charges of the upazila administration and rural development to the elected members?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____
- c. Others (please specify) ____

(2) Is an alternative to the central bureaucracy at the field-level possible?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____
- c. Others (please specify) ____

(3) If an alternative is possible, what would it be like?

- a. A structure composed of elected members, government officials, and professional groups ____
- b. Composed of only non-governmental organizations ____
- c. Composed of only political organizations ____

d. Others (please specify) __

(4) What, according to you, are some of the main problems of the upazila scheme in its present form?

a. Personality conflict __

b. Inability of elected members/officials to understand local problems __

c. UZPs lack the power to influence officials in respect of transfer and promotion __

d. Others (please specify) __

(5) In the light of your experience, please mention some means for improvement (rank your answer)

a. Training needed for the bureaucracy __

b. Training needed for the elected members __

c. Training needed for both __

d. Others (please specify) __

e. Members of the central bureaucracy, posted at the upazila level, should be placed under the control of the UZP __

f. Local governments, including the UZP, should be run without the involvement of the central bureaucracy __

g. Others (please specify) __

(6) How would you evaluate the upazila as an organizational arrangement?

a. Not bad __

b. Bad __

c. Good __

d. Very good __

e. Others (please specify) __

Section F:

(1) Do you think that the Deputy Commissioner still has excess power with regard to upazila administration?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

(2) If yes, in what fields?

a.

b.

c.

(3) Do you think that elections for the Upazila Parishads and the Union Parishads should be held on the same day?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

Section G:

(1) Is there any need for the army to participate in the upazila administration?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

(2) If yes, how can their participation be secured?

a. by giving them voting rights at the UZP ____

b. by giving observer status ____

c. by making the army available to the upazila administration without a & b. ____

d. Others (please specify) ____

Section G:

(1) Is people's participation necessary for planning and plan implementation?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

(2) If yes,

a. In planning ____

b. In implementation ____

c. In both ____

(2) If people's participation in local affairs is not adequate, how can that be increased?

a. By increasing the literacy rate ____

b. By publicity and consciousness raising ____

c. By the electoral process (regular elections at the national and local levels)

d. Others (please specify) ____

Section H:

(1) Do you think that the quality of education is spreading, as a result of decentralization?

a. No increase ____

b. Little increase ____

c. Increasing significantly ____

d. Others (please specify) ____

(2) Do you think that decentralization is helping the eradication of adult literacy?

- a. Not at all ____
- b. Helping significantly ____
- c. Some help ____
- d. Others (please specify)

(3) Is the existing education system helpful in promoting a sense of awareness about the need for agricultural and rural development?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____

(4) What according to you are some of the main problems facing the education system at the upazila level? (Please rank your answer).

- a. Education is expensive ____
- b. Existing education fails to highlight national problems, especially rural problems ____
- c. Lack of trained teachers and teaching equipment ____
- d. Lack of central control over educational institutions by local governments ____
- e. Others (please specify) ____

(5) In the light of your experience, please suggest some solutions to the main problems.

- a. Free distribution of books among primary school students ____
- b. Partial local government control over administration and expenses of schools ____
- c. Emphasis on rural development in the school curriculum and training ____
- d. Others (please specify) ____

Section I:

(1) What, according to you, is the role of the non-governmental organizations, popularly known as NGOs at the local level?

- a. Necessary and constructive ____
- b. There are some needs ____
- c. Not very necessary ____
- d. Harmful ____
- e. Others (please specify) ____

(2) Do NGOs want to interfere in the affairs of the upazila administration?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____

(3) If yes, which NGOs?

- a. National ____
- b. Foreign ____
- c. Both ____

(4) Do NGOs co-ordinate their various activities (e.g., relief, health and family planning, education) with the upazila administration?

- a. Yes ____
- b. No ____

(5) Is there any need for co-ordination between NGOs and government organizations and local government?

(6) Please mention some main problems that are caused by the NGOs at the local level

- a. NGOs ignore complexities of the local problems ____
- b. NGO solutions to local problems are ad hoc and temporary ____

- c. NGOs are enhancing social inequality ____
- d. Lack of co-ordination between local government and NGO activities is causing a serious problem ____
- e. Others (please specify) ____

Section J:

(1) Have you received any training after assuming office at the upazila level?

a. yes ____

b. No ____

(2) If yes, please mention the name of the institute and the duration of the training received each time

Name of the Institute

Duration of Training

(3) If the answer to question 2 is yes, is the training helping you perform your duties better, especially in planning and plan implementation matters?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

c. Others (please specify) ____

(4) Do you think that training is necessary for performing duties at the upazila level?

a. Yes ____

b. No ____

c. Others (please specify) ____

Appendix 2: Zia's 19-Points

1. To preserve the independence, integrity and sovereignty of the State at all cost.
2. To reflect in all spheres of our national life the four fundamental principles of the Constitution, i.e, complete faith in and reliance on the Almighty Allah, Democracy, Nationalism and Socialism meaning economic and social justice.
3. To build ourselves into a self-reliant-nation through all possible means.
4. To ensure people's participation at all levels of administration, development programmes and in the maintenance of law and order.
5. To strengthen rural economy and thus the national economy by according priority to agricultural development.
6. To make the country self-sufficient in food and ensure that nobody has to starve.
7. To step up cloth production so as to ensure supply of at least coarse cloth for everybody.
8. To take all possible measures so that no one remains homeless.
9. To rid the country of the curse of illiteracy.
10. To ensure minimum medical care for everybody.
11. To place women at their rightful position in the society and to organise and inspire the youths for nation building.
12. To give necessary incentives to the private sectors for the economic development of the country.
13. To improve the condition of the workers and develop healthy employer-worker relations in the interest of increased production.
14. To create an urge for public service and nation building among the government employees and improve their financial condition.

15. To check population explosion.
16. To build up friendship based on equality with all countries and specially strengthen the relations with the Muslim Countries.
17. To decentralise the system of administration and development and strengthen local government.
18. To establish a social system based on justice and fairplay and free from corruption.
19. To safeguard the rights of all citizens irrespective of religion, colour and sect and consolidate national unity and solidarity.

[Source: M. Anisuzzaman, Bangladesh: Public Administration and Society (Dacca: Bangladesh Books International, 1979), pp. 49-51]

Appendix 3: UPAZILA PROJECT PROFORMA (UPP)

1. Name of project:
2. Implementing agency:
3. Nature, purpose, importance and justification:
4. Total cost and annual phasing:
5. Major physical items of work with estimated cost:

Quantity. Cost.

(a) Land

(b) Labour

(c) Materials:

(i) Bricks

(ii) Cement

(iii) Steel

(iv) Other items

(d) Transportation

(e) Land development

(f) Others

6. Implementation period:
 - (a) Date of commencement
 - (b) Date of completion

7. Location of the project:

8. Source of financing:

(a) Government

(b) Local contribution

(c) Others

9. Modes of implementation: contract/otherwise

10. Manpower requirement:

(a) Skilled

(b) Unskilled

11. Arrangements for maintenance of project work or facilities after completion:

(i) Annual requirement of staff and their training

(ii) Annual requirement of spares and consumables and other materials for maintenance and repairs.

(iii) Annual recurring cost.

(iv) Proposed mode of financing the recurring costs and securing the necessary manpower and skills.

12. Is there a similar project of the national government or regional body in the Upazilla? If so, the reason for undertaking the proposed project may be indicated.

13. What other complementary investments by the Upazilla Parishad or national government are necessary for deriving full benefit out of the proposed investment?

14. Does the project require acquisition of land? If so, what arrangements have been made for land acquisition for the project.

15. Estimated/expected benefit due to implementation of the project:

- (a) In terms of money
- (b) In terms of employment
- (c) Socio-economic well-being (please describe)
- (d) Estimated benefit/cost ratio:

16. How did the project idea originate?

17. Has any survey/study been made before initiating the project?

18. Does the project strictly adhere to the guidelines for undertaking development schemes by the Upazilla Parishad?

.....
Signature of the Sponsoring Authority

[Source: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Manual on Upazila Administration, Vol. II, (Dhaka, 1983), pp. 31-32.]

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