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Abdul Karim Masnad-I-All Isa Khan

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Aslam Bhuiyan Social Mobility Studies in India & Bangladesh

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Masnad-I-Ali Isa Khan

Abdul Karim

Isa Khan was the chief of the Bhuiyans who put up stiff resistance against the Mughal conquest of Bengal. Isa Khan fought successfully against Akbar's generals and did not submit till his death in 1599 A.D. His sons also opposed the Mughal aggression though they were compelled to surrender to Islam Khan Chishti, the vigorous subahdar of Jahangir. Isa Khan's heroism was recognised by the Mughal historian Abul Fazl. He says,

"The tract of country on the east called Bhati is reckoned a part of this province (Bangalah or Bengal). It is ruled by Isa Afghan and the Khutba is read and the coin struck in the name of his present Majesty ... Adjoining it is an extensive tract of country inhabited by the Tipperah tribes. The name of the ruler is Bijoy Manik."¹

Here Abul Fazal describes Isa Khan as an independent ruler. He says that Isa Khan read Khutba and struck coin in the name of Akbar, but this statement has been made only to save the prestige of his master Akbar. It is needless to say that no coin of Isa Khan has so far been discovered, not to speak of any coin issued by him (Isa Khan) in the name of Akbar. It may also be noticed that, while telling about Isa Khan, Abul Fazl also, speaks of Bijoy Manikya, the independent King of Tippera. In the *Akbarnamah*, Abul Fazl writes about Isa Khan as follows:

"Isa Khan, Zamindar of Bhati spent his time in dissimulation Isa acquired fame by his ripe judgement and deliberateness and made the 12 Zamindars of Bengal subject to himself. Out of foresight and cautiousness, he refrained from waiting upon the rulers of Bengal, though he rendered service to them and sent them presents. From a distance, he made use of submissive language."²

Here Abul Fázl is more clear about Isa Khan's position, strategy and foresight. It is stated that Isa Khan never visited the court of Bengal Kings (meaning pre-Mughal Afghan Sultans, particularly the Karranis and more particularly Daud Khan Karrani), he rendered them service from a distance and showed allegiance without actually waiting upon them. It is also clear from this statement that Isa Khan was a powerful Bhuiyan in the time of the Karranis and particularly Daud Khan Karrani. (It will be seen later in this paper that at the time of Daud Karrani, Isa Khan was holding only the Sarail Pargana, which was the source of his power). Secondly, Abul Fazl

clearly states that Isa Khan became the chief of the Bara Bhuiyans of Bengal, he made them "subject to himself". So in strategy and foresight, Isa Khan may be compared with Sulaiman Karrani, who was an independent King, but did neither read the Khutba nor struck coins in his own name. Isa Khan also did not assume independence, though he was more or less independent in his area. The English traveller Ralph Fitch said in 1585.³

"They be all hereabouts rebels against their King Zebal dim Echebar (Jalaluddin Akbar). For here are so many rivers and islands that they flee from one to another, whereby his horsemen cannot prevail against them Sinnergan (Sonargaon) is a town six leagues (i.e. 18 miles) from Serrepore (Sripur) The chief king of all these countries is called Isa can (Isa Khan), and he is chief of all other kings"

Ralph Fitch has given a correct location of territory of Isa Khan and his position vis-a-vis the Mughal emperor Akbar. It may be stated with confidence that Isa Khan was the chief of all those Bhuiyans of Eastern Bengal who fought against the Mughals or those who stood bravely against the Mughal aggression. Henry Beveridge says (In *Akbarnamah*, Vol. III).

"we are told more than once of his (Isa Khan's) making submission and sending presents. But he was never really subdued and his swamps and creeks enabled him to preserve his independence as affectually as the Aravalli Hills protected Rana Pratap of Udaipur."⁴

The history of Isa Khan, the chief of the Bara Bhuiyans is still in darkness. The Muslims are known for their historical consciousness; there is no dearth of contemporary historical works for the Sultans of Delhi or Mughal emperors. But, unfortunately, no contemporary history, giving a connected history of Bengal, has so far been discovered. So there is a complete absence of contemporary writing in Bengal about the Bara Bhuiyans, or their chief, Isa Khan. The little that is known about Isa Khan is either through the writings of Mughal historian or through the traditional account current in Bengal.

Isa Khan's descendants are still living in Haibatnagar and Jangalbari (near Kishorganj) of the erstwhile greater Mymensingh district. They still hold the title of Diwan, but they do not possess any materials throwing light on the life and activities of Isa Khan. In the late 19th century, James Wise enquired in the family, but the result was not encouraging. He could collect the traditional accounts and a few sanads of the time of Shah Shuja and Azimush-Shan. The descendants got a book written by Pandit Kali Kumar Chakravarti and Munshi Rajchandra Ghose. This is a booklet entitled *Masnadalir Itihas* and published in 1298 B.S. (1892 A. D.). This is a poor attempt lacking in historical insight and is full of fables and fictions.

"Those whom nature endows with qualities above the common run and on whom future smiles, find themselves taken up as heroes of popular legends in our country even during their life-time.

The greatest obstacle in the way of Akbar's aggressive imperialism in Eastern India, a stubborn fighter for independence to the last of his day, it is no wonder that Isa Khan's career would exert a powerful influence on popular fancy and tales and fables would circulate in the country with Isa Khan as their hero. The village poets took up the theme and composed rustic ballads which, set to music, lighted up the evening hours of the stalwart farmers of Eastern Bengal after their all-day-long hard work in the field under a scorching sun. Many such romantic poems on Isa Khan's wars and love are still current in Eastern Bengal."⁵

One such ballad is "Dewan Isa Khan Masnadali" published by D.C. Sen in his Part II, Vol. II of Mymensingh Ballads. So it has become rather difficult to find out truth in such popular legends. But historians have persistently tried to reconstruct the history of the Bara Bhuiyans. Of those who have achieved some success in their attempts names of James Wise, H. Blochmann, Henry Beveridge and N. K. Bhattasali deserve special mention. This paper has been prepared chiefly with the help of the *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnamah* of Abul Fazl, *Rajmala*, the official history of the kings of Tippera and the researches made by the previous writers mentioned above.

In 1874, James Wise collected a little information about the early life and family history of Isa Khan. He writes as follows:

"The family tradition is that during the reign of Husain Shah (1493 to 1520) Kali Das Gajdani, a Bais Rajput of Oudh, became a Muhammadan, and received the title of Sulaiman Khan. He afterwards married a daughter of the reigning monarch. He is said to have been killed in battle by Salim Khan and Taj Khan. He left three children, Isa, Ismail and a daughter afterwards known as Shahinsha Bibi. Their father being slain, the two sons were taken prisoners and sold as slaves. They were subsequently traced to Turan, whence they were brought back by their uncle Qutbuddin."⁶

"Isa Khan is said to have married Fatimah Khatun, a cousin of his own, and grand-daughter of Husain Shah of Bengal."⁷ In his *Akbarnamah*, Abul Fazl also gives a little information about Isa Khan's early and family life. He says,

"The father of this chief (bumi=bhumi or Bhowmik or Bhuiyan) belonged to the Bais tribe of Rajputs. In that fluvial region (i.e. Bhati) he continually displayed presumption and refractoriness. In the time of Salim Khan, Taj Khan and Dariya Khan went to that country with large forces and after many contests he surrendered. In a short while, he again rebelled. They managed by a trick to get hold of him and sent him to the abode of annihilation and sold his two sons Isa and Ismail to merchants. When the cup of Salim Khan's life was full, and Taj Khan became predominant in Bengal, Qutbuddin the paternal uncle of Isa obtained glory by good service and by making diligent search, brought back both brothers from Turan."⁸

There is agreement between the above accounts collected by James Wise and given by Abul Fazl, but, unfortunately, very little is known from them. What seems very probable from these accounts, is that Isa Khan's father was a Rajput and belonged to the Bais tribe,⁹ and that the family originally came from Oudh. According to James Wise, Isa Khan's father's name was Kalidas Gajdani, who on being

converted to Islam, took the name of Sulaiman Khan. In the reign of Salim Shah (Islam Shah), son of Sher Shah, Isa Khan's father rebelled, but when attacked by Taj Khan and Dariya Khan, he submitted. But he (Isa's father) rebelled again. The Sultan's army got hold of him by a trick and killed him, and sold his two sons, Isa and Ismail, to merchants. Later Qutbuddin, his uncle searched both Isa and Ismail out; and got both the brothers back from Turan. Thereafter, Isa Khan rose to power and assumed leadership of the Bara Bhuiyans of Bengal.

Abul Fazl does not give the name of Isa Khan's father. In James Wise, it is Kalidas Gajdani,¹⁰ and on being Muslim, he took the name of Sulaiman Khan in Eastern Bengal Ballad, and *Masnadali Itihas*, compiled under the patronage of Isa Khan's descendants, also this name is given. According to Wise, Kalidas Gajdani (or sulaiman Khan) married the daughter of Hussain Shah (Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, 1493-1519 A.D.), but according to *Masnadali Itihas*, Kalidas's father-in-law's name was Jalal Shah and according to Eastern Bengal Ballad, the name is Jalaluddin. Though none of these three sources are contemporary or authentic, there is agreement among them in one point, and that is Kalidas Gajdani accepted Islam, took the name of Sulaiman Khan and married the daughter of a Sultan of Bengal. In one account, the Sultan's name is Husain Shah, in another it is Jalal Shah and in the third it is Jalaluddin. To ascertain the name of the Sultan whose daughter was married to Sulaiman Khan, the following chronology of the then history of Bengal should be considered:

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 1493 A.D. | - | Accession of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah. |
| 1519 A.D. | - | death of Husain Shah and accession of his son Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah. |
| 1531 A.D. | - | death of Nusrat Shah and accession of his son Alauddin Firuz Shah. |
| 1532 A.D. | - | Firuz Shah was killed and his uncle Ghiyas-uddin Mahmud Shah ascended the throne. |
| 1538 A.D. | - | Sher Shah occupied Gaud after supplanting Mahmud Shah. |
| 1545 A.D. | - | death of Sher Shah and accession of his son Salim Shah (Islam Shah). |
| 1552 A.D. | - | death of Salim Shah. |
| 1552 A.D. | - | Shamsuddin Muhammad Shah Ghazi, Sultan of Bengal. |
| 1554 A.D. | - | death of Shamsuddin Muhammad Shah and accession of his son Ghiyasuddin Bahadur. |

- 1560 A.D. - death of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur and accession of his brother Ghiyasuddin Jalal Shah.
- 1563 A.D. - death of Ghiyasuddin Jalal Shah.
- 1563 A.D. - Sulaiman Karrani assumes power.
- 1572 A.D. - death of Sulaiman Karrani.
- 1575 A.D. (towards the end) - first encounter of Isa Khan with the Mughals and the retreat of the Mughal navy.

The above chronology has been prepared with the help of contemporary coins, inscriptions and historical literature. In this chronology, there is only one king bearing the name Jala Shah or Jalaluddin and he is Ghiyasuddin Jalal Shah, son of Shamsuddin Muhammad Shah Ghazi and brother of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah of the independent Sur dynasty of Bengal. Ghiyasuddin Jalal Shah ruled from 1560 to 1563 A.D. So he cannot be identified with the father-in-law of Kalidas Gajdani (Sulaiman Khan), because Kalidas Gajdani was killed in the reign of Salim Shah during the years 1545-1552 A.D. The rebellion and ultimate death of Kalidas Gajdani, therefore, took place about a decade before the reign of Ghiyasuddin Jalal Shah.

N. K. Bhattasali is of the opinion that Kalidas Gajdani (Sulaiman Khan) married the daughter of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah (1532-1538 A.D.), the last of the Husain Shahi rulers of Bengal. Bhattasali says, "What led Kalidas to rebel again and again in the reign of Islam Shah? From his repeated rebellions, it appears as if he had particular animosity against the reigning family. Sher Shah became master of Bengal after ousting Sultan Mahmud Shah, the last of the Huseini Sultans. This took place in 1538 A. D. Rebellion or insubordination was inopportune during the vigorous rule of Sher Shah upto 1545 A.D. Kalidas's rebellion came in the next and comparatively weaker (sic) reign of Islam Shah. The rebellion of Kalidas looks like an attempt to reestablish the lost political power of the Huseini dynasty ousted by Sher Shah. Jalal Shah whose daughter was married to Kalidas had used Ghiyasuddin as his first name.¹¹ Mahmud Shah also had Ghiyasuddin as his first name. We have seen above that Jalal Shah cannot be thought of as the Sultan whose daughter Kalidas may have married. The only Ghiyasuddin *before Islam Shah* who had a reign long enough and who came only a few years before Islam Shah is Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah and possibly he was the father-in-law of Kalidas. With the massacre of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah's sons by the son of Sher Shah after the capture of Gaur, Kalidas as the husband of a daughter of Mahmud Shah, possibly considered himself *de jure* successor to the kingdom of Mahmud Shah and as such entitled to rebel against the usurping family."¹²

According to the tradition collected by James Wise, Kalidas Gajdani (Sulaiman Khan) married the daughter of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah. The arguments on which Bhattasali thinks Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah to have been the father-in-law of Kalidas, the same arguments are valid to say that Kalidas may have married the daughter of Alauddin Husain Shah. Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah was the son of Husain Shah and Sher Shah dispossessed this dynasty. So Kalidas rebelled again and again to avenge the overthrow of his father-in-law's family. Both conclusions are probable, i.e. it was probable for Kalidas to marry the daughter of either Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah or Alauddin Husain Shah. But from another consideration, it seems more probable that Kalidas married the daughter of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah. The later reigned from 1532 to 1538 A.D. All sources agree that Kalidas married the daughter of the Sultan when the Sultan was reigning. So Kalidas or Sulaiman must have married in between 1532 to 1538 A.D. On this calculation, when Sulaiman was killed during the reign of Islam Shah Sur, Isa Khan must have been 12/13 years old or at the most he was 15, and when in 1599 A.D. Isa Khan died he was 64/65 years old. This chronology fits in with the eventful life of Isa Khan. On the contrary, if Sulaiman married the daughter of Alauddin Husain Shah, who died in 1519 A.D. Isa Khan would have been 32/33 years old during the death of his father and more than eighty on his death in 1599 A.D. According to traditional accounts, before death, Isa Khan engaged Man Singh in a single combat and defeated him. Whether this is true or not (it is not supported by any contemporary source), it is true that there were several contests between Isa Khan and the Mughals in 1596-97 A.D. and Isa Khan showed extraordinary valour in these battles.¹³ It is not possible for a man of 80, to take active part in battles. So it is probable that Sulaiman Khan (Kalidas) married the daughter of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah and Bhattasali's conclusion may be accepted.

From the above discussion, we may derive some facts about the early life and family of Isa Khan. The founder of the family (so far known) was Dhanapat Singh, his son Bhagirath came from Oudh to Bengal to seek fortune. Bhagirath's son Kalidas became a Diwan under Bengal Sultan. Kalidas became a Muslim, took the Muslim name Sulaiman Khan and married the daughter of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah. He had two sons, Isa and Ismail and one daughter, Shahinsha Bibi. Isa Khan married Fatimah Khatun, a grand-daughter of the same Sultan, so Isa Khan married his cousin sister. Sulaiman Khan rebelled at least twice during the reign of Salim Shah (Islam Shah) and was ultimately killed. Isa and Ismail were taken as captives and sold to merchants. Later, Isa's uncle Qutbuddin brought the brothers back from Turan, in about 1563-64 A.D. Thereafter Isa Khan, embarked upon his successful career.

It may be assumed that Isa Khan on return got possession of his father's zamindari. As his father was a Diwan, was entitled Khan, was son-in-law of a Sultan, and was powerful enough to challenge the Imperial Sur Sultan, he must have been in possession of a big land-estate. This big estate came into Isa Khan's possession. But it is not possible to ascertain where Sulaiman Khan's estate lay. From the *Rajmala*, it is however, known that during the early part of Isa Khan's rise to power, he was the Zimandar of Sarail Paragana. During this time, Isa Khan's life and career is connected with the history of Tippera. So to discuss the early career of Isa Khan, it is necessary to discuss the contemporary history of Tippera. It has been stated above that while mentioning the name of Isa Khan, Abul Fazl also referred to the King Bijoy Manikya of Tippera. The chronology of some kings of Tippera, contemporary of Isa Khan, as follows:¹⁴

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 1. Bijoy Manikya | - | 1540 - 1571 A. D. |
| 2. Ananta Manikya | - | 1571 - 1572 A.D. (son of No. 1
but he was killed by his
father-in-law Udaya Manikya
who became king). |
| 3. Udaya Manikya | - | 1572 - 1576 A.D. |
| 4. Jaya | - | 1576 - 1577 A.D. (son of No. 3). |
| 5. Amar Manikya | - | 1577 - 1586 A. D. (brother of
No. 1.) |
| 6. Rajdhar Manikya | - | 1586 - 1600 A. D. (son of No. 5) |

These six Kings of Tippera were contemporary of Isa Khan. Isa Khan rose to power towards the end of the reign of Bijoy Manikya and died one year before the death of Rajdhar Manikya. It is known from the *Rajmala* that Isa Khan first established contact with Tippera during the reign of Amar Manikya. During this time Isa Khan, the Zamindar of Sarail, was attacked by the Mughals, but being defeated, Isa Khan sought help from the king of Tippera. Hearing that the Tippera King was sending military help to Isa Khan, the Mughals retreated.¹⁵ Giving this account the *Rajmala* clearly states that Isa Khan was the Zamindar of Sarail. The name Sarail still exists and so it is not difficult to determine the geographical location of Sarail. It stands on the Meghna, north of Brahmanbaria. On the other side of Sarail, opposite Meghna lies the Joanshahi Paragana of Mymensingh. So it is clear that Mughal warfare against Isa Khan took place on both sides of the Meghna river. No date is given in the *Rajmala* for this warfare, but in the *Akbarnamah*, Abul Fazl places the first battle between the Mughal general Khan Jahan and Isa Khan towards the end of

1578 A.D. This battle took place on the river Meghna in a place called Kastul or Kathail near Astagram. It appears very probable that both *Rajmala* and *Akbarnamah* refer to the same battle. So in 1578 A.D. we find Isa Khan as the Zamindar of Sarail and it may also be stated with certainty that Isa Khan first rose to power in Sarail on the river Meghna.

The next reference to Isa Khan is in 1580 A.D. Amar Manikya, the King of Tippera needed labour for causing the excavation of a big tank, called Amar Sagar. He requested the Zamindars of Eastern Bengal to send labourers and the following Zamindars sent the number of labourers mentioned against each:¹⁶

1. Chand Rai of Vikrampur	700	labourers.
2. Basu Zamindar of Bacla	700	"
3. Ghazi of Salai Goalpara	700	"
4. Zamindar of Bhowal	1000	"
5. Zamindar of Astagram	500	"
6. Zamindar of Ran Bhowal	1000	"
7. Zamindar of Bariachang	500	"
8. Isa Khan of Sarail	1000	"
9. Zamindar of Bhulua	1000	"

Isa Khan of Sarail sent one thousand labourers along with other Zamindars, but Fateh Khan, Zamindar of Taraf in Sylhet refused to send. So Amar Manikya got angry with Fateh Khan and invaded his territory. Here we get the third reference to Isa Khan, because in the war between Fateh Khan of Taraf and Amar Manikya, King of Tippera. Isa Khan led the navy of Tippera against Fateh Khan of Taraf. Fateh Khan was made captive and brought to Tippera. In the *Rajmala*, there is a long description of this war and the valiant role, Isa Khan and others had played. Fortunately we get the date of this war. Amar Manikya issued coin commemorating the conquest of Taraf. The coin is described below:

Obverse: "Srihatta Vijayi Sri Srijutamar Manikya Deva

Reverse: Sri Amaravati Davau Saka 1503"

(The doubly illustrious Amara Manikya Deva, conqueror of Sylhet and Queen Amaravati, Saka 1503/1581 A.D.).

So we know for certain that Amar Manikya conquered Taraf in 1581 A.D., and Isa Khan took an active part in the battle.

From the above discussion, we may determine three events of Isa Khan's

career. 1st, in 1578 A.D. the Mughals attacked Isa Khan, the latter being defeated sought help from Amar Manikya of Tippera. 2nd, in 1580 A.D. Isa Khan, along with other Zamindars sent labourers to Amar Manikya for excavating the big tank known as Amar Sagar. 3rd, in 1581 A.D. Isa Khan, as a naval chief of Tippera King Amar Manikya, fought against Fateh Khan, Zamindar of Taraf in Sylhet. It may be noted here that during this time, Isa Khan was in friendly relations with the King of Tippera.¹⁷

Masnad-i-Ali title of Isa Khan

Isa Khan's title was Masnad-i-Ali. Among the seven cannons discovered from Diwanbagh, on the bank of the river Sitalakhya and a few miles away from the city of Dhaka, one cannon belonged to Isa Khan. The cannon, now being preserved in the National Museum, Dhaka, bears the following inscription in Bengali:¹⁸

Sarkar Srijut Isa Khan

Masnadalvi San Hijri

1002

(Sarkar Srijut Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ali, in the year 1002 A. H./1593-94 A.D.)

The cannon is dated 1002 A.H. or 1593 A.D. So Isa Khan got or assumed the title of Masnad-i-Ali sometimes before that date. There are three different opinions about the receipt or taking this title. These are discussed below:

The tradition collected by James Wise:¹⁹

"When Man Singh invaded Bengal about 1595, he advanced to Egara Sindhu and besieged the garrison of the fort. Isa Khan hastened to its relief, but his troops were disaffected and refused to fight. He, however, challenged Man Singh to single combat, stipulating that the survivor should receive peaceable possession of Bengal. Man Singh accepted the challenge and its conditions, but when Isa Khan rode into the field, he recognised in his opponent a young man, the son-in-law of the Raja. They fought and the latter was slain. Upbraiding Man Singh for his cowardice, Isa Khan returned to his camp. Scarcely had he done so, when word was brought to him that Man Singh himself was in the field. He again mounted and galloped to the ground, but refused to engage with his opponent until satisfied of his identity. Being assured that Man Singh was opposed to him, the combat began. In the first encounter Man Singh lost his sword. Isa Khan offered his, but without accepting it Man Singh dismounted. His adversary did the same, and dared him to have a wrestling bout. Instead of acceding to his wish, Man Singh, struck by the generosity and chivalry of the man, embraced him and claimed him as a friend. After entertaining Isa Khan, he loaded him with presents on his taking leave.

"The behaviour of the Hindu prince excited the disapprobation of many of his followers, and the Rani was so indignant at his pusillanimous conduct that she vowed she would never return to court, where he would be put to death and she be made a widow.

"This domestic quarrell, however, was quelled by Isa Khan, who volunteered to return with Man

Singh to Agra and trust to the magnanimity of the emperor for pardon.

"On their arrival at Agra, Isa Khan was thrown into prison but when the story of the combat at Igarah Sindhu was told, the emperor ordered his immediate release, conferred on the titles of Diwan and Masnad-i-Ali, and gave him a grant of numerous parganahs in Bengal".

In the above tradition there is talk of Isa Khan's war with Man Singh. Isa Khan was defeated, his troops refused to fight. So Isa Khan expressed the desire to engage Man Singh in single combat. In this tradition Man Singh has been made a coward and Isa Khan a hero. When in the single combat Man Singh was defeated, his queen got angry at his cowardice and refused to go back to Akbar because she was sure that the emperor would surely put Man Singh to death and she would be made a widow. Again, Isa Khan's magnanimity saved them, he went to Agra where the emperor gave him the title the Diwan and Masnad-i-Ali and granted him parganahs as Jagir.

Evidence of Eastern Bengal Ballad:²⁰

Almost the same story has been told in the Ballad, but here there is no reference to single combat between Isa Khan and Man Singh. Rather it is stated that Man Singh got hold of Isa Khan by a trick and sent him to the imperial court. But there the emperor became satisfied with Isa Khan and honoured him with the title of Masnad-i-Ali and granted him 22 parganahs on payment of a revenue of rupees ten thousand.

According to the above two accounts, Isa Khan went to the court of Akbar who gave him the title of Masnad-i-Ali. But the evidence of these sources is totally unacceptable. Abul Fazl clearly states that Isa Khan did not go to Agra or to the court of Akbar or to the court of Bengal Sultans, although he tendered submission from a distance when forced by circumstances. Giving the news of the death of Isa Khan, Abul Fazl writes, "One of the occurrences was the death of Isa Khan. He was a great land holder of Bengal. He had some share of prudence, but from somnolence of fortune, he did not come to court."²¹ On the face of this unequivocal statement of Abul Fazl, no one can say that Isa Khan went to the court of Akbar. Abul Fazl was a court historian of Akbar, he wrote his history under the patronage of the emperor; he would not have failed to mention such an important information as Isa Khan's visit to the court of the emperor. There is also no reason on the part of Abul Fazl to conceal such an important event. Bhattasali says,

"No statement can be more clear and it is inconceivable that Abul Fazl would needlessly conceal or forget to mention so important and, from imperial point of view, so welcome a piece of information, as Isa Khan's submission and his journey to the Mughal capital. I cannot admire the historical insight of those writers who, in the face of these overwhelming evidences, have taken as true history the puerile tradition about the single combat of Man Singh and Isa Khan, resulting in the latter's submission to Akbar and journey to Agra to receive the fabulous farman for the 22 Parganas."²²

There is a very important proof to say that the evidence of the above accounts of James Wise and Eastern Bengal Ballad is not true. This is the cannon inscription of Isa Khan. The main point in the evidence of Wise and Ballad is that after the fight (in Wise, single combat) between Man Singh and Isa Khan, the latter went to Agra and Akbar gave Isa Khan the title of Masnad-i-Ali. Now the dates of Man Singh's movement in Bengal are found in the *Akbarnamah*. Man Singh was appointed subahdar of Bengal on 17th March 1595 A.D. and he started for Bengal to assume charge of the Subahdari on 4th May, and he started for Bhati against Isa Khan in December of the same year. In the end of 1596, Himmat Singh, son of Man Singh plundered Egara Sindhu and on 3rd May, 1697 Man Singh's son, Durjan Singh attacked Katrabo, the capital of Isa Khan. In September 1597, Isa Khan attacked the Mughals at a little distance from Vikrampur. Isa Khan came out victorious and Durjan Singh was killed.²³ In the *Akbarnama* there is no mention of the single combat of Man Singh and Isa Khan. So Isa Khan already had the title of Masnad-i-Ali, at least six months before Man Singh was appointed subahdar of Bengal, and about eight months before Man Singh started for Bengal, at least fifteen months before Man Singh started for operations against Bhati, at least two years three months before Himmat Singh plundered Egara Sindhu, and at least three years before Durjan Singh was killed in battle against Isa Khan. So there is no doubt that Isa Khan had the title of Masnad-i-Ali, long before his fight against Man Singh and his children. There is, therefore, no basis for the evidence of James Wise and Ballad.

The next evidence of Isa Khan's Masnad-i-Ali title is found in the *Rajmala*, the history of Tippera. It has been stated above that, while a Zamindar of Sarail in 1578 A.D. Isa Khan was attacked by Khan Jahan, the Mughal general. Being defeated Isa Khan sought help from the Tippera King Amar Manikya. In the *Rajmala* it is further stated that Isa Khan went to the queen and called her mother. He drank the breast-washed water of the queen and then queen took him (Isa Khan) to be her own son. The queen requested the King to help Isa Khan. The King ordered his army to move and help Isa Khan and also gave him the title of Masnad-i-Ali.²⁴ On the basis of this unequivocal statement in the *Rajmala*, Bhattasali thinks that Isa Khan was given the title of Masnad-i-Ali by Amar Manikya, the king of Tippera. He says:

"As regards Isa Khan's title of Masnad-i-Ali, when the *Rajmala* expressly states that the title was given to him by Amar Manikya, I do not see why the statement should be disbelieved. No one can seriously contend that a powerful and independent king like Amar Manikya had not authority or power enough to confer a title on an Afghan protege."²⁵

Where there is a real dearth of source materials, the evidence of the *Rajmala* is extremely valuable, and Bhattasali has given it its due. The Manikya title of the Tippetra Kings was given by a Bengal Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah.²⁶ There are various examples of Muslim rulers conferring titles on the Hindu Rajas and

Maharajas. So it is not unreasonable to say that the king of Tippera gave the title of Masnad-i-Ali to Isa Khan. But the manner in which the information is presented in the *Rajmala* raises suspicion. At the time when Isa Khan is said to have been given the title by Amar Manikya, Isa Khan was simply a Zamindar of Sarail pargana. It has been said above that in 1578 Isa Khan being defeated by the Mughals sought help from the king of Tippera. What was the justification for giving title to a pargana Zamindar who went to the king seeking military help? Is it natural that the king gave the supplicant both military help and the title? Secondly, *Rajmala* was written by the court historians under the patronage of the kings. It is probably that the court historians exaggerated in favour of their patrons. Unless corroborated directly or indirectly by other sources, the evidence of the *Rajmala* cannot be accepted without question. Thirdly, the statements in the *Rajmala* also raise doubts. Isa Khan not only sought help from the king, this "Yavana" Zamindar also got entry into the harem, called the queen mother and drank the queen's breast-washed water. This is really questionable and so the evidence of the *Rajmala* cannot be accepted without hesitation.

M.A. Rahim gives the third theory about Isa Khan's Masnad-i-Ali title. He says that the title was given by Daud Khan Karrani. Daud Karrani, being defeated by Munim Khan in the battle of Tukaroi, signed a peace treaty with the Mughals on 3rd March 1575.²⁷ In October of the same year, Munim Khan died of plague at Gaur and at this news, Daud broke the peace treaty and attacked the Mughal army. On the other side, in Eastern Bengal, Isa Khan defeated the Mughal navy under Admiral Shah Bardi. It appears, therefore, that Isa Khan was loyal to Daud Karrani. Abul Fazl also says, "He (Isa Khan) rendered service to them (the rulers of Bengal, meaning pre-Mughal Sultans) and sent them presents, though he refrained from waiting upon them."²⁸ M.A. Rahim says, "The rulers to whom he rendered service could be no other than the Karranis. Isa Khan never rendered any service to Emperor Akbar. On the contrary, he defied the Mughal Emperor right from the beginning. It was in recognition of his services that Daud Karrani conferred on him the title of Masnad-i-Ali."²⁹

The opinion of M.A. Rahim also is not acceptable. We have seen above that until 1578, Isa Khan was a Zamindar of Sarail. Three years back in 1575 also, he was a Zamindar of Sarail, he was no more powerful than a pargana holder. That Daud Karrani gave the title Masnad-i-Ali to a pargana zamindar does not appear probable. Moreover, time was inopportune for Daud. During the time when Daud is said to have conferred the title on Isa Khan, he (Daud) himself was in a precarious condition. Breaking the peace treaty he was faced with the Mughal generals Khan Jahan and Todar Mal. In such precarious condition, whether Daud had time to think of honouring a zamindar of Eastern Bengal, who was of no use to him in his

impending war with the Mughals, is very doubtful. Moreover, Abul Fazl in his statement, quoted above, clearly says that Isa Khan never visited the court of kings. It means that Isa Khan also did not visit the court of Daud Karrani. There is no reason to believe that Daud Karrani should have conferred the title of Masnad-i-Ali on such a man.

Keeping in view the colourful life of Isa Khan, it seems very probable that Isa Khan himself assumed the title. The title Masnad-i-Ali was not new, it was an Afghan title, assumed by previous Afghan rulers. Though Isa Khan was not an Afghan, he lived in the Afghan tradition, and Abul Fazl actually called him an Afghan. So after a captive life in early years, and being a Zamindar of a pargana only in his youth, when he became the chief of the Bara Bhuiyans and became so powerful as to contest, on equal terms, the great Mughal generals, Isa Khan might have been tempted to assume the title of Masnad-i-Ali. When did Isa Khan become the chief of the Bara Bhuiyans of Eastern Bengal? From the *Akbarnamah*, we know that Shahbaz Khan's campaign of 1584 was chiefly directed against Isa Khan. The theatre of war spread in Dhaka, Sonargaon, Katrabo and Vikrampur. Katrabo, on the river Lakhya, was then Isa Khan's capital and so by 1584, Isa Khan became master of almost the whole of Bhati or Eastern Bengal. During this time, one of the chief allies of Isa Khan was Masum Khan Kabuli, a rebel Mughal captain. It appears that when the Mughal captains of Bengal and Bihar revolted against Akbar, and Bengal passed out of the hands of Akbar, Isa Khan took advantage to unite the Bhuiyans under him and to become the chief of the Bara Bhuiyans. Akbar defeated the rebel Mughal captains, the rebels one by one submitted, but Masum Khan Kabuli did not submit until his death. Masum Khan Kabuli assumed independence, took the title of Sultan and issued inscription in his own name in 989 A.H. (1581-82 A.D.)³⁰ Masum Khan Kabuli did not receive the title of Sultan from any one, he assumed it himself. Discussing Shahbaz Khan's campaigns of 1584 Abul Fazl says, "Isa acquired fame by his ripe judgement and deliberateness and made the 12 Zamindars of Bengal subject to himself."³¹ So by 1584 Isa Khan got the leadership of the Bara Bhuiyans. In 1586, Ralph Fitch also said that Isa Khan was the chief of the Bhuiyans, in his words, "The chief king of all these countries is called Isa can, and he is chief of all other kings."³² So it may be concluded safely that Isa Khan expanded his power during the years 1580-84, and he did so taking advantage of the revolt of the Mughal captains against Akbar, as a result of which Akbar's hold over Bengal totally eclipsed during 1580-82. We have seen above that Isa Khan's ally Masum Khan assumed independence and took the title of Sultan in 1581-82. Could not Isa Khan do the same thing? Could he not assume the title himself? We believe that Isa Khan assumed the title himself, being influenced by Masum Khan Kabuli. As Isa Khan rose to power by his own merit, expanded his territory and became the chief of the Bara

Bhuiyans by his prowess of arms, so he assumed his title himself. There was no need of conferring the title on him by any one else. Though there is no direct evidence in support of this conclusion, Isa Khan's troublous early life, successful active life, and Abul Fazl's praise of his diplomatic and strategic skill, help us in arriving at this conclusion.

Extent of Isa Khan's territory

According to tradition, Isa Khan was the master of 22 parganas. We have seen above that according to James Wise, Akbar granted numerous parganas to Isa Khan and according to Eastern Bengal Ballad, Akbar granted Isa Khan 22 parganas on payment of a revenue of rupees ten thousand. We have also seen above that Isa Khan never visited the court of Akbar. So the question of Akbar's granting him numerous or 22 parganas does not arise. But there is little doubt that Isa Khan was the master of 22 or a little more or less number of parganas, because his warfare against the Mughals spread over almost the whole of Eastern Bengal. It may not be possible now to delimit the boundary of Isa Khan's territory, but it seems that the tradition making him master of 22 parganas is not very far from the truth. 22 parganas give a tentative area of Isa Khan's possessions, though the number 22 may not be wholly correct. Bhattasali says, "That Isa Khan ultimately made himself master of 22 parganas, is universally known and remembered and the memory of the public in general is not likely to err very much in this respect."³³

The names of Isa Khan's parganas are found in three sources, *Maimansingher Itihas* (History of Mymensingh) of Kedernath Majumdar; *Mymensingh District Gazetteer*; and "Dewan Isa Khaner Pala" in the Eastern Bengal Ballads. The three lists are given below side by side:

Maimensingher Itihas	District Gazetter	Eastern Bengal Ballad
1. Alapshahi	1. Alapsingh	1. Alapsingh
2. Mominshahi	2. Maimansingh	2. Maimansingh
3. Husenshahi	3. Husenshahi	3. Husenshahi
4. Bara Bazu	4. Bara Bazu	-
5. Merauna	-	-
6. Herauna	-	-
7. Kharana	-	-
8. Sher Ali	-	-
9. Bowal Bazu	5. Bhowal	4. Bhowal
10. Dhashkahania Bazu	-	-
11. Siyar Jalkar	-	-
12. Singda Merin	6. Singda	5. Singda

13. Singh Nusrat Ujjyal	7. Nasir Ujjyal	6. Nasir Ujjyal
14. Darji Bazu	8. Darji Bazu	7. Darji Bazu
15. Hajradi	9. Hajradi	8. Hajradi
16. Jafarshahi	10. Jafarshahi	9. Juanshahi
17. Balda Khal	11. Bardakhat and Bardakhat Magra	10. Bardakhat
18. Sonargaon	12. Sonargaon	11. Bardakhat Manra
19. Maheswardi	13. Maheswardi	12. Swarnagram
20. Paitkara	14. Paitkara	13. Maheswardi
21. Katraba	15. Katrabo and Kurikhai	14. Paitkara
22. Gangamandal	16. Gangamandal	15. Katrabo
	17. Kagmari	16. Gangamadal
	18. Atia	17. Sherpur
	19. Sherpur	18. Khaliajuri
	20. KHaliajuri	19. Joar Hosenpur
	21. Joar Husenpur	20. Joanshahi
	22. Joanshahi	21. Kurikhai

There is no complete uniformity in the three lists which is natural, because none of the lists is contemporary. With the passage of time names also changed. There are 21 names in the third list and the name Bara Bazu is absent in this list. The names Merauna, Herauna, Kharana and Sher Ali are found only in the first list: in the second and third list there is the name of Sherpur, Merauna, Harauna and Kharana are actually parts of Bara Bazu Pargana i.e. the number of parganas in the first list becomes short by three. Bara Bazu is a big pargana on both sides of the Brahmaputra; nowadays a greater portion of this pargana lies on the west bank of that river. The names of Kagmari and Atia are found only in the second list, but the name Pukharia is not found in any list. Pargana Pukharia is to the north of Tangail by the side of the Jumna channel and is formed with portions of Jamalpur, Sherpur and Nalitabari. In Sarkar Bazuha of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Pukaria is shown as a separate Pargana. This pargana must have been in the possession of Isa Khan, because in the midst of Isa Khan's territory no one else could have possessed one pargana. The absence of Pukharia pargana in the above lists prove that the lists are not absolutely correct. Siyar Jalkar is found in the first list only. In the Mughal system, revenues were divided into *mal* or land revenue and Siar or Sayer, i.e. all receipts except land revenues. Though Siyar Jalkar was a Mahal, it did not represent a territorial unit. So in the first list the number of parganas falls short by one more, and the number of parganas in the first list comes to 18 only. The name of Husenshahi pargana is found in all lists, but Joar Husenpur is found only in the second and the third list. Joar Husenpur is a small portion of Husensahi pargana. Bardakhat Magra of the second

list seems to be the same as Bardakhat Manra of the third list, these may be a small portion of Bardakhat pargana. Krikhai is a small pargana, it was situated in the middle of Joanshahi, Bardakhat and Maheswardi parganas. The presence of pargana Bhowal in these lists may be noticed. Ghazi Zamindar of Bhowal also fought against the Mughals and kept contact with Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan. So Bhowal could not form a part of the territory of Isa Khan. For this reason the pargana Bhowal of the lists may be taken to be a mistake for Ran Bhowal. It is to be particularly noted that the name of Sarail is absent in all these lists, though we have seen above that Sarail was the pargana from where Isa Khan rose up the ladder to fame and power. The absence of Sarail in the lists, is, therefore, another proof that the lists of parganas are not absolutely correct.

Were there two Isa Khans?

Kaliprasanna Sen, the editor of the *Rajmala* expressed the opinion that there were two Isa Khans, one Isa Khan of Khizrpur and the other Isa Khan of Sarail.³⁴ He gives the following reasons for holding such an opinion. First, Isa Khan of Sarail got the title of Masnad-i-Ali from Amar Manikya, the king of Tippera, while Isa Khan of Khizrpur got the title from the Mughal emperor Akbar. Secondly, in the list of 22 parganas of Isa Khan of Khizrpur, the name of Sarail pargana is absent. Thirdly, Kaliprasanna Sen has given two separate genealogies of Isa Khan and says that if they were not two different persons, the genealogy would have been the same. Needless to say that we have already discussed the first two arguments of the scholar. We have proved, I think conclusively, that Isa Khan never visited Akbar and so the question of Akbar's conferring the title on Isa Khan does not arise. We have also said that the lists of parganas as available in the three lists, may not be taken to be absolutely correct or wholly acceptable. The absence of the name of Sarail, therefore, does not help us to conclude either way. All the three lists have come down to us through only recent writings. The two genealogical tables supplied by Kaliprasanna Sen are not free from doubt. The one, said to be of Isa Khan of Khizrpur, does not mention the names of Musa Khan, and his brothers, i.e. sons of Isa Khan and Masum Khan, grandson of Isa Khan. But we know from contemporary sources like *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan and *Padshanama* of Abdul Hamid Lahori that they were sons and grand sons of Isa Khan. If the first list is so much defective, what is the guarantee that the second list is genuine.

Further information, though of later date, is available about Isa Khan's family of Sarail. In the Survey and Settlement Report, the tradition as handed down in the Sarail pargana is recorded as follows: "About the time of Isa Khan, Sarail pargana passed into the hands of the Dewan family, the first Zamindar Majlis Gazi being of Isa Khan's family."³⁵ It appears that when Isa Khan expanded his sphere of influence

influence in the whole Bhati region, he placed Sarail into the hands of one of his family members. That is why Majlis Gazi is said to have belonged to the family of Isa Khan. The wife of one Nur Muhammad of Sarail built a mosque in 1080 A.H. (1669-70 A.D.) in the reign of Aurangzib. Nur Muhammad is said to be the grand son of Majlis Ghazi and son of Majlis Shahbaz. If Nur Muhammad³⁶ lived in 1669-70 A.D. his grand father Majlis Ghazi may be taken to be a successor Isa Khan.³⁷ The relation between the two, i.e. Isa Khan and Majlis Ghazi cannot, however, be determined. There is a great probability that Majlis Ghazi of Sarail belonged to the family of Isa Khan and the question of having been two Isa Khans does not arise.

We have discussed above a few important points in the life and career of Isa Khan, the Chief of the Bara Bhuiyans of Eastern Bengal. These points are, his family, early life, rise to power, the title of Masnad-i-Ali and the extent of his territory. It has been stated above that Isa Khan died in September, 1599 A.D. Man Singh was then Subahdar of Bengal. Isa Khan never submitted to the Mughals but preserved independence till his death. After his death, his sons Musa Khan, Daud Khan, Abdullah Khan, Mahmud Khan and his nephew Alaol Khan continued their fight against the Mughals. From the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* we know that Musa Khan took his father's title of Masnad-i-Ali. Musa Khan and his brothers fought valiantly and ceaselessly but were forced to submit to the Mughals. After Musa Khan, his son Masum Khan and after his death his son Munawwar Khan remained loyal to the Mughals.

NOTES

1. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. II, tr. by Jarrett and Sarkar, p. 130.
2. *Akbarnamah*, vol. III, tr. H. Beveridge, pp. 376; 678.
3. Ralph Fitch: *Travels*, ed. by H. Ryley, London 1899, p. 93.
4. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (hereafter called *JASB*), 1904, p. 61.
5. N. K. Bhattasali: "Bengal Chief's Struggle" in *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. XXXV, 1928, No. 6 (hereafter referred to as Bhattasali), pp. 13-14.
6. Correctly 1519 A.D. *JASB*, 1874, No. 3, p. 210.
7. *JASB*, 1874, No. 3, p. 210.
8. *Akarnamah*, vol. III, tr H. Beveridge, p. 647.
9. "These Bais Rajputs are said to belong to Baiswara in Oudh. The name is given to several tracts of country in various parts of the United Provinces ... The most important of these include a number of parganas (traditionally twenty-two, in the eastern half of the Unao district, the western half of the Rai

Bareilly district and the extreme south of the Lucknow district, with a total area of about 2,000 square miles. The Bais Rajputs first came into prominence here in the 13th century ... are supposed to have come from Mungi Patan in the Deccan ... the tract has given its name to an eastern district of Hindi ... Its inhabitants still bear a reputation for bravery. *Imperial Gazetteer*, under the word Baiswara. 1908, p. 218. Mr. Crooke in his "North Western Provinces of India" says (p. 86) that the Bais Rajputs came from Rajputana. There is undoubtedly a Baiswara in Rajputana, but it is spelt Baiswara in *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnama*. In the former, it is included in the Sarkar of Sirohi (II, p. 276) and said to have been ruled by an independent chief of the family of the Rana of Menar. (II, p. 251)". (Bhattachali, p.14, note 6).

10. In the Eastern Bengal Ballad it is stated that Bhagirath, son of Dhanpat Singh, first came to Bengal from the *Paschim desh* (up country) to seek fortune. Ghiyasuddin, the then Sultan of Bengal, appointed him Diwan. After the death of Bhagirath, his son Kalidas got his father's post. This evidence may be accepted because it would not have been possible for an ordinary person to marry the daughter of a King. He must have been occupying a high post. Isa Khan's descendants in Haibatnagar and Jangalbari use the title Diwan with their names, but Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan were called Masnad-i-Ali. It is probable that Isa Khan's descendants took the title of Diwan, because the founders of the family, Bhagirath and Kalidas were holding that post. N. K. Bhattachali has collected some more information about the family. He writes as follows: "Tradition also says that Kalidas had a brother called Ramdas Gajdani. Some Kayastha families of eastern Mymensingh claim Ramdas as their forefather. Babu Joychandra Mahalanabis, the well-known compiler of some drawing books, is one of such claimants. Portions of his letter on the subject is quoted in translation below:

"I am communicating to you what I have heard from my father and grand-father.

"Ramdas Gajdani and Kalidas Gajdani were two brothers. The elder Ramdas was high officer (Dewan) of the Badsha. He used to give away (golden effigies of) elephants in daily worship and this acquired the name of Gajdani (i.e. the giver of elephants). After sometime they incurred the displeasure of the Badsha and had to fly from the country with their family. They migrated to Haripur in the Birbhum district with their family preceptor, but as Haripur did not prove an asylum safe enough, they settled the preceptor and themselves moved on to Kettaba in the Pargana of Maheswardi in the Dacca district ... I am 16th descent from Ramdas. It is said that Kalidas accepted Islam at Delhi and remained there, after having married the daughter of the Badsha ... His son is Isa Khan". (Bhattachali, pp. 15-16, note 7).

The above information collected by Bhattachali is no better than other traditional accounts. We know from this account that Kalidas had a brother named Ramdas and the informer claims himself to be a descendant of Ramdas. It may also be noted that in this account Ramdas has been given precedence over Kalidas, probably because the informer himself was connected with Ramdas. However, this information is not available either in the collection of James Wise or in Eastern Bengal Ballad. We cannot say there is no truth in this account, but it does not further our knowledge.

11. This statement of Bhattachali is not true. In the ballad, the name is Jalaluddin and not Ghiyasuddin. But in the ballad we find that Bhagirath, father of Kalidas came to Bengal and became Diwan in the reign of Ghiyasuddin. Bhagirath's son Kalidas got the post (of Diwan) of his father. But giving the account of Kalidas's marriage, in the ballad the name of the Sultan is Jalaluddin.
12. Bhattachali, p.17.
13. *JASB*, 1874, No. 3, p. 213. On 7th December, 1595 A.D. Mansingh started for Bhati from Rajmahal. In 1596-97, Isa Khan engaged the Mughals in several battles (*History of Bengal*, Vol. II,

ed. J.N. Sarkar, Dhaka 1984, pp. 211-12). If it is true that Isa Khan engaged Man Singh in single combat, the combat took place sometime in 1596-97. But the story of single combat seems to be a fabrication. The story is not found in any contemporary source.

14. The Chronology in the *Rajmala* is faulty, dates are wrong. So the Chronology has been prepared afresh with the help of coins and other reliable sources. The Chronology given here is prepared by Bhattasali and we agree with him.
15. *Rajmala*, ed. K.P. Sen, Vol. III, p. 192.
16. *Rajmala*, vol. III. p. 192; Bhattasali, p. 23.
17. Bhattasali, pp. 2-3, illustration no. 4.
18. *Ibid.*, illustration No. 7.
19. *JASB*, 1874, No. 3, pp. 213-14.
20. Kshitish Chandra Bhowmik ed.: *Prachin Purva Benga Gitika*, part VII, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 213-216.
21. *Akbarnamah*, vol. III, tr. H. Beveridge, p. 1140.
22. Bhattasali, p. 5.
23. *Akbarnamah*, vol. III tr. H. Beveridge, pp. 998, 1001, 1063, 1081-82.
24. *Rajmala*, Vol. III, ed. K.P. Sen, p.16.
25. Bhattasali, p. 24.
26. A. Karim, *Banglar Itihas (Sultani Amal)*, 2nd edition, Dhaka 1987, pp. 169-70.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-81.
28. *Akbarnamah*, vol. III, tr. H. Beveridge, p.161.
29. M.A. Rahim: *The History of Afghans in India*, p. 226.
30. Shamsuddin Ahmad: *Inscription of Bengal*, vol. IV, Rajshahi. 1960, pp. 259-60.
31. *Akbarnamah*, vol. III, tr. H. Beveridge, p. 648.
32. See Note 3, above.
33. Bhattasali, p. 8.
34. *Rajmala*, vol. III, ed. K. P. Sen, pp. 132-34.
35. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement operations in the District of Tippera*, 1915-1919, p. 76.
36. The mosque was built by Nur Muhammad's wife, he may not have been alive at that time. But even if he was dead by that time, there will not be a big gap between the death of husband and wife.
37. Bhattasali, p. 10, Note 4.

17. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10.
18. The evidence in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10, is not sufficient to establish the date of the death of the author. The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10, is not sufficient to establish the date of the death of the author.
19. The evidence in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10, is not sufficient to establish the date of the death of the author. The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10, is not sufficient to establish the date of the death of the author.
20. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10.
21. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10.
22. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10.
23. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 10.
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Referendum in Sylhet and the Radcliffe Award, 1947

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ABSTRACT

The object of the paper is to present an account of the problems, issues and circumstances leading to the Referendum in Sylhet and the implementation of the decision by the Bengal Boundary Commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe during the closing and the most crucial days of British Rule in the sub-continent. The referendum was proposed to ascertain whether the Muslim majority district of Sylhet, forming part of a predominantly non-Muslim province of Assam, would remain in India or join with East Bengal, the eastern wing of proposed Pakistan. The paper will endeavour to put the discussion on the theme of the referendum in all-Indian perspective. Among other points, the discussion will include (i) what led to the decision on referendum in Sylhet; (ii) the composition of the Boundary Commission and its terms of reference; (iii) processing of procedural formalities and the legal framework for referendum; (iv) decision on partition of Bengal; (v) the electioneering campaigns during the referendum, the role of the League and Congress leaders as well as the newspapers before, during and after the referendum; and (vi) the implementation of the results of the referendum. This is the first ever attempt to present a fuller paper covering all aspects of the referendum in Sylhet. The paper is based on Bengal and Assam Secretariat files, Mountbatten papers, official publications, contemporary studies and newspapers.

Historical Background

Though independence of the Indian sub-continent was the ultimate goal of the Indian National Congress (1885), and the All-India Muslim League (1906), the various attempts to evolve a federal constitution for India during the 1920's and 1930's acceptable to the two major political parties ended in *fiasco*. On 23 March 1940, the Muslim League redefined its constitutional objective by adopting at Lahore, what later on came to be known as the Pakistan Resolution, to fight for a separate homeland for the Muslims consisting of the Punjab, the NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan in the north-western, and Bengal and Assam in the north-eastern zones of India. During the Second World War (1939-45), the importance of India in the Allied war strategy and India's nationalist movement hastened the process of her independence. At the end of the war, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee decided to solve the Indian constitutional problem by taking firm steps and even

dropped hints to partition India, if necessary. As such, the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) was intended to work out a formula for transfer of power to Indian hands. But when the constitutional agreement between the Congress and the League became impossible, the British Government announced their firm commitment on 20 February 1947 to end the British rule in India by June 1948 and appointed Lord Mountbatten as the last Viceroy and Governor-General with full powers to devise ways and means so as to finally solve the Indian political issue. Lord Mountbatten approached the problem seriously, and by a process of hard bargaining and 'open diplomacy' with the Indian leaders arrived at the conclusion that the partition of India as well as of the provinces of Bengal and the Punjab (and also of Assam) was the only solution to the Indian problem. It was against this background that Mountbatten prepared a plan which, being endorsed by the Congress, the Muslim League and the British Parliament, had been cast in the form of a statement to be issued by His Majesty's Government on 3 June 1947. The plan provided the legal framework for the partition of India into two independent states, making clear provisions for the division of Bengal, the Punjab and Assam.¹

The district of Sylhet along with contiguous Cachar district formed part of Bengal until 1874. Before the next census (in 1881), they were transferred to the Chief Commissioner's province of Assam amidst loud protests against its inclusion in Assam as the people of Sylhet and Cachar wanted to remain in Bengal because of their linguistic and cultural links.² In 1905, when the new (Muslim majority) province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was created, Sylhet and Cachar were again included in the Chittagong Division of the new province, but its annulment in 1911 again transferred the districts to the province of Assam, and Sylhet remained a part of Assam till 1947.

Of Assam, which had been predominantly a non-Muslim Province (3,442,479 Muslims out of a total population of 10,204,733); only the district of Sylhet, contiguous to Bengal, was predominantly Muslim (1,892,117 out of total 3,116,602). However, because of historical ties and geo-physical consideration, the Lahore Resolution contemplated the inclusion of Assam in the proposed Pakistan scheme. The rationale of such inclusion was explained by Jinnah in clear terms when he submitted the League points to the Cabinet Mission on 12 May 1946. Jinnah claimed the whole of Assam together with the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab, the NWF Province, Sind, Baluchistan and Bengal to be grouped together as the Pakistan group. This was the minimum demands that the League could think of at the moment. Analysing the demand, Jinnah added that the Muslim majority had the right to decide their method of government according to their wishes. He argued that it was necessary to include in the scheme substantial areas where the Muslims were in a minority in order to make Pakistan administratively and economically viable.³ The

Congress memorandum, on the other hand, contested in to to the League demand emphatically stating: "in any event, Assam has obviously no place" in Jinnah's scheme of Pakistan.⁴

The Cabinet Mission examined the question of a separate and fully independent sovereign state of Pakistan as claimed by the Muslim League. The Mission pointed out that the setting up of a state of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the minority problem. There was no justification for inclusion within Pakistan those districts of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam in which the population was predominantly non-Muslim. It further pointed out that "every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally in our view be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan."⁵ The Mission, therefore, considered whether a smaller Pakistan confined to Muslim majority areas alone might be a possible basis of compromise. Such a Pakistan was, however, regarded by the Muslim League as quite impracticable because it would entail exclusion from Pakistan of (a) the whole of the Ambala and Jullundar Divisions in the Punjab; (b) a large part of Western Bengal (whole of Burdwan Division) including Calcutta, a city with Muslims that constituted hardly one-fourth of the city's total population; and (c) the whole of Assam except the district of Sylhet. The League were, however, prepared to consider adjustment of boundaries at a later stage provided the principle of Pakistan were first acknowledged.⁶

The demand by the Muslim League and inclusion of Assam, including Sylhet and Cachar in Pakistan received a momentum under the leadership of Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Manwar Ali, Mudabber Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Hamid, Mahmud Ali (General Secretary, Assam Provincial Muslim League), Mainul Huq Chowdhury (Cachar) and Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhahsani (President, Assam Provincial Muslim League). When the prospect of Bengal and Assam's division emerged clearer, the Sylhet Muslims, because of their historical, linguistic, cultural and ethnic affinities with their co-religionists in Bengal, demanded Sylhet's transfer to East Bengal which was to form a constituent part of Paikstan.

The Rationale

It was these considerations and Viceroy's several rounds of discussions with the Indian leaders that provided the basis for the 3 June Plan. The 3 June declaration clearly stated that if Bengal were to be divided:

... a referendum will be held in Sylhet district under the aegies of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Assam Provincial Government to decide whether the district of Sylhet should continue to form part of the Assam province or should be amalgamated with the new province of Eastern Bengal, if that province agrees ...

The Plan also made provision for the composition of a Boundary Commission with terms of reference similar to those for the Punjab and Bengal to demarcate the Muslim majority areas of Sylhet district and the contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts, which will then be transferred to Eastern Bengal.⁷ It was against this legal background that referendum in Sylhet was to be held.

Composition of the Boundary Commission for Bengal and Assam

According to the 3 June announcement, the date of transfer of power was advanced from June 1948 to 14-15 August 1947. Therefore, the two issues which needed Viceroy's immediate attention as well as active consideration were (i) the composition of the Boundary Commissions for Bengal (and also Assam) and the Punjab with the terms of reference; and (ii) completion of the formalities for holding referendum in Sylhet. The composition of the Boundary Commission(s) with the terms of reference was a complicated matter. The 3 June Plan specifically provided that the composition of the Commission with the terms of reference would be settled in consultation with the Indian leaders. The Viceroy, therefore, decided to consult the two parties — the Muslim League and the Congress — individually in the first place, and then "try to marry their ideas."⁸ It appears from records that Jinnah accepted the Congress proposal that each Commission should consist of an independent Chairman and four other persons of whom two would be nominated by the Congress and two by the League.⁹ Records also reveal that Nehru suggested that members to be nominated to the Commission(s) "should be persons of high judicial standing," and Jinnah "wanted, if possible, to avoid lawyers," as "there was always trouble when two or more lawyers got together."¹⁰ Though no details are available, it is clear that Jinnah also accepted the terms of reference for the Bengal Boundary Commission as suggested by Nehru without any change:

The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Bengal on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so it will take into account other factors.

In the event of referendum in Sylhet District of Assam resulting in favour of amalgamation with Eastern Bengal the Boundary Commission for Bengal will also demarcate the Muslim majority areas of Sylhet District and contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining Districts.¹¹

This indeed precluded the possibility of a separate Boundary Commission for Sylhet. The Assam Governor, however, attempted to reopen the issue and in a communique to the Viceroy submitted a proposal for a separate Boundary Commission for Sylhet.¹² The Viceroy, in consultation with his advisers, however, decided not to accede to the Governor of Assam's proposal "in view of the fact that

leaders had already agreed that Bengal Boundary Commission should deal also with Assam" and that the terms of reference had already been agreed upon by Nehru and Jinnah.¹³

In the meantime, the Viceroy received the nominations of members to the Boundary Commissions from Nehru and Jinnah.¹⁴ In an official announcement on 30 June 1947, the Governor-General declared the composition of the two Boundary Commissions, one for Bengal and the other for the Punjab. The members of the Bengal Boundary Commission were: (1) Mr. Justice Bijan Kumar Mukherjea; (2) Mr. Justice C. C. Biswas, both of Calcutta High Court as Congress nominees; and (3) Mr. Justice Abu Saleh Mohamed Akram of Calcutta High Court; and (4) Justice S. A. Rahman of the Punjab High Court as the League nominees. It may be pointed out here that the likes and dislikes of Nehru and Jinnah ultimately restricted the scope of the Muslim League to find out suitable persons of high judicial standing who were well acquainted with the geography of Bengal for nomination to the Bengal Commission. This explained why the League had to nominate a Lahore High Court Judge to the Bengal Boundary Commission. The announcement directed the Bengal Boundary Commission to demarcate also the boundary between East Bengal and Assam.¹⁵ On 4 July, the Viceroy announced the appointment of Sir Cyril Radcliffe as Chairman of the two Boundary Commissions — Bengal as well as the Punjab.¹⁶

Procedural Formalities and Legal Framework for Referendum

As already mentioned, immediately after the announcement of 3 June Plan, the Viceroy had requested the Governor of Assam to initiate "necessary preliminary steps for holding referendum" in Sylhet without delay.¹⁷ The Governor took prompt steps to work on procedural details,¹⁸ and in consultation with and suggestions and instructions from the Viceroy¹⁹ took the following steps for holding the referendum. (i) He sought the Viceroy's approval for appointment of H. C. Stork, ICS (Secretary, Legislative Department and Legal Remembrancer, Assam) as Referendum Commissioner on the ground that he "has previous experience of electoral matters and is generally trusted." (ii) The Governor also informed the Viceroy that the polling for referendum would take place on 6-7 July and the voters on all rolls concerned would vote either day. The polling stations and booths would be arranged as at general elections. (iii) He further informed the Viceroy that the Referendum Commissioner "will personally count votes and inform me of result which I will immediately telegraph to you." With regard to the publication of the referendum results, the Governor conveyed to the Viceroy that "my Ministers wish and I agree with them that the result should be announced by your Excellency from Delhi and not to be given out or leak out from Assam." Further, he assured the Viceroy that all

Viceroy that all arrangements were now almost complete and affirmed that he would stick to the schedule.²⁰

Decision on Partition of Bengal

The 3 June Plan envisaged that the referendum in Sylhet was conditional on the partition of Bengal and 'if Eastern Bengal agrees on amalgamation' (of Sylhet). Therefore, in pursuance of paragraph 21 of the 3 June Plan, the Governor-General, on 16 June, announced the procedure providing:

"if it is decided that Bengal should be partitioned, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly representing the Muslim majority districts shall forthwith proceed to decide ... whether, ... if the referendum to be held in Sylhet district results in favour of the amalgamation of the district of Sylhet with the new Province of Eastern Bengal, that Province should agree to such amalgamation."²¹

Accordingly, the Bengal Legislature met in two sessions on 20 June 1947. Two questions were put to the members: should Bengal be partitioned? If so, which Constituent Assembly should draft the constitution. In a joint meeting of the members (from the Muslim majority and Hindu majority districts) presided over by the Speaker of the House, Nurul Amin (1897-1974), 126 members voted for a new and separate (Pakistan) Constituent Assembly, and 90 members for Bengal joining the existing (Indian-elected in 1946) Constituent Assembly. Members representing the Hindu majority districts met separately under the Chairmanship of Maharajahdiraj of Burdwan and decided by 58 to 21 votes that Bengal should be partitioned and the constitution of the state comprising these areas should be framed by the existing Constituent Assembly. Members representing the Muslim majority districts, sitting separately decided by 106 to 35 votes against partition. However, when the results of the voting of the members of the Hindu majority districts were communicated to them, they decided by 107 to 34 votes that the state comprising the Muslim majority districts should join the proposed Pakistan Constituent Assembly. It was also decided by 105 to 34 votes that, in the event of partition, East Bengal would agree to amalgamation with Sylhet.²²

Electioneering Campaigns

The district of Sylhet was in the grip of referendum fever when the pro-Congress and pro-League groups were carrying out the electioneering slogans. There was considerable enthusiasm and excitement in the district during the days of the electioneering campaigns. A large number of Muslim League leaders headed by H. S. Suhrawardy came to Sylhet to campaign for amalgamation of Sylhet with Pakistan. Amongst the leaders from Bengal who personally supervised the referendum

campaign were Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan, Nurul Amin, Pir Badsha Mian, Syed Muazzamuddin Hussain, A. H. Ispahani, Maulana Abdullah-al-Baki, Yusuf Ali Chaudhury and student leaders like Shah Azizur Rahman, Fazlul Quader Chaudhury and others. The slogan in Bengal was "cholo cholo Sylhet cholo." According to the local army sources, pro-East Bengal "Muslim organisation and propaganda obviously was much better than that of Congress. The manner in which the Muslim League party carried out their propaganda campaign was most noticeable."²³ Processions, slogans, drilling of youngmen were the order of the day. Motor vans and boats with microphones and loud speakers served as propaganda media. The Muslim National Guards and volunteers flooded Sylhet from outside and penetrated into the remotest villages. The Congress volunteers including young Sikhs also spread into remotest areas in large numbers. Processions and meetings of each party reached a climax on 5 July 1947.²⁴

The presence of Muslim National Guards and student leaders from Bengal in large numbers created panic in the minds of pro-Assam non-Muslim population. The relationship between the various groups representing the two shades of public opinion became somewhat tense. During these days charges and counter-charges of violence were made both by the Congress and the Muslim League circles, Reports of high-handedness, assaults, intimidation and violence started pouring in from 3 July from various Sub-divisions, particularly from the Congress leaders. Some non-violent intimidation by League workers were reported. There were innumerable requests for troops and police. Even after the posting of army on 2 July 1947 highly exaggerated reports from the Congress and Jam'at circles came into the civil authorities on 3 and 4 July. Many cases of alleged lawlessness were examined by the army and the civil authorities and were found to be untrue.²⁵ According to local official sources, "these reports were entirely baseless and were denied". The same source claimed that panic was created by certain vested interest groups "to serve their political ends as well as to make up a case in case they lost."²⁶

Though the district of Sylhet was a Muslim majority area, there was considerable apprehension among the Muslim League leaders about the results of the proposed referendum. The Hindu Ministers in the Assam Government, particularly those from Sylhet — Basanta Kumar Das and Baidyanath Mookherjee — actively canvassed in favour of Sylhet remaining in Assam. The supporters of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, the leader of Jamat-i-Ulema-i-Hind, who had a sizeable followers in Sylhet, also canvassed against inclusion of Sylhet in Pakistan. Hence the Muslim League leaders were apprehensive that the referendum would neither be free nor fair under the control of the Provincial Government which meant a Congress Ministry interested in the referendum, and a Governor, Sir Akbar Hydari, "notorious for his anti-Muslim League views and also for his anxiety to placate the

Congress."²⁷ Hence, the Assam Muslim League leaders, particularly Mahmud Ali, General Secretary of Assam Provincial Muslim League, suggested replacement of the Assam Governor.²⁸ The pro-Muslim League Hindu leaders also brought charges of violence against the Congress and pro-Assam workers.²⁹

Hence, no sooner the formalities for holding referendum was completed, *the Dawn*, a Muslim League daily published from New Delhi, in a leading article, came out with a series of complaints on the manner in which the referendum was proposed to be conducted. The paper pointed out that the Viceroy as yet had fulfilled neither the conditions laid down in 3 June statement nor the assurance which he publicly gave at his press conference on the following day that the British officers of the Indian Army would supervise the proceedings of the referendum. The paper pointed out that though the 3 June Plan specifically provided that the referendum in Sylhet, like that in the NWF Province, would be held under the aegis of the Governor-General, yet matters relating to the referendum appear to have been left in the hands of the Provincial Congress Ministry interested in the referendum. The paper alleged that though no formal announcement had been made but it appeared in the press that Stork had been appointed Referendum Commissioner, who "is notorious in Assam as being anti-Muslim." The paper claimed that this officer was "unsuitable for this post" because (1) he was "directly subordinate to a Hindu Minister from Sylhet," and (2) he was a prisoner of war in Turkey during the First World War; and as a result of which he was understood to have developed an aversion to the 'Turkish cap' and whoever wears that headgear. So the Muslims of Assam looked upon him with distrust.³⁰ Referring to the selection of symbols, the paper accused that the symbols for ballot boxes had been fixed arbitrarily and without consulting the Muslim League referendum committee. A 'hut' had been chosen as the symbol for the ballot boxes for votes against Sylhet joining East Bengal, while 'Axe' had been chosen for the ballot boxes for votes in favour of Pakistan. These symbols had popular background and Congress workers were already canvassing against joining East Bengal playing on the popular superstitions that 'Axe' symbolised causing an injury to oneself while the 'hut' stood for happiness.³¹ The paper also pointed out that the Presiding Officers would be subordinate to the Assam Government working under the local Government's orders and no step had been taken to place them under the supervision of officers under the control of the Governor-General. The paper then serialised a number of charges against the Assam Government which was indiscriminately arresting League workers and deliberately impeding League campaigns.³²

Jinnah endorsed the complaints and forwarded to Mountbatten with the observation that the date fixed for referendum was too early and time given for voting (between 9-30 a.m. to 6 p.m.) as well as for canvassing too short, especially because of floods in large areas of the district.³³

Dawn's comments along with Jinnah's forwarding note were carefully considered in Viceroy's 48th staff meeting on 28 June 1947, and it was decided that the referendum "should be run in an absolutely fair way and that it should so appear to the world at large." Although there was no question of yielding to any pressure exerted by *Dawn's* criticism, the Viceroy, in order to allay apprehensions that Muslims might not get as fair a deal in Sylhet as in the NWF Province and remove as far as possible causes of criticism and secure confidence of both sides, conveyed to the Governor of Assam that (i) the Referendum Commissioner might be attached to the Governor's personal staff or to his own staff; (ii) a joint Referendum Commissioner might be appointed as his own representative; (iii) a few military officers might be sent to assist and supervise referendum in Sylhet; and (iv) that the date of the referendum could be postponed by a few days.³⁴

The Governor of Assam was requested to give his comments on the decisions. In his replies to the complaints, the Governor informed the Viceroy that referendum was being held under the aegis of the Governor-General and that Provincial Government had no hand in or control over the arrangements. Besides, Stork, as Referendum Commissioner, was "not under any Minister but under me," and was being formally relieved of the post of Legal Remembrancer to avoid any suspicion of Ministerial direction. The Governor welcomed the assistance of as many military officers as could be spared to assist Stork in supervising polling in the interior of the district, but he firmly refused to (i) have any Joint Referendum Commissioner, because "such an appointment, apart from being construed as unmerited slur on Stork's impartiality, would confuse direction of operation", and (ii) postpone the referendum. He held that referendum arrangements, both civil and military, were now far too advanced to permit of postponement at this stage.³⁵

The Governor also dwelt at length on *Dawn's* allegations and refuting them point by point he observed: "what *Dawn* says should be treated with greatest reserve."³⁶ In fact, the whole of the stuff of the *Dawn* was a story concocted by a prominent Assam Muslim League leader Abdul Matin Chaudhuri from Sylhet. The Governor, however, was concerned more with the holding of the referendum. He drew the Viceroy's attention to the elaborate arrangements made by Stork to ensure complete impartiality. For example, he mentioned that the transfer order of two Muslim Sub-Divisional Officers from Sylhet district issued before referendum announcement was cancelled by the Chief Minister Gopinath Bardoloi at his request to avoid any suspicion. About stork's appointment as Referendum Commissioner, the Governor added that Abdul Main Chaudhuri, who was presumably the Chief Complainant, did neither express any distrust of Stork nor any Muslim League leader from Sylhet complained when they met him recently. In connection with the symbol,

the Governor pointed out that Matin Chaudhuri's idea was to have 'crescent' for joining East Bengal, which if allowed, would have been resented by nationalist Muslims in Sylhet and nourished communal feeling. Referring to Jinnah's charges, the Governor assured the Viceroy that he would investigate complaints regarding censorship, but he firmly denied that there were any arrests under Public Safety Act. He assured the Viceroy that if there were any arrests he would order release of them, but he could not let those go accused of violence. Further, he pointed out that Sikh officers mentioned might have reference to Lt. Col. Mohinder Singh Chopra, Commanding Officer, 1st Assam Regiment who with a party of European and other non-Sikh officers had been arranging posting of pickets at suitable points in the district for the maintenance of law and order during 2-8 July 1947. Finally, the Governor made it clear that he had taken personal measures to secure the impartiality of the referendum and that the Assam Government could not interfere in the referendum as it was not in their hands and emphatically pointed out:

no one from outside Sylhet is particularly anxious to retain the district in Assam. All my Ministers except four Suma Valley ones are lukewarm and Prime Minister has even been publicly criticised for his lack of enthusiasm in the matter of retaining Sylhet. The impression of a Ministry strongly determined to keep it which is one of the objects of League propaganda to spread is just not true.³⁷

The Governor's replies to and analysis of the complaints of *Dawn* were convincing. The most urgent matter which warranted an immediate decision was whether the Viceroy would overrule the Governor and order postponement of the referendum. I.D. Scott, a member of the Viceroy's staff, argued against postponement of referendum. He pointed out the communications, which were bad, would get steadily worse day by day throughout July in Sylhet and "it was unlikely that a postponement at this stage would produce more benefit than confusion."³⁸ Mountbatten was convinced of Scott's arguments and confirmed the Assam government stand: "I entirely accept that all arrangements for the referendum are being made in an impartial manner."³⁹ The Viceroy then requested the Commander-in-Chief to depute four British Military officers of the rank of Major or thereabout to report for duty to Referendum Commissioner Stork in Sylhet by 5 July latest to assist him in supervising polling.⁴⁰ With all arrangements complete, the Viceroy wrote to Liaquat Ali Khan assuring the Muslim League circles that the referendum in Sylhet "is being properly conducted without any sort of control by the Ministry and in a fully impartial manner."⁴¹

Electoral Arrangements

The actual business of preparing for the referendum had been a considerable administrative headache for Stork and Dumbreck, the Deputy Commissioner of

Sylhet. The number of polling stations, with the approval of the two main parties, was fixed at 239. Since the voting had to be completed throughout the district within two consecutive days, it posed a serious problem before the Referendum Commissioner to make provision of 478 Presiding officers and 1434 Polling officers which the District of Sylhet could not by itself supply.⁴² Therefore, with the cooperation of, and under orders from the Assam Chief Secretary, the Districts in the Assam Valley with Cachar, Shillong and the Assam Secretariat supplied about 250 Presiding officers and 500 Polling officers. Two Presiding officers were allotted to each polling station and five or six polling officers allotted to each Presiding officer.⁴³ It was, however, not possible to allot a Muslim officer to every station where there were two Presiding officers, as their number was insufficient. The allotment of Presiding and Polling officers to the Polling stations and the issuance of instructions to them, along with all the materials, boxes, ballot papers necessary for the conduct of the referendum, which was a task of considerable magnitude, was done by the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet and his staff under the direct supervision of the Referendum Commissioner. A reserve of about 20 Presiding officers and 40 Polling officers was kept at Sylhet Sadar. No Muslim officer could be kept in the reserve as their number was very small.⁴⁴

Maintenance of Law and Order

In a tense situation created by the electioneering campaigns of two equally powerful contestants, the holding of the referendum in a free and impartial manner posed a problem. But the local authorities with the advice, and help from the Assam Governor, other higher authorities and cooperation of the neighbouring districts faced the problem courageously and made provisions for proper maintenance of law and order ahead of schedule.

The services of a large number of Police including Assam Rifles and Railforce were requisitioned for maintenance of law and order in the district of Sylhet during the referendum. A minimum of three unarmed constables was deputed to each of the 239 polling stations. This was found from the District force and the unarmed constables deputed from other districts. A number of polling stations had more unarmed constables depending on the importance of the stations. About 50% of the polling stations were marked as 'danger spots,' and in those stations, in addition to the three unarmed constables, one NCO and six armed constables were posted. Since District force of armed constabulary was not enough to meet the demand, Assam Rifles and Railforces were stationed in the district.⁴⁵

Armed parties were also arranged to patrol in trucks on main roads and in boats in the interior to stop possible intimidation. These police patrols were in addition to

patrols by the military. Military help was to be made available whenever sought.

The provision of troops, at the request of the Assam Governor, was sanctioned by higher military authority to assist in maintaining law and order, and to prevent intimidation immediately before, during and if necessary, after the holding of the referendum. Lt. Col. Mohinder Singh Chopra was given the command of the force known as SYLFORCE. The Sylforce's responsibility was to preserve law and order before, during, and after the referendum, preventing intimidation of voters and to act as a mobile reserve to the police.⁴⁶ In view of the very peculiar topographical features of the district and vast expanses of water in nearly all the sub-divisions, military was posted — one platoon strength — at important and strategic points from where they could reach any place of trouble in the shortest possible time. Water craft was placed where required, i.e., outboard motors were allotted to forces at Sunamganj and north-west of Habiganj where areas were completely submerged. Military preparation was complete and was considered adequate. All members of Sylforce were in their positions by 1800 hours 2 July 1947 and vigorous patrolling was started.

On 3 July, Deputy Commissioner prohibited carrying of lethal weapons, and law enforcing units were told to assist in enforcing this order. Warning was also issued by the Deputy Commissioner to party leaders that troops and armed police were now in a position with the object of ensuring fair play and peace during the referendum. If necessary they would use lethal weapons against either community to ensure law and order.⁴⁷

Besides, one Lt. Colonel and three officers of the Indian army were sent by the Commander-in-Chief to report to the Referendum Commissioner in Sylhet on 5 July to act as observers on behalf of the Viceroy during the referendum. On the advice of Stork they were deputed to different sub-divisions. Major Buchard was sent to Habiganj, Major Cotter to Maulvi Bazar, Major Young to Karimganj, and Lt. Col. Pearson remained in Sylhet. Only Sunamganj, which was considered to be too far and under water, was excluded on the advice of Reid, DIG of Police, and D.C. Dumbreck.⁴⁸

Referendum Held

Polling commenced at 0930 hours on 6 July at 239 polling stations scattered throughout the district. On account of inclement weather there was some rush and stampede in the beginning at some of the polling stations as the spirit of "await your turn" was lacking. But the Presiding officers, with the help of the police and the military, managed to establish control soon, and it was noticeable that a steady flow of voters was always passing in and out of the polling booths.⁴⁹ According to the

Referendum Commissioner, with one exception, he received no reports that any large number of would-be voters were waiting their turn when the voting closed on the second day. The exception was a polling station where the voting continued for an extra hour only. He further mentioned that no one was prevented from recording his vote simply because of insufficiency of time, and received no complaints to the contrary.⁵⁰ According to Col. Chopra, polling was carried out more smoothly on the second day because of the experience gained on the first day. He further recorded that, considering everything the voters were peaceful and well-behaved generally throughout, although in places they got impatient on account of the rain and often delay in polling but nothing else. The referendum passed off 'peacefully'.⁵¹

The referendum in Sylhet was held as per schedule, and according to official sources, "completed peacefully."⁵² The result was telegraphed to Delhi on 12 July. The people of Sylhet decided by a majority of 55,578 votes in favour of amalgamation with East Bengal. The number of valid votes in favour of joining East Bengal was 2,39,619, while the number of valid votes in favour of remaining with Assam was 1,84,041. The percentage of valid votes to total electorate was 77.33%. The result was announced by the Viceroy on 14 July 1947.

League-Congress Reactions

Though, according to the official circles, the referendum was 'completed peacefully,' but as soon as the polling started charges and counter-charges of obstruction and violence against each other by the two contending parties began to pour into the official quarters in unlimited numbers. There were numerous allegations of intimidation of voters, nearly all of intimidation of Hindu voters by Muslim voters. The Muslim League made detailed complaints to the Viceroy particularly about interferences by the Assam Ministry in the referendum and asked for an enquiry.⁵³ The pro-Assamese groups mounted a serious campaign against the Muslim voters and Muslim National Guards. In their telegrams to the Viceroy, Nehru, Ghandhi, Patel and others, they alleged that whole villages of Hindu voters in many places, particularly at Habiganj, had been prevented by threats from coming to the polling stations or entering the polling booths.⁵⁴ They also alleged that in almost all the centres large number of non-voter and unauthorised league workers were allowed to enter and remain inside polling booths who actively interfered with free voting of pro-Assamese voters. A telegram sent to the Viceroy by the Secretary, Sylhet District Referendum Committee, even asserted that hundreds of pro-Assamese voters were driven from the defined area of polling stations by the Deputy Commissioner himself with the help of other European officers.⁵⁵

The Congress and pro-Assam organisations complained that precautions were inadequate and that military and police should have escorted voters from homes to

polling booths and back. The Congress newspapers had even reported that there had been a general breakdown of law and order and that the lawlessness had prevailed throughout the district on the eve and during the referendum.⁵⁶ On Rabindranath Choudhury of Sovabazar, Calcutta, in a telegram to the Viceroy, claimed that "Muslim League violence and grave irregularities already ventilated in press reduced Sylhet referendum to farce." He demanded a second 'just' referendum and a 'partition' of the district with exchange of population.⁵⁷ Even Basanta Kumar Das, the Home Minister of the Assam Cabinet, in a statement to the Press, declared that the referendum was a "farce" and along with Baidyanath Mukherjee, Supply Minister, wanted an enquiry into the conduct of the referendum.⁵⁸

Response to Allegations

Sir Akbar Hydari, in a despatch to the Viceroy, informed him that he visited Sylhet on 9 July to obtain first hand information from the civil and military authorities as to how the referendum was conducted. In a conference attended by Basanta Kumar Das and Baidyanath Mukherjee, the two Surma Valley Ministers, the Military officers sent to Sylhet by the Commander-in-Chief, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Retd.), Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet (Dumbreck), Commander of the SYLFORCE (Col. Chopra), Superintendent of Police (S.P. Dutt) and others, the British military officers confirmed the correctness of the first report that the referendum had been carried out peacefully and that "the stray instances of disorder could not by any stretch of imagination be imagined into a widespread breakdown of law and order which had been alleged by interested quarters."⁵⁹ The Governor also pointed out that

The widely irresponsible statements given to the press by Basanta Kumar Das and other Bengali (Congress) workers were due to their realisation that they were losing the battle and so provide an explanation in advance of their defeat.⁶⁰

As soon as Nehru learnt the results of the referendum, he addressed a letter to Mountbatten detailing all the complaints on the basis of the reports, telegrams and deputations he received from Assam and Calcutta, and pointed out that if these allegations were "at all based on facts then the validity of the referendum was doubtful." He, therefore, suggested that "some kind of brief enquiry be made and report from the Governor be awaited before the figures for the Sylhet referendum" were published.⁶¹ Nehru also sent a telegram to the Governor of Assam with all the allegations and requested him to send an appreciation of the situation during the referendum.⁶²

Since the results of the referendum were scheduled to be announced on 14 July, Mountbatten wrote Nehru back stating that Jinnah also made detailed complaints

about interference by the Assam Ministry in the referendum and asked for an enquiry which "I refused."⁶³ Arguing against withholding the publication of the results, Mountbatten reasoned: "I have already telegraphed the results to London and authorised their release tomorrow and to withdraw them would cause a sensation." He reminded Nehru that there were always complaints about the conduct of an election or referendum and in this case the Assam Governor had asked for an immediate publication of the result, which clearly meant that he was fully satisfied with it, and, therefore, "we must not stop the announcement of the results."⁶⁴

On receipt of Nehru's telegram, Hydari hurried to explain the situation. He gave the details of the referendum results sub-Division-wise:

TABLE I

Sub-Divisions	Total Muslim Electorate	Votes cast for East Bengal	Total General Electorate	Votes for remaining in Assam
Sylhet Sadar	92,268	68,381	48,863	38,871
Karimganj	54,022	41,262	46,221	40,536
Habiganj	75,274	54,543	60,252	36,952
South Sylhet	38,297	31,718	41,427	33,471
Sunamganj	51,846	43,715	39,045	34,211
Sylhet :	3,11,707	2,39,619	2,35,808	1,84,041

Source: Secretary, Governor of Assam, Shillong to Foreign, New Delhi, No. 959/C,14 July 1947. Personal for Pandit Nehru from Hydari, R/3/1/158, p. 84.

Hydari tried to convince Nehru from the election data, as presented in Table I above, that (i) "a large proportion of electorate went to polls," and (ii) "that in each Sub-Division proportion of votes cast for Eastern Bengal and for remaining in Assam in relation to Moslem and General electorates respectively was very high," and therefore, his assumption was inconsistent with facts. Taking the district as a whole including interior areas, the Governor was sure that "there could not have been intimidation on a large scale or if will to intimidate was there military and police precautions were adequate to prevent it."⁶⁵ He also pointed out that Baidyanath

Mukherjee who had previously supported allegations of widespread intimidation, now agreed that in the light of the voting figures they could not have been well-founded. The Governor mentioned that great majority of specific complaints were found, on testimony of military and police officers who were in the localities from which these complaints came, to be unfounded. Hydari, no doubt, admitted that there were large numbers of Muslim National Guards from Bengal; some of whom might have behaved arrogantly, but he confirmed that "none of them was allowed to be armed even with Lathis." He also admitted that Hindu voters in Muslim majority areas were certainly apprehensive of their houses and women folk, but he pointed out that in one case a small party of them refused to go to polls even when promised escort by the military to the polls and back to their villages. He specifically mentioned that while there must have been some reasons for this frame of mind, "there were no acts of physical lawlessness." He also mentioned that complaints of false impersonation on any considerable scale on the testimony of Referendum Commissioner, was unfounded.⁶⁶ He had, therefore, no doubts that, as per report of the Referendum Commissioner and the testimony of military and police officers, the referendum was conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

Hydari's report on the conduct of the referendum with reference to complaints by the Congress and pro-Assam supporters was very convincing and this helped to dispel much of Nehru's doubts. In reply to Hydari, Nehru wrote that

in view of facts stated by you and large percentage of voters and substantial majority in favour of joining East Bengal, it appears clear that any irregularities and intimidation that may have taken place could not have affected result of referendum.⁶⁷

How Referendum was Conducted

Though the referendum, according to Governor of Assam and the Referendum Commissioner, was held in an impartial manner, yet there were numerous charges of widespread intimidation and molestation of Hindu votes by Muslim League workers. An analysis of the percentages of the total electorates voted for the two propositions, as presented in Table II will bring into sharp focus, whether the referendum was held impartially and without intimidation of Hindu voters. It must be admitted that, the ballot being secret, the overall percentage of the total electorate was slightly higher in the votes for remaining in Assam than in those for amalgamation with East Bengal. This, by itself, supplies a convincing refutation of allegations of widespread intimidation and molestation, on a large scale, of Hindu voters. It may be pointed out that the percentage figure for Habiganj Sub-Division was lower than any other in respect of the votes for remaining in Assam as well as amalgamation with East Bengal. Stork's attention was drawn to the votes so cast at five polling stations of

Gavigaon, Aushkandi, Deopara, Kurshi and Bamai, where the percentage of votes on General Electoral Rolls was approximately 27, 8, 13, 6 and 26% respectively. There was clearly a very considerable abstention among the votes on the General Rolls at these stations but whether abstention was due to intimidation or fear, was not confirmed from official or unbiased sources. The Referendum Commissioner came to the definite conclusion that

intimidation, if there was any, was confined to a very few areas and that the result of the referendum was a clear index of the relative strengths of the supporters of the alternative propositions.⁶⁸

TABLE II

Sub-Division	For remaining in Assam (%)	For amalgamation with East Bengal (%)
Sylhet Sadar	79.55	74.11
Karimganj	87.70	76.38
Habiganj	61.33	72.46
South Sylhet	80.79	82.32
Sunamganj	78.62	84.31
Average for the whole district	78.05	76.87

Source: Report on Sylhet Referendum by H. C. Stork, Referendum Commission, dated 26 July 1947, R/3/1/158, p. 106.

The reports from the Viceroy's representatives led by Lt. Col. C. Pearson refuted the allegations by Congress and pro-Assam groups and asserted that "the Referendum was conducted in a fair and impartial manner and that voters were not obstructed in casting their votes." He regretted that the members of the government, in particular the Home Minister should have given such irresponsible statements to the press that the referendum was a "farce." He firmly asserted that "there was no breakdown of law and order and that the conduct of the army and the police in maintaining law and order was of a very high order."⁶⁹ The Superintendent of Police, D.C. Dutt, a resident of Habiganj, also reported that "law and order was maintained satisfactorily."⁷⁰ The

Viceroy congratulated the Assam Governor referring to the conduct of the Sylhet referendum as "a great credit" to him and his officers, and expressing his confidence and appreciation he observed: "I realise that complaints are almost inevitable in such circumstances, and so far I can judge, the referendum has been efficiently and impartially run."⁷¹

Radcliffe Award on Sylhet

The Bengal Boundary Commission held open sittings in Calcutta during 16-24 July 1947 relating to the demarcation of boundary in Bengal. After the conclusion of the proceedings on Bengal, the Commission invited the submission of memoranda and representations by parties interested in the Sylhet question.

The public sittings of the Commission were held during 4-6 August 1947 for the purpose of hearing arguments. The main arguments were presented on the one side by the Counsel on behalf of the Government of East Bengal and the Assam Provincial and Sylhet District Muslim Leagues; and on the other side, by the Counsel on behalf of the Government of the Province of Assam and the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and the Assam Provincial Hindu Mahasabha.⁷²

The Chairman of the Commission was not present in person at the open sittings at which arguments were presented by the interested parties as he was at the time engaged in the proceedings of the Punjab Boundary Commission which were taking place simultaneously. But he was supplied with the daily record of the Sylhet proceedings and with all the materials submitted to the Commission's consideration. At the close of the open sittings, the members of the Commission held discussions with the Chairman in connection with the issues involved and the decisions to be arrived at. These discussions took place at New Delhi.

The members of the Commission had initial differences of opinion as to the scope of the terms of reference. According to the Chairman, two members of the Commission were of the view that the Commission "had been given authority to detach from Assam and to attach to East Bengal any Muslim majority areas of any part of Assam that could be described as contiguous to East Bengal," since they construed the words "the adjoining districts of Assam" as meaning "any districts of Assam that adjoined East Bengal." The other two members argued that

the Commission's power of detaching areas from Assam and transferring them to East Bengal was limited to the District of Sylhet and contiguous majority areas (if any) of other districts of Assam that adjoined Sylhet.⁷³

The difference of opinion was so sharp that it had to be referred to the Chairman for his casting vote. The Chairman took the view that the latter interpretation was the correct one as it accorded better with the "natural meaning" of the words used in the

terms of reference, and that "the adjoining districts of Assam" did not extend to "other districts of Assam" than those that adjoined Sylhet.⁷⁴ Therefore, in his view, the question was limited to the districts of Sylhet and Cachar. Mountbatten had never any intention to interpret the terms of reference, but when it was referred to him he opined that 'adjoining' should refer to Sylhet alone. He pointed out that the intention of HMG was that "only contiguous Muslim majority areas of districts adjoining Sylhet itself should be transferred to Eastern Bengal."⁷⁵

It was also argued before the Commission on behalf of the Government of East Bengal that, on the true construction of the terms of reference and section 3 of the Indian Independence Act 1947, "the whole of the District of Sylhet at least must be transferred to East Bengal and the Commission had no option but to act upon this assumption." The members of the Commission were unanimous in rejecting this argument and the Chairman concurred with the members. The members of the Commission finally came to the unanimous conclusion that their responsibility was "to divide the Sylhet and the adjoining districts of Assam between East Bengal and the Province of Assam" on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims, but taking into consideration other factors.⁷⁶

The members of the Commission were, however, unable to arrive at an agreed view as to how the boundary lines should be drawn, and after discussion of their differences, according to Radcliffe, "they invited me to give my decision."⁷⁷

There were 35 (thirty-five) police stations in the district of Sylhet, of which, according to 1941 census, 8 (eight) had non-Muslim majorities. Of these eight, Sulla (in Sunamganj) and Ajmiriganj (in Habiganj) — divided almost evenly between Muslims and non-Muslims and situated along the western boundary of Sylhet bordering Mymensingh — were entirely surrounded by preponderatingly Muslim areas. The other six non-Muslim majority police stations — Srimangal, Kamalganj, Kulaura, Barlekha, Patharkandi and Rathabari — were divided between two sub-Divisions of south Sylhet and Karimganj, and comprising a population of 531,817; stretched in a continuous line along part of the southern border of Sylhet district. But they were not contiguous to any other part of Assam. As presented in Table III below, south Sylhet, comprising a population of 5,15,154, had in fact a non-Muslim majority of 39,632; while Karimganj, with a population of 5,68,228, had a Muslim majority of 55,534.⁷⁸

TABLE III

Sub-Divisions	Police Stations	Total population	Muslim	Non-Muslims
Sunamganj	Sulla	37,937	13,431	24,506
Habiganj	Ajmirganj	46,297	23,129	23,168
South Sylhet	Srimangal	79,260	22,000	57,260
	Kamalganj	86,708	33,925	52,783
	Kulaura	1,46,006	69,947	76,059
	Raj Nagar	79,559	43,247	36,312
	Maulvi Bazar	1,22,837	68,531	54,306
	Railway Area	784	111	673
	Total:	5,15,154	2,37,761 (46.11%)	2,77,393 (53.89%)
Kamarganj	Barlekha	81,456	39,250	42,206
	Patharkandi	70,788	27,664	53,124
	Rathabari	67,599	24,730	42,869
	Beani Bazar	1,00,899	70,690	30,209
	Karimganj	2,02,341	1,33,733	78,608
	Badarpur	42,672	25,228	17,444
	Railway Area	2,473	586	1,887
Total:	5,68,228	3,11,881 (54.89%)	2,56,347 (45.11%)	

Source: *Census of India, 1941, vol. IX, Assam*

Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1942, pp. 24-38.

With regard to the district of Cachar, one police station Hailakandi had a Muslim majority, and was contiguous to the Muslim majority police stations of Badarpur and Karimganj of Sylhet district. This police station along with the police station of Katlichara, immediately to its south, formed the Sub-Division of Hailakandi, and in the Sub-Division as a whole, as per Table IV, the Muslims enjoyed a small majority of 51.62% of the total population. According to the Chairman, Katlichara was entirely dependent on Hailakandi for normal communications and this warranted that the Sub-Division should be under one jurisdiction and that the Muslims had, no doubt, a strong presumptive claim for the transfer of the Sub-Division of Hailakandi from the province of Assam to the province of East Bengal.⁷⁹

TABLE IV

Police Stations	Total population	Muslims	Non-Muslims
Hailakandi	1,23,183	67,546	55,637
Katlichara	43,176	18,391	24,785
Railway Area	177	26	151
Hailakandi Sub-Division in Cachar District	1,66,536	85,963 (51.62%)	80,473 (48.38%)

Source: *Census of India, 1941*, vol. IX, Assam
Delhi: 1942, pp. 24-38.

Besides, the Chairman had also to consider a last minute representation from the Assam Government. It stated that the road from the Khasi Hills (in the north of Sylhet) to Cachar and Lushai Hills (in the east and south) skirted the northern fringe, of Sylhet District. This road, according to the Governor, was "Assam's only present means of communication to these two districts" and it would be very difficult and too expensive to build an alternative road through difficult hilly country. The Governor giving his personal views concluded that the road was so

vital to Assam's communications that if government's request was granted by Chairman of the Boundary Commission, I would be able to persuade my ministers to abate their claims to some

other parts of Sylhet district.⁸⁰

According to Radcliffe, a study of the map showed that a division on the basis of the results of the referendum would have presented problems of administration that might have affected the future welfare and happiness of the district(s). If the Muslim claim to Karimganj (Sylhet) and Hailakandi Sub-Division (of Cachar district) were recognised, the six non-Muslim police stations of Sylhet would have been completely cut off from the rest of Assam, and the Tripura state would have had no access with Assam excepting through the difficult reserve forests and over the Lushai Hills. On the other hand, since they formed a strip running east to west, the detachment of these police stations from Sylhet would have affected an awkward severance of the railway line through Sylhet and the railway junction (Kulaura) for the town of Sylhet itself would have been in Assam, and not in East Bengal.⁸¹

Hence, in these circumstances, according to the Chairman, some exchange of territories was considered essential to arrive at a workable division. As a result, "some of the non-Muslim *thanas* must go to East Bengal and some Muslim territory and Hailakandi must be retained by Assam."⁸² Accordingly, in exchange for the non-Muslim majority police stations (Srimangal, Kamalganj, Kulaura and Barlekha) of South Sylhet and Karimganj Sub-Divisions, the Muslim majority police stations of Karimganj and Badarpur, and non-Muslim majority police stations of Patharkandi and Ratabari of Karimganj Sub-Division of Sylhet district along with Hailakandi Sub-Division of Cachar district were awarded to Assam. The Award of the Bengal Boundary Commission had thus resulted in the whole of the Sylhet district being detached from the Province of Assam to the new Province of East Bengal except for the four police stations of Karimganj, Badarpur (Muslim majority), Patharkandi and Ratabari (non-Muslim majority). No other part of Assam had been transferred to East Bengal.⁸³

Criticism on the Award

The award of Muslim majority areas of Sylhet and Cachar to Assam contravened the very principle on which the demarcation of boundary was made. The two underlying principles governing the terms of reference for the Boundary Commission were: (i) the separation of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims; and (ii) that a substantial area with a majority of the community should not be compelled to live under the government of the other. In doing so, 'the other factors' could only be secondary to the majority principle, otherwise they would contravene the two essential principles. For ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims, it was necessary to define 'contiguity.' Since the League was in the most disadvantageous bargaining position with Mountbatten and the Congress, the League High Command should have seen that the terms of

reference were explicit and contained no loopholes and meant nothing beyond "ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims." However, in the ecstasy over "a truncated" or of "a moth-eaten Pakistan" than "no Pakistan at all," Jinnah and the High Command did not try to be explicit in adopting the terms of reference, and accepted it in the language proposed by Nehru without any reservations. Radcliffe could thus completely disregard the 'majority' and 'contiguity' principles in assigning the Muslim majority areas of Karimganj Sub-Division (a majority of 55,534) and Hailakandi Sub-Division of Cachar to Assam in exchange for the non-Muslim police stations which were not contiguous to and cut off from Assam. Since they were not contiguous to and divorced from Assam, they must have been automatically assigned to East Bengal on the basis of 'other (local) factors' of the terms of reference and not exchanged with Muslim majority Karimganj and Hailakandi Sub-Divisions against the terms of reference with a view to allowing Tripura state easy access with Cachar and other parts of Assam. Hence, Radcliffe's "I decide and award" was an arbitrary decision and was not above criticism. If the Muslim majority police stations of Karimganj Sub-Division as well as Hailakandi Sub-Division were not cut out from Sylhet from sheer physical point of view, the Tripura state would eventually be obliged to be part of (East) Pakistan. It may be mentioned that the Maharaja of Tripura, who had considerable properties in East Bengal had actually started negotiations with the League leaders for joining Pakistan because of non-accessibility of Tripura with Assam. But after the publication of the Radcliffe award, he changed his mind, and joined India.⁸⁴

Publication of the Award

The Reports (awards) of the Bengal Boundary Commission, dated 12 August 1947; and that relating to Sylhet District and the adjoining Districts of Assam, dated 13 August 1947, were scheduled to be published well before 15 August, so as to allow time for administrative and security arrangements to be made on both sides of the partitioned province(s). However, Mountbatten was not in favour of publication of the awards before 15 August, and suggested to Nehru and Jinnah that there should be a meeting on 16 August "to decide upon the timing and method of publication."⁸⁵ Therefore, the Viceroy on the basis of HMG's statement, directed the Governments of East and West Bengal to take charge upto the 'notional boundary' on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas pending the publication and implementation of the awards. Accordingly, the whole of Sylhet district was provisionally transferred to Government of East Bengal on 14 August and the Pakistan flag was hoisted in all the police stations, including the four police stations of Karimganj which were awarded and later retransferred to Assam.

The anomalies of division of Sylhet became manifest immediately after the

Boundary Commission and the Radcliffe Award, 1947". *Bangladesh Historical Studies*, vol. VII, 1983, pp. 55-65.

17. Governor-General to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 1342-S, 7 June 1947. File No. 1446/20/GG/43, Referendum in Sylhet, 1947 IOR-R/3/1/158, p. 5. This collection comprises the correspondences of the Viceroy, the Governor of Assam, Jinnah, Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, notes of the functionaries attached to Viceroy's office in connection with the Referendum in Sylhet.
18. The Governor of Assam sought confirmation from the Viceroy of his proposals that the referendum should be held: (i) "under symbol system"; (ii) "on the basis of present rolls of the Provincial Assembly"; (iii) to hold polls on or about 15 July; (iv) to undertake polling in successive blocks due to monsoon time and count votes only when complete; (v) to make special arrangements for the use of the army to preserve order and secure a fair poll; and (vi) concurrence of the Viceroy for the appointment of a Referendum Commissioner. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. 841-C, 11 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 6.
19. The Viceroy made the following suggestions: (i) the result of the referendum in Sylhet should be known before the introduction of parliamentary legislation by third week of July; (ii) the decision on partition of Bengal was expected by 22 June; (iii) preliminary arrangements for polling should be completed by the end of June; (iv) actual polling throughout the district should not take more than 3-4 days and counting of votes not more than 10 days; and (v) there is no objection to symbol system or use of existing electoral rolls. The Viceroy also sent the legal framework within which the referendum was to be conducted. Firstly, the referendum should be made to the voters included in the electoral rolls for 9 General, 19 Muhammadan, and one Indian Christian constituencies of the Assam Legislative Assembly. Secondly, the Governor-General might, in consultation with the Government of Assam, appoint a Referendum Commissioner. Thirdly, the Referendum Commissioner should take such steps as he might consider necessary to hold the referendum. Finally, the result of the referendum should be communicated to the Viceroy and to the Government of Assam by the Referendum Commissioner. Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 1443-S, 14 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 14. For details, see M. K. U. Mollah, "The Sylhet Referendum: Delhi-Shillong Dimension," draft.
20. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. 144 MSG 1679-S, 15 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 19; Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. 377/47/26, 1801-S, 23 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 39; Akbar Hydari to Mountbatten, Fortnightly Report, 23 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 39A.
21. Announcement by the Governor-General, 16 June 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 28-29; *The Statesman*, 17 June 1947.
22. Member from Hindu majority districts who voted for partition of Bengal consisted of 48 Congress members including 13 scheduled caste members; 4 Anglo-Indians, 2 independents, 2 Communists, 1 Indian Christian and 1 Hindu Mahasabha member. The opposition included 21 Muslim League members including H. S. Suhrawardy (1893-1963), the last Chief Minister of United Bengal (1946-47).
All Muslim League members of Muslim majority districts, numbering 100, sitting separately, voted against partition and for joining the new Constituent Assembly. Five scheduled caste members and one Indian Christian supported them. It may be mentioned that the most notable absentee of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party was A.K. Fazlul Huq (1873-1962), *The Statesman*, 21 June 1947.
23. Report of Lt. Col. Mohinder Singh Chopra, as Annexure C to Referendum Commissioner H. C.

- Stork's report, R/3/1/158, pp. 114-15.
24. *Ibid.*, The author was an eye-witness. As an Intermediate student he was in the group of a Muslim National Guards, and took part in the referendum in Sunamganj Sub-Division. Also see Muslim League dailies, *Azad*, *Morning News* and *Ittehad* (all published from Calcutta) and *Jugaveri* (Sylhet), 25 June to 7 July 1947.
 25. Lt. Col. Chopra, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117. Also see *The Azad, Morning News*, 3-7 July 1947.
 26. *Ibid.*
 27. *Dawn*, 28 June 1947. Also see R/3/1/158, pp. 48-49.
 28. *The Statesman*, 26 June 1947.
 29. Jogendra Nath Mandal, Law member in the Interim Cabinet (as League nominee), while touring Sylhet to address the schedule castes on the subject of referendum, informed the Viceroy that, according to a telegram from Salar-e-Suba, Bengal, the Muslim National Guards had been attacked in the train between Kulaura and Sylhet on 3 July by the tea-garden labourers with lathis and arrows instigated by the Communist and Congress workers. Jogendra Nath Mandal to Viceroy, Telegram, 4 July 1947, R/3/1/158, pp. 61-62 and 68.
 30. *The Dawn*, 28 June 1947, also see telegram No. 1622-S from Viceroy to Governor of Assam, 28 June 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 48-52.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 1622-S, 28 June, 1947, p. 52; and the *Dawn*, 28 June 1947. For details also see M. K. U. Mollah, *op. cit.*
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. Extracts from Minutes of Viceroy's 48th Staff meeting held on 28 June 1947, R/3/1/158, pp. 46-47; and Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 1631-S, 28 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 53.
 35. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram 1952-S, No. 151 MSG, 30 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 54.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. 152 MSG, 1 July 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
 38. I. D. Scott's file note, 1 July 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
 39. Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 1692-S, 2 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 59.
 40. Lord Mountbatten to Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Letter No. 1446/20, 2 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 60.
 41. Viceroy to Liaquat Ali Khan, No. 1446/20, 4 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 64.
 42. Akbar Hydari to Lord Mountbatten, 23 June 1947, *ibid.*, p. 39A.
 43. Report on Sylhet Referendum by H. C. Stork, Referendum Commission, dated 26 July 1947, R/3/1/158, pp. 101-103.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. Report by D.C. Dutt, Superintendent of Police, Sylhet, dated 19.7.47, *ibid.*, p. 108.
 46. Lt. Col. Mohinder Singh Chopra, "History of the Operation held in connection with the Sylhet Referendum, July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 113.
 47. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.
 48. Report on behalf of Viceroy's Representatives, by Lt. Col. C. W. Pearson, dated 11 July 1947,

- R/3/1/158, pp. 109-111.
49. The author was an eye-witness to this while visiting 7 polling stations during polling hours on 6-7 July 1947. Also see Chopra, *op. cit.*
 50. H. C. Stork, *op. cit.*, R/3/1/158, p. 104.
 51. Chopra, *ibid.*, pp. 117-18.
 52. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram Conf. 2134-S, No. 157 MSG, 7 July, R/3/1/158, p. 71; Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. MSG, 12 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 74.
 53. Mountbatten to Nehru, 13 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 83; Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 2000-S, 16 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 90.
 54. For instance, Telegram from Rabindranath Choudhury to Viceroy, Nehru Patel, Ghandi and Kripalani, n.d., *ibid.*, p. 95C. Letter of confirmation along with post copy to Viceroy, 17 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 85b.
 55. Secretary, Sylhet District Referendum Committee to Viceroy, No. 6-234, R/3/1/158, p. 70.
 56. For details, see *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 1-8 July 1947.
 57. Rabindranath Choudhury to Viceroy, 17 July 1947, R/3/1/158, p. 95b.
 58. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8 July 1947.
 59. Hydari to Mountbatten, 11 July 1947, R/3/1/158, pp. 73a-b.
 60. *Ibid.*, Report, H. C. Stork, *ibid.*, p. 106.
 61. Nehru to Mountbatten, 13 July 1947 *ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
 62. Nehru to Governor of Assam, Tel. OTP No. 5483, 13 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 79a.
 63. Mountbatten to Nehru, 13 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 83.
 64. *Ibid.*
 65. Secretary, Governor of Assam, Shillong to Foreign, New Delhi No. 959/C, 14 July 1947. Personal for Pandt Nehru from Hydari, *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
 66. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86. Also testimony of Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
 67. Nehru to Mountbatten and Hydari, Tel. OTP No. 5530, 15 July 1947, R/3/1/158, p. 89.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 69. *Report*, Lt. Col. Pearson, *ibid.*, pp. 109-11.
 70. *Report*, D.C. Dutt, 19 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 112.
 71. Viceroy to Governor of Assam, Telegram No. 2000-S, 16 July 1947, *ibid.*, p. 92; and letters 21 July 1947 and 10 August 1947. *Ibid.*, pp. 98 and 124.
 72. *Report of the Bengal Boundary Commission relating to Sylhet District* and the adjoining Districts of Assam, New Delhi, 13 August 1947, Appendix III, L/PO/433, pp. 309-10.
 73. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
 74. *Ibid.*
 75. Proceedings of the Viceroy's 66th meeting held on 2 August 1947, R/3/1/158, p. 189.
 76. *Report*, Sylhet, L/PO/433, pp. 317-18.
 77. *Ibid.*

78. *Census of India, 1941, vol. IX, Assam*. Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1942, pp. 24-38.
79. *Report*, Sylhet, L/PO/433, p. 319.
80. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, Telegram No. 175/MSG, 10 August 1947, R/3/1/157, p. 209.
81. *Report*, Sylhet, L/PO/433, p. 319.
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
84. Interview with Hamidul Huq Chowdhury, Counsel for Bengal Provincial Muslim League and Government of East Bengal in 1947.
85. On 9 August Mountbatten was reported to have said that "if he could exercise some discretion in the matter he would much prefer to postpone its appearance until after the independence day itself." Therefore, he wrote to Nehru and Jinnah that he had not yet received all the award by the time he left for Karachi on 13 August. Alan Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*. London: Robert Hale, 1953, p. 152, and L/PO/433, p. 248.
86. *The Azad, Morning News Jugaveri, The Ananda Bazar Patrika, The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17-20 August 1947.
87. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor-General*, Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1963, pp. 32-33.

An Unknown Type of Mughal Mosque At Bhangni, Rangpur

Md. Abdul Bari

The building, unknown and unpublished so far, is located beside the village market of Bhangni under Mithapukur Upazila in the district of Rangpur. It is about ten miles north-east of the Upazila headquarter, and about two miles south-east of the Pairaband Bazar where is still seen the remains of the house of the famous Begum Rokeya. The mosque stands on the northern bank of a pond, which still serves the purpose of ablution for those offering prayers in the mosque. The building, as reported by the *mutawallī*, was thoroughly repaired at the initiative of the local people in the late seventies of the present century. This time an ugly flat-roofed masonry varanda was added in the east and the open grassy court in the front plastered smooth with brick, surkhi and cement. Notwithstanding its subsequent restoration and extension works the monument has still preserved much of its original

Built entirely of brick with plaster the building occupied the western side of a slightly raised platform, and the whole is enclosed by a low outer wall with a gateway in the east, now almost completely renovated. The mosque proper, consisting of a three-domed prayer chamber and a domed varanda in the east, is oblong in plan and measures exteriorly 46 ft. from north to south and 30 ft. from east to west. The four exterior angles are emphasised with circular towers, each being flanked on either side by an ornamental circular turrets. There are other subsidiary turrets in between these corner towers. All these towers and turrets unlike those of the sultanate monuments in the country, are extended beyond the horizontal parapet and crowned with cupolas and *kalasa* finials.

The oblong prayer chamber has three arched doorways in the east and one each side. The *qiblah* wall, corresponding to three eastern entrances, is internally recessed with three *mihṛāb* niches — the central one semi octagonal and the side ones semi-circular. The arches of the side *mihṛābs* are of semi-circular type but that in the central *mihṛāb* is of multi-cusped design. The central *mihṛāb* depicts an outward projection with bordering circular turrets — a feature which was introduced in Bengal by the

Mughals in imitation of their parent styles in Delhi, Agra and Lahore. The interior of the prayer chamber, measuring 35 ft. 6 ins. from north to south and 9 ft. 6 ins. from east to west, is divided into three equal square bays by two lateral arches on stumpy brick pilasters. Above the roof are three hemispherical domes of equal size, one over each bay. They are supported below by the lateral arches and the arches over the doorways and the *mihrābs*. The phase of transition for each dome is achieved by means of the triangular pendentives.

The varanda in front of the domed prayer chamber is internally 35 ft. 6 ins. by 6 ft. 6 ins. It could be entered from the east through five arched doorways, of which the two side ones are larger than the rest three. Over the roof of the varanda are four small domes, internally carried on three lateral arches springing from the side walls. The corners below these domes are filled with triangular pendentives. We are, therefore, getting seven domes in total — three above the prayer chamber and four over the varanda. All these seven domes are crowned with prominent lotus and *kalasa* finials.

The cornices and parapets of the mosque are horizontal, which is a distinguishing feature of the Mughal architecture in Bengal.

The surface of the walls, both inside and outside, was originally minutely decorated with stucco ornamentation some of which still survive in the outside over the northern and southern doorways and also in the *mihrābs*. The side *mihrāb* niches depict small trees and spiral scrolls with rosettes. The interior of the central *mihrāb* niche is panelled, each panel being embellished with rosettes and other designs. Above the doorways just cited there are three horizontal rows of vertically placed rectangular panels. These panels are again ornamented, the motifs being rosettes, floral scrolls and small trees of flowers. The spandrels of the doorway arches are also embossed with rosettes. On the outer face of each of the north and south walls of the varanda there is a blind arched panel, the spandrels of which are adorned with floral scrolls and rosettes. Both the arches of the blind panels have cusplings in their

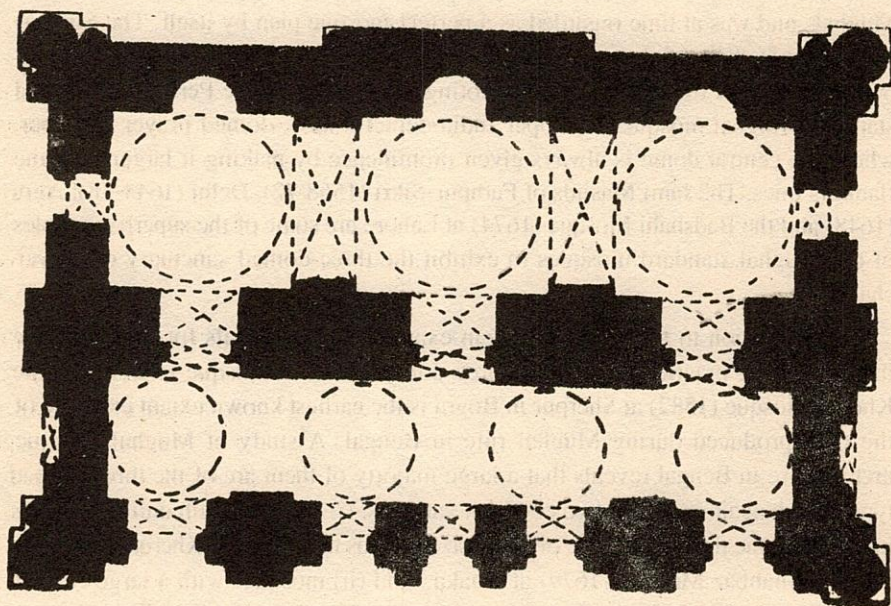
The corner towers and a number of subsidiary ornamental turrets have beautiful *kalasa* bases. The parapets are faced with a frieze of blind crestings, while the domes have basal leaf ornamentation. The mosque does not have any inscription and as such the accurate date of its construction is not known today. It is locally said to have been built by one local petty zamindar Enayet Karim Chowdhury, who had the residence behind the mosque. The present Mutawalli Muhammad Sirajul Karim Chowdhury claims his descent from the said builder of the mosque. But he could not say when did the proposed builder Enayet Karim Chowdhury flourish in the area and build it. Architecturally the mosque bears similarity with the Baghdhani Mosque (1791) in Rajshahi and the Mithapukur Mosque (1810) about nine miles off from it. It is on this

stylistical ground that the Bhangni Mosque in Rangpur may be said to have been erected either in the late 18th or in the early 19th century.

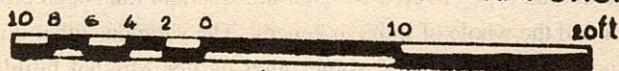
The Bhangni Mosque under study, which consists of a three-domed prayer chamber and a domed varanda in front, appears to be the only known example of its kind throughout the whole of India and even perhaps in the whole of the Islamic world. Three-domed covered mosque without the addition of *ṣahn* with surrounding *riwaqs*, which is perhaps a simplification of the Turkish multi-domed mosques or an elaboration of the Iranian iwan-i-Karkha style,¹ was an innovation of the Indian architects and started appearing in the sub-continent during the Lodi and the Suri periods such as the Bara Gumbad Mosque (1494) and the Moth-ki-Masjid (c.1505) in Delhi² and the Rohtasgarh Mosque (1543) in Bihar.³ Such a mosque style continued to have been very popularly practised in the subsequent period under the Mughals and was at time regarded as a perfect mosque plan by itself. The Sunhari Mosque at Delhi⁴ and the mosque beside the Taj Mahal at Agra (1634) are the two best examples of the type. It is worth noting that almost all the Persian influenced standard Mughal mosques in Upper India depict a three-domed prayer chamber, where the central dome is always given prominence by making it larger than the flanking ones. The Jami Masjids of Fathpur-Sikri (1568-72), Delhi (1644-48), Agra (1648) and the Badshahi Mosque (1674) at Lahore are some of the superb examples of the Mughal standard mosques to exhibit the three-domed sanctuary or prayer chamber.

In imitation to these Upper Indian examples the Mughals for the first time introduced the practice of erecting three-domed covered mosque in Bengal. The Kherua Mosque (1582) at Sherpur in Bogra is the earliest known extant example of the type produced during Mughal rule in Bengal. A study of Mughal mosque architecture in Bengal reveals that a large majority of them are of the three-domed type, which again produces two common varieties: (i) mosques with uniform domes in which all the three domes are of equal size such as the just cited Kherua Mosque or Khwaja Shahbaz Mosque (1679) at Dhaka,⁵ and (ii) mosques with a large central dome such as the Lalbagh Fort Mosque (1678-79) at Dhaka.⁶ But the present Bhangni Mosque marks a clear advance over the existing style by the introduction of a varanda in the front. And with the addition of this domed varanda a new and a rare variety of the three-domed type covered Mughal mosque had thus been created in Bengal in particular and the whole of India in general. The varanda, either domed or vaulted, is also known to have fronted some other earlier Mughal buildings in Bengal. But in those examples the main building is of the single-domed type such as the Atiya Mosque (1609) in Tangail and Dara Begum's Tomb (c.late 17th century) at Dhaka.⁷ Vaulted or domed varandas are frequently noticed in front of both the multi-domed and the single-domed buildings of the sultanate Bengal. Two earliest

examples of the sultanate period are the single-domed Gopalganj Mosque (1460) in Dinajpur and the multi-domed Darasbari Mosque (1479) at Firozpur in Rajshahi.⁸ It is from these sources, therefore, that the idea of the varanda of the Bhangni Mosque in Rangpur might have been directly derived, but the combination of the domed varanda with the three-domed mosque is a new approach, and certainly makes the structure a lone example of its kind to add to the already known various types of Mughal mosques.



PLAN: BHANGNI MOSQUE, MITHAPUKUR (RANGPUR)



Scale: 1" = 10ft

NOTES

1. The iwan-i-Karkha style mosque consists of a barrel vaulted structure with a dome in the centre such as those Muhammadiya near Nayin, which in turn appear to have been influenced by the same type of Sassanian edifice found in Khuzistan. See A. Godard *The Art of Iran*, London (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.), 1965, p. 285 and Fig. 203 on page 284.
2. R. Nath, *History of Sultanate Architecture*, New Dehli (Abhinav Publications), 1978, pp.108-11, Pls. CXXXVII & CXLIII; S. Grover, *The Architecture of India: Islamic (727-1707)*, New Delhi (Vikas Publishing House), 1989, pp. 145-47.
3. M.H. Kuraishi, *List of Ancient Monuments Protected Under Act VI of 1904 in the Provinces of Bihar and Orissa*, Calcutta (Govt. of India Central Publication Branch), 1931, pp. 181-82.
4. C. Stephen, *The Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*, Allahabad (Kitab Mahal), 1967, pp. 266 & 273-75.
5. A.H. Dani, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Dacca (Asiatic Society of Pakistan), 1961, pp. 176-77 & 199.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-12 & 253.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-12 & 154.

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The first part of the manuscript is a list of names and titles, including
 the names of the rulers of the Mughal Empire, such as Babur, Humayun,
 Akbar, and Shah Jahan. The list is arranged in chronological order, starting
 with Babur in 1519 and ending with Shah Jahan in 1658. Each name is
 followed by a brief description of his reign and achievements. The text is
 written in a clear, elegant hand, and the ink is a deep red color. The
 list is a valuable historical document, providing a concise overview of the
 Mughal Empire's history.

The second part of the manuscript is a collection of poems and songs, many of
 which are dedicated to the Mughal rulers. The poems are written in a
 highly stylized and ornate style, characteristic of the Mughal court
 poets. The songs are also written in a similar style, and many of them
 are set to music. The collection is a beautiful example of Mughal
 literature, and it provides a glimpse into the lives and tastes of the
 Mughal rulers.

The third part of the manuscript is a collection of historical accounts and
 chronicles, many of which are written by Mughal historians. The accounts
 provide a detailed and often colorful view of the events of the Mughal
 Empire. The chronicles are written in a clear and concise style, and they
 are a valuable source of information for historians. The collection is a
 masterpiece of Mughal history, and it is a must-read for anyone
 interested in the history of the Mughal Empire.

The fourth part of the manuscript is a collection of letters and documents, many
 of which are written by Mughal rulers. The letters provide a personal
 view of the rulers and their concerns. The documents are also written in a
 clear and concise style, and they provide a detailed view of the Mughal
 government and its operations. The collection is a valuable historical
 document, and it provides a glimpse into the lives and thoughts of the
 Mughal rulers.

The fifth part of the manuscript is a collection of legal codes and regulations, many
 of which are written by Mughal rulers. The codes provide a detailed view
 of the Mughal legal system and its operations. The regulations are also
 written in a clear and concise style, and they provide a detailed view of
 the Mughal government and its operations. The collection is a valuable
 historical document, and it provides a glimpse into the lives and thoughts
 of the Mughal rulers.

The sixth part of the manuscript is a collection of religious texts and
 prayers, many of which are written by Mughal rulers. The texts provide a
 detailed view of the Mughal religious beliefs and practices. The prayers
 are also written in a clear and concise style, and they provide a detailed
 view of the Mughal government and its operations. The collection is a
 valuable historical document, and it provides a glimpse into the lives and
 thoughts of the Mughal rulers.

The seventh part of the manuscript is a collection of miscellaneous items, many
 of which are written by Mughal rulers. The items provide a detailed view
 of the Mughal government and its operations. The collection is a valuable
 historical document, and it provides a glimpse into the lives and thoughts
 of the Mughal rulers.

Status of Calligraphers in Muslim Society

Shah Muhammad Shafiqullah

In the medieval Muslim society, the art prized above all others, was the art of calligraphy. The art seems to have come into prominence almost with the advent of Islam for committing to writing the sacred text of the Holy Qura'n. Reading and writing of the Qura'n are considered by the Faithful as meritorious acts, and emperors, kings, amirs and nobles sought merit by copying it.¹ A reputed calligrapher was the artist whom people honoured and loved most and even the kings and sultans felt proud of having him in their court. Possession of a piece of good calligraphy was a matter of pride at all social levels. Specimens of calligraphy by the renowned calligraphers were collected by the Muslim emperors, kings and nobles in the east with as much enthusiasm as for the collection of the paintings by the great artists in the west.

The great services of the calligraphers added to the reverence for their art and helped to sustain their vast prestige in the society. "Even the names of minor calligraphers were well-known and their profession was esteemed above that of all other artisans."² Hitti says: "Arabic literature has honorably preserved the names of calligraphers beginning with the days of al-Ma'mun, a fact which contrasts sharply with the omission of names of painters and other artists."³ The preservation of the names of the calligraphers and omission of the names of the other artists clearly manifest the excellent position of the art of calligraphy and the calligraphers in the medieval Muslim society.

The art of painting was not much honoured as it was not sanctioned by the religion of Islam. From the outset, calligraphy enjoyed more esteem than painting. With the passage of time, however, the two arts became almost equal in prestige until the painters overtook the calligraphers in eminence as it transpires from the appointment of painter Bihzad as director of the royal library of Shah Isma'il Safavi (A.D. 1499-1524).⁴ But calligraphy never lost its ground in Muslim art nor did

calligraphers lose their dignity. Shah Isma'il himself was such a great admirer of the art of calligraphy that when the fall of Tabriz was imminent in the hands of the Turks, he issued a special instruction to the effect that his calligrapher Shah Muhammad Nishapuri (d.1545) should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the invaders.⁵

The Muslims hardly considered architecture as an art and the architect as an artist or intellectual, rather merely a master-mason or technician or at best an engineer.⁶ The architects held a lower social status and had no opportunity to enter into the circles of kings and princes that brought together theologians, philosophers, poets, scholars, writers, calligraphers and painters. Even as late as the nineteenth century, on the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of the mosque of Muhammad 'Ali in Cairo, when French guests expressed their surprise at the absence of the architect from the function, they were simply informed that he had not been invited.⁷ But the case was quite opposite with the calligraphers. They were most honoured persons and held covetable and reponsible position in the society and the state throughout the Muslim world.

Calligrapher 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya (d. 750) was the chief secretary of Marwan (d. 750) the last Umayyad Khalifa of Damascus.⁸ Ibn Muqla (d. 940), the famous calligrapher of the Abbasid period, was the wazir of the three Abbasid Khalifas, al-Muqtadir (908-32), al-Qahir (932-34) and al-Radi (934-40).⁹ Another great calligrapher of the Abbasid times, 'Ali ibn Hilal (d. 1022), popularly known as Ibn al-Bawwab (son of a Janitor) was in charge of the library of the Buwayhid Baha al-daula (989-1012) in Shiraz for sometime.¹⁰ Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d.1298), the greatest *naskh* calligrapher Islam has ever produced, was the librarian of Musta'sim (d.1258), the last Abbasid Khalifa.¹¹ Side by side with the male calligraphers, there are also reports about the female ones. In Spain, two such reputed calligraphers were Labna and Fatima who held high posts in the court and the library of the Umayyad Khalifa Hakam II (961-76). Labna also worked as the secretary of Hakam.¹² Amir Badr al-Din, a reputed calligrapher of Timur's reign (1369-1405), served him as a minister.¹³ Maulana 'Abd al-Hayy, a specialist on *ta'liq* style was the private secretary of Sultan Abu Sa'id Mirza (1452-67).¹⁴ Calligrapher Khwaja Ikhtiyar adorned the post of the private secretary of Sultan Husain Mirza (1470-1505), king of Khurasan.¹⁵

In India, calligrapher 'Abd al-Samad was appointed the master of the imperial mint by Akbar (1556-1605).¹⁶ Inayatallah Shirazi, the librarian of the Imperial library of Akbar, was also a reputed calligrapher.¹⁷ Calligrapher Sayyid 'Ali, teacher of the Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was the superintendent of his Imperial library.¹⁸

The calligraphers were honoured with honorific titles by the kings and emperors throughout the Islamic world. Yaqut al-Musta'simi, who worked for the last Abbasid

Khalifa al-Musta'sim, received the titles of *qiblat al-kuttah* (focus of calligraphers) and *sultan al-kuttah*¹⁹ (the sultan of the calligraphers). Mir 'Ali Tabrizi, who worked under Timur, was designated *qiblat al-kuttah*.²⁰ Another renowned calligrapher of Tabriz, Maulana Azhar Tabrizi (d. 1475/6) was known as *ustad-i-ustaan*²¹ (master of masters). Maulana Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, a pupil of Mir 'Ali of Tabriz, was honoured with the title of *qiblat al-kuttah*.²²

In India also, the calligraphers were greatly honoured with royal titles, specially during the Mughal rule. Mr 'Abdallah Tabrizi was given the title of *muskin qalam* (musk-penned) by the Emperor Akbar.²³ Muhammad Husain Kashmiri, the greatest calligrapher of Akbar's court, was honoured with the title of *zarrin qalam* (the possessor of the golden pen) by the emperor.²⁴ The Emperor Akbar also conferred on Mir Dawri, an expert calligrapher in the *nasta'liq* style, the title of *katib al-mulk*²⁵ (calligrapher of the empire). Mulla 'Abd al-Rahim, a calligrapher of Khan-i-Khannan, was known as *ambarin qalam*²⁶ (perfume-penned). Sayyid 'Ali Tabrizi, a noted calligrapher of Shah Jahan's court, was honoured by the emperor with the title of *jawahir raqam*²⁷ (diamond-penned). Another calligrapher 'Abd al-Baqi received the title of *yaqut raqam* (ruby-penned) from the Emperor Shah Jahan.²⁸ Emperor Arangzeb honoured calligrapher Hidayatallah with the title of *zarrin raqam*²⁹ (golden-penned).

Apart from honorific titles, calligraphers also received high salary from their patrons. 'Abd al-Hayy, a renowned calligrapher of Akbar's court, held a *mansab* of 500.³⁰ Mulla Muhammad Amin, a reputed calligrapher and superintendent of the library of 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i-Khannan, a distinguished noble in the court of Akbar and Jahangir was paid a monthly salary of four thousand rupees.³¹

It is worth mentioning that the calligraphers enjoyed unrivalled social status so much so that they often cared little for the royal authority. This may be illustrated by an historical anecdote relating to Mir 'Imad al-Din al-Husaini (d. 1651). This famous *nasta'liq* calligrapher of Qazvin refused to comply with the order of the Persian king Shah 'Abbas the great (1588-1629) to make him a copy of the Persian epic, the *Shah-Nama* of Firdausi. The Shah having sent him seventy *tumans* enquired for the book after the lapse of almost a year, whereupon Mir 'Imad responded by sending him only seventy lines from the beginning of the epic, which he considered sufficient against the payment. This offended the king who sent back those seventy lines to the calligrapher and demanded his *tumans* back. Mir took a pair of scissors and cut those lines into seventy pieces. Each of the pieces he gave to one of his pupils, who paid him a *tuman*. Mir 'Imam then counted up seventy *tumans* in the presence of the royal messenger and thereby took vengeance upon the Shah. This incident angered the Shah to such an extent that he is said to have engineered the murder of Mir soon afterwards.³²

The art of calligraphy was a costly exercise but its high price was considered minimal by its admirers. A calligraphic work of four hundred pages to be sold for five hundred pounds, was not considered an unusually high price.³³ There are reports that an admirer of the calligrapher Khalilallah wanted to buy some of his writings for seven hundred rupees, but the owner would not sell them short of an Arabian horse which the buyer collected and secured the papers.³⁴

There is an interesting anecdote narrated about the calligrapher Mir Khalilallah Shah who once copied the *Nauras* and made a present of it to Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (1579-1629), the most illustrious king of Bijapur. The king was so pleased at the gift that he bestowed upon the calligrapher the title of *badsha-i-qalam* (the king of the pen) and made him sit on his throne—an unusual royal favour, in recognition of his artistic accomplishments. The ceremony being over, the king ordered his courtiers to accompany the calligrapher to his residence.³⁵

From the above discussion it is evident that the calligraphers were the most honoured artists in the Muslim society. They enjoyed a superior social status and recognition. Even the name of a minor calligrapher has come down to us in records. While the painter was not duly honoured as his art was not sanctioned by the religion, and the architect, the builder of the beautiful edifices in Islam, was treated not an artist but merely a master-mason, the calligrapher was honoured with honorific titles such as *qiblat al-kuttāb*, *zarrin qalam*, *jawahir raqam*, *katib al-mulk* noted above. The high salaries of the calligraphers and their appointments to the highest posts of the state as ministers, secretaries, librarians and the like attest to the distinctive place occupied by the art and the artists in the cultural history of the Muslims.

NOTES

1. For details, see Shah Muhammad Shafiqullah, *Calligraphy in the Sultanate Architecture of India: A Study of Ornamentation and Stylistic Development* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, 1986), pp. 20-25.
2. Ernst Kuhnelt, "Calligraphy and Epigraphy", in *Encyclopedia of World Art*, Vol. III (New York, 1960), p. 16.
3. P. K. Hitti, *Islam: A Way of Life* (London, 1970), p. 168.
4. Alexandre Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, Eng. transl. by Robert Erich Wolf (London, 1980), 26.
5. A. U. Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. II (London, 1939), p. 1738; Cf. Richard Ettinghausen, "Interaction and Integration in Islamic Art", in *Unity and Variety in Muslim*

Civilization, ed. by Gustave E. Von Grunebaum (Chicago, 1967), pp. 112-13.

6. Alexandre Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Maulavi Ihtiram al-Din Ahmad Shaghil 'Uthmani, *Sahifah-i-Khushnawisan* (Aligarh, 1963), p. 23.
9. Nabia Abbot, *The Rise of North Arabic Script and Its Kurnaic Development* (Chicago, 1939), p. 33; Y. H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy* (London, 1978, p. 17.
10. D. S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn al-Bawwab Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dubline, 1955), p. 5.
11. Cf. Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, Vol. 1, Eng. transl. by H. Blochmann, rev. and ed. by Lieut. Colonel D. C. Phillott (Reprint, New Delhi, 1977), p. 106, f. n. 5.
12. S. M. Imamuddin, *Hispano-Arab Libraries*, Memoir No. 4 (Karachi, 1961), pp. 4, 8.
13. A. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 1733.
14. Cf. Abu'l Fazl, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
15. *Ibid.*, f. n. 7.
16. K. M. Yusuf, "Calligraphy under the Mughals", *The Islamic Review*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 7 (July, 1960), p. 22.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
19. D. S. Rice *op. cit.*, p. 10.
20. A. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 1734.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 1735.
22. Pares I. S. M. Rahman, *Islamic Calligraphy in Medieval India*, (Dacca, 1979), p. 8.
23. Qazi Ahmad Mian Akhtar, "Muslim Calligraphy in *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan*, ed. by S. M. Ikram and P. Spear (Karachi, 1955), p. 78.
24. Abu'l Fazl, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
25. *Ibid.*, f. n. 5.
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An Analysis of Imbalances in the Mobilization of Divisional and Regional Deposits of Commercial Banks of Bangladesh During 1970-1986

M. Zainul Abedin

1.1. Factors Influencing Deposit Mobilization

Deposit mobilization is one of the most important functions of the commercial banks. It is because they do business with other people's money or deposits. In the narrow sense, deposit is considered as the main product of the banking industry. This product has three dimensions, viz., (a) physical unit as represented by the number of accounts, (b) size of output as represented by the amount of money involved, and (c) time period for which the amount involved stay with the bank. Time, the last dimension, is usually eliminated by expressing the number or output as an average of monthly or yearly balances.¹ So the growth of output is expressed in terms of either amount or number or both. The total amount of deposits of Bangladesh increased from Tk. 3.1 billion in 1970 to Tk. 104.6 billion in 1986. Similarly, the number of various kinds of deposit accounts rose from 1.4 million in 1970 to 13.5 million in 1986.² This phenomenal increase in deposits and deposit accounts was due mainly to expansion of bank branches in un-banked areas in the post-nationalization years.

The mobilization of bank deposits is fundamentally influenced by three major factors, viz., (a) bank credit, (b) increase in national income, and (c) the rate of interest paid on time and savings deposits.³ In fact, growth of deposits and credits are inter-related, each one influencing the other. Indian experience indicates that a one per cent increase in the bank advances result in about 0.62 per cent increase in demand deposits.⁴ So deposit mobilisation largely depends on the loans and advances policy of the commercial banks. Advances do not automatically come back to the banks as deposits. "Much depends on how well the banking system plugs the leakage of advances into cash withdrawals by the public, in what from it gives the advances and what degree of supervision and skill in recovery it brings to bear on these

advances."⁵ Thus an increase in advances leads to a substantial increase in deposits out of which more loans and advances can be made. Such a policy allows the banking system to increase bank advances without creating much inflationary pressure. It also firmly establishes "the beneficent circle of advances — deposits-advances", and so on. "More generally, a banker who casts himself in the role of a financial intermediary and marries credit to input and input to output and output to marketing and marketing to deposits and thus completes the circle, stands to gain more and makes the community to gain more in two ways: he causes the banking service to improve and prevents the liquidity ratio from falling, thus making further lending possible."⁶

Apart from advances, deposit is also influenced by the growth and level of national income and its distribution pattern. Incomes of households below the subsistence level discourage savings and deposits. On the other hand, R.K. Sen observed from the Indian experiences that there was no positive correlation between the skewed distribution of income and the growth of domestic savings. In fact it was just the reverse.⁷ So the larger the size of the middle income groups in an economy, the greater is the possibility of deposit mobilization. Again when income grows, a part of it becomes savings. Since a part of savings comes in banks in the form of time and savings deposits, the aggregate deposit of the banking system is positively related to income.

Another major factor that influences the mobilization of deposits is the rate of interest paid on time and saving deposits. In order to encourage deposit mobilization, the weighted average rate of interest on deposits was raised from 4.23 per cent in 1975-76 to 6.98 per cent in 1980-81, and to 8.54 per cent in 1985-86 by the Bangladesh Bank.⁸ These measures were also responsible for the phenomenal growth of deposits in the post-independence years.

Banking business progresses with the expansion of its resource base which is largely dominated by its deposit base. In fact, deposit base is looked upon as "the main component and yardstick for any growth index"⁹ of banking business. So a sound resource base of a bank requires a sound resource mix which, again, demands a balanced deposit mix comprising demand and time deposits.¹⁰ Demand deposits are payable on demand. Such deposits are kept in current accounts and bear no interest for the depositors. On the contrary, beyond certain minimum amount, the depositors are required to pay the bank a service charge or incidental charge for the safe keeping of their deposits.¹¹ In Bangladesh a part of the savings deposits (varying from 12 to 15 per cent) is also included in demand deposits.¹²

A time deposit, on the other hand, is one in which the liability of the banker is not immediate. The tenures of time deposits vary from account to account. The bank

usually pay interests on time deposits depending on their tenures. The greater the tenure of the time deposit, the higher is the rate of interest. In Bangladesh commercial banks pay interests, which vary from 12 per cent to 14.25 per cent (from January, 1987) depending on tenures varying from 3 months to 3 years, on time deposits.¹³ The savings deposits are also included in time deposits. Since those are withdrawable at short notices, the banks pay relatively lower rates of interests on savings deposits.

It is important for a bank to remain alert about the maintenance of a balanced deposit mix, since the demand deposits are withdrawable at any time. Time deposits involve high service costs by way of interest paid on deposits, but they simultaneously give a bank the comfort and security of resource base.¹⁴ So a bank's deposit mobilization is influenced by many factors including its diversified efforts. In Bangladesh, time deposits as percentage of total deposits increased from 61 per cent in 1976 to 64 per cent in 1981 and to 70 per cent in 1986.¹⁵ The larger share of time deposits in the total amount of bank deposits indicates the banks' inability to bring back their advances as demand deposits.

The aggregate bank deposits, including demand and time deposits, constituted as high as 74 per cent of the supply of broad money in 1975, 78 per cent in 1980 and 85 per cent in 1986. However, the demand deposits comprised 54 per cent of the supply of narrow money in 1975, 56 per cent in 1980 and 63 per cent in 1986.¹⁶ "The power to create money possessed by the commercial banking system is of great economic significance. It results in the elastic credit system which is necessary for economic progress at a relatively steady rate of growth."¹⁷ Again, the rising share of aggregate bank deposits in total monetary resources implies an expansion of banking habits and an increase in the value of money multiplier.¹⁸ The phenomenon bounds the banks to make their maximum efforts for collecting deposits. The regional deposits may also be used as an indicator of the strength of a regional economy. The volume of deposits of a region, however, depends mainly on the level and pattern of distribution of the regional income.

1.2 An analysis of Divisional and Regional Deposit Imbalances

The imbalances in the distribution of bank deposits were wide and alarming under private ownership of banks upto 1970. After nationalization of banks, attempts were made to reduce deposit imbalances over the years. Bank branches were expanded in the un-banked areas for mobilizing untapped idle savings of those areas. By investing deposits in the form of advances and by bringing back the advances as deposits to the banks through financial intermediation, it is generally possible on their part to remove regional deposit imbalances. Efforts are made here to measure the extent of reduction in the divisional and regional deposit imbalances during 1970-86

For this purpose the national, divisional and regional averages of deposits per million of population are worked out by dividing the total amount of deposits by the total population of the respective areas. The location quotient (L.Q) technique is used to measure the deviations of the regional and divisional averages from the national average. The following formula is used for this purpose:

$$L. Q. = \frac{\frac{D_r}{P_r}}{\frac{D}{P}}$$

where 'Dr', 'Pr', 'D' and 'P' respectively denote deposits of the region, population of the region, total deposits mobilized in the country and its total population. Here also L.Q. may be equal to one, less than or greater than one. If it is one, there is no difference between the regional and national averages. If it is less than one, the region is below the national average; while if it is greater than one, the region is above the national average.

Table 1 exhibits the divisional and regional imbalances in the expansion of bank deposits during 1970-86. Deposits per million of population rose from Tk. 44.01 million in 1970 to Tk. 1017.42 million in 1986 for the nation as a whole. This means an increase of 2212 per cent. But the divisional and regional increases do not show the same trend. In 1970 commercial banks showed wide variation in the mobilization of bank deposits from different divisions and regions. Among the four Divisions, Dhaka and Chittagong were above the national average with L.Qs. of 2.00 and 1.12 respectively. The remaining two Divisions, viz., Khulna and Rajshahi were below the national average with low L.Qs. of 0.42 and 0.32 respectively. Though in absolute terms the deposits of each Division increased significantly, the relative positions of Khulna and Rajshahi Divisions did not improve much even in 1986. However, the positive changes in the L.Qs of these two Divisions were 9.52 per cent in the case of Khulna and 12.50 per cent in the case of Rajshahi during 1970-86. With those improvements, the L.Qs. of Khulna and Rajshahi Divisions rose to 0.46 and 0.36 respectively in 1986 though their rank positions remained unaltered. On the contrary, the L.Qs. of the Divisions above the national average declined to 1.77 in Dhaka, and to 1.11 in Chittagong. The decline was 11.50 per cent in the former case and 0.89 per cent in the latter. The rank positions of the Divisions remained unchanged during 1970-86. Since the Divisions with L.Qs. above the national average decreased, while those with L.Qs. below the national average increased, it can be stated that the divisional imbalances in the mobilization of the deposits got reduced to some extent.

Table 1 also reveals that deposits per million of population was the highest

15 Bogra	35	1506	2.1	3.2	16.67	470.63	0.38	0.46	7	7	+21.05
16. Dinajpur	37	1161	2.4	3.8	15.42	305.53	0.35	0.30	9	14	-14.29
17. Pabna	37	1673	2.7	4.0	13.70	418.25	0.31	0.41	10	10	+ 32.25
18. Rajshahi	74	2992	4.0	6.2	18.50	482.58	0.42	0.47	6	6	+11.90
19. Rangpur	50	1726	5.1	7.7	9.80	224.16	0.22	0.22	14	16	0.00
iv) Rajshahi Division	233	9058	16.3	24.9	14.29	363.78	0.32	0.36	D	D	+ 12.50
Bangladesh	2997	104591	68.1	102.8	44.01	1017.42					

Note: 1. Dr = Deposit of the Region in million taka, Pr = Population of the Region in million; Dr/Pr = Deposit of the Region per million of population in million taka.

L.Q. = Location quotient = $\frac{Dr/Pr}{D/Pr}$

2. The Divisions are ranked by capital letters and the Regions are ranked by Arabic numbers.

3. The sign # indicates the Regions and Divisions above the national average.

Source: 1. Population figures of 1970 were obtained from BBS, 1981 *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh*, p. 39, while those of 1986 were taken from BBS, 1984-85 *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh*, p.125.

2. Regional Deposit figures were estimated for the year 1970 from the contrary total figure of the same year on the basis of regional shares of deposits available on 30 June, 1975 for the first instance. (See *Scheduled Banks Statistics*, September, 1975 and *Bulletin of July, 1973*), Regional deposit figures of 1986 were obtained from Scheduled Banks Statistics. (April-June, 1986).

(Tk. 210.00 million) in Dhaka region with the L.Q. of 4.77 in 1970. Chittagong was in the second position with deposits of Tk.156.59 million per million of population and with the L.Q. of 3.56. These two regions were above the national average in 1970. The remaining 17 regions of Bangladesh were below the national average in the same year in terms of deposit mobilization per million of population. Among the regions below the national average, Khulna had deposits of Tk. 35.00 million per million of its population with the L.Q of 0.80. All other regions remained far below of this level. Faridpur stood at the lowest position with deposits of Tk. 6.67 million per million of its population and the L.Q of only 0.15. The regions of Tangail and Mymensingh rose to the next rank position of 16 with the equal L.Q. of 0.20. The regions of Patuakhali, Rangpur, Noakhali, Barisal, Jessore and Comilla had L.Qs. between 0.21 and 0.29. In these regions, the mobilization of deposits per million of population varied between Tk. 9.33 million and Tk. 12.90 million. The L.Qs. of the regions of Pabna, Dinajpur, Kushtia, Bogra, Rajshashi and Chittagong Hill Tracts fell between 0.31 and 0.45 Their deposits per million of population varied between Tk. 13.70 million and Tk. 20.00 million. The rank position of Sylhet was 4 with the L.Q. of 0.60 and the deposits of Tk. 26.22 million per million of its population. Thus in 1970 wide variations were observed among the regions in terms of mobilization of deposits per million of population .

After nationalization of the commercial banks in 1972, the situation began to improve steadily. Table 2 and Figure 1 display the changing pattern of L.Qs. of the regions both above and below the national average during 1970-86. The L.Qs. of Dhaka and Chittagong, both of which were regions above the national average declined by 9.43 per cent and 23.60 per cent respectively. Thus the L.Qs. of these two regions fell from 4.77 and 3.56 in 1970 to 4.32 and 2.72 in 1986 respectively.

In comparison with their positions in 1970, all but two regions below the national average improved or maintained the level of their L.Qs. in 1986. The two regions were Dinajpur and Mymensingh. The L.Q. of the former declined from 0.35 in 1970 to 0.30 in 1986 recording a fall of 14.29 per cent, while the same of the latter fell from 0.20 in 1970 to 0.18 in 1986 postering a decline of 10 per cent. The L.Qs. of Rangpur and Patuakhali remained unaltered during 1970-86. Though in absolute terms deposit mobilization per million of population in these regions increased from Tk. 9.80 million and Tk. 9.33 million in 1970 to Tk. 224.16 million and Tk. 209.09 million in 1986, their relative rank positions deteriorated from 14 and 15 in 1970 to 16 and 17 in 1986 respectively.

TABLE 2

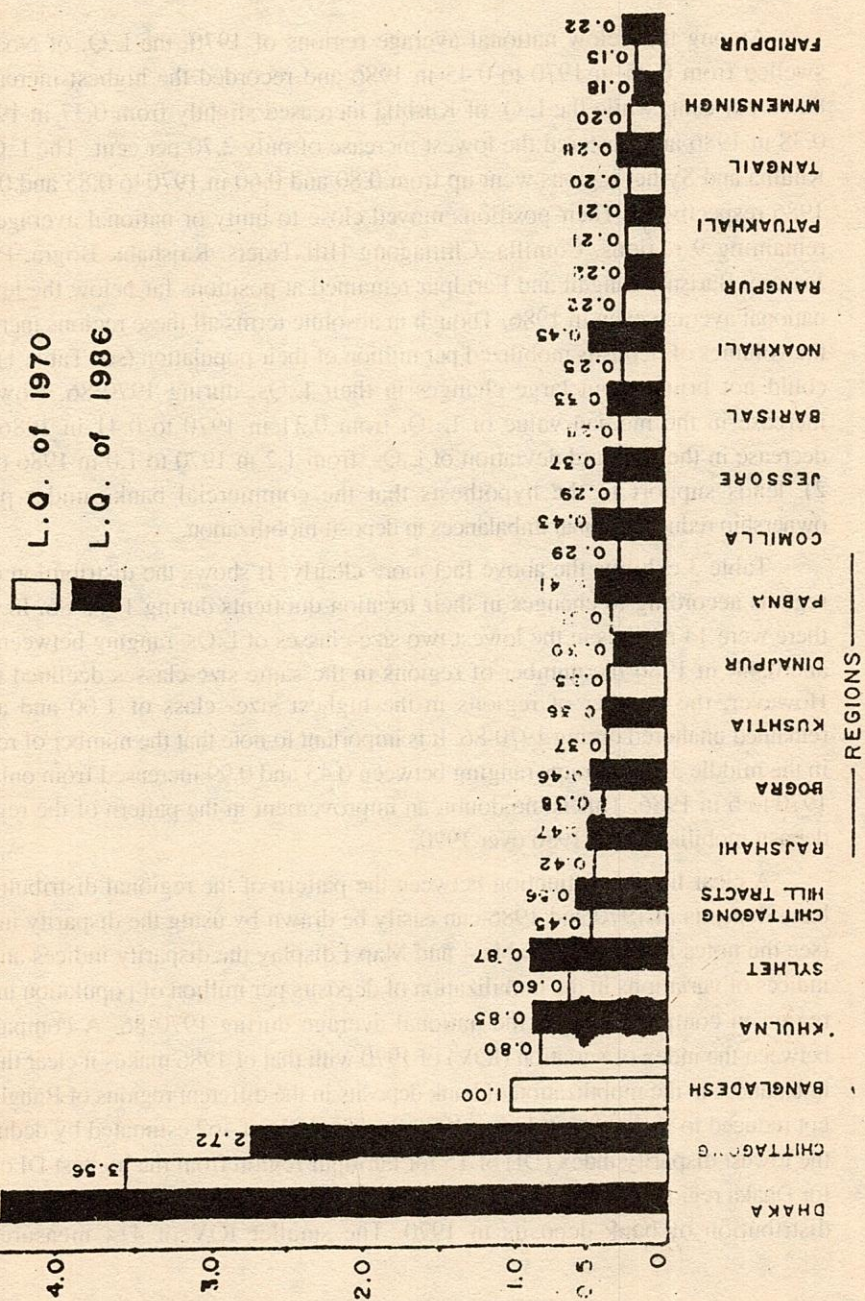
Deposit Imbalances: Classification of the Regions According to L.Qs. Above and Below the National Average of 1970 and Changes in Their L.Qs. of 1986.

Regions	L.Q		Rank		Percentage (%) variation in L.Q. of 1986 over that of 1970
	1970	1986	1970	1986	
1	2	3	4	5	6
I. Above the national average regions (1970)					
1. Dhaka	4.77	4.32	1	1	-9.43
2. Chittagong	3.56	2.72	2	2	-23.60
II. Below the national average regions(1970)					
3. Khulna	0.80	0.85	3	4	+6.25
4. Sylhet	0.60	0.87	4	3	+45.00
5. Chittagong Hill Tracts	0.45	0.56	5	5	+24.44
6. Rajshahi	0.42	0.47	6	6	+11.90
7. Bogra	0.38	0.46	7	7	+21.05
8. Kushtia	0.37	0.38	8	11	+2.70
9. Dinajpur	0.35	0.30	9	14	-14.29
10. Pabna	0.31	0.41	10	10	+32.25
11. Comilla	0.29	0.43	11	9	+48.28
12. Jessore	0.29	0.37	11	12	+27.59
13. Barisal	0.28	0.33	12	13	+17.86
14. Noakhali	0.25	0.45	13	8	+80.00
15. Rangpur	0.22	0.22	14	16	0.00
16. Patuakhali	0.21	0.21	15	17	0.00
17. Tangail	0.20	0.28	16	15	33.33
18. Mymensingh	0.20	0.18	16	18	-10.00
19. Faridpur	0.15	0.22	17	16	+46.67

Note: 1. 1970: Mean of L.Qs. = 0.74; Median of L.Qs. = 0.31; S.D. of L.Qs. = 1.2
1986: Mean of L.Qs. = 0.74; Median of L.Qs. = 0.41; S. D. of L.Qs. = 1.0
2. Calculations are shown in Appendix Table 2.

Source: Table 1.

Figure 1: Multiple Bar Diagram Illustrating Deposit Imbalances and the Changing Pattern of L.Q.s. Among Above and Below the National Average Regions During 1970-86.



SOURCE: TABLE - 2

Among the below national average regions of 1970, the L.Q. of Noakhali swelled from 0.25 in 1970 to 0.45 in 1986 and recorded the highest increase of 80.00 per cent, while the L.Q. of Kushtia increased slightly from 0.37 in 1970 to 0.38 in 1986 and posted the lowest increase of only 2.70 per cent. The L.Qs. of Khulna and Sylhet regions went up from 0.80 and 0.60 in 1970 to 0.85 and 0.87 in 1986 respectively. Their positions moved close to unity or national average. The remaining 9 regions, Comilla, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Jessore, Barisal, Tangail and Faridpur remained at positions far below the level of national average even in 1986. Though in absolute terms all these regions increased the volumes of deposits mobilized per million of their population (see Table 1), they could not bring about large changes in their L.Qs. during 1970-86. However, increase in the median value of L. Q. from 0.31 in 1970 to 0.41 in 1986, and decrease in the standard deviation of L.Qs. from 1.2 in 1970 to 1.0 in 1986 (Table 2), lends support to the hypothesis that the commercial banks under public ownership reduce regional imbalances in deposit mobilization.

Table 3 exhibits the above fact more clearly. It shows the distribution of the regions according to changes in their location quotients during 1970-86. In 1970, there were 14 regions in the lowest two size-classes of L.Qs. ranging between 0.15 and 0.44; in 1986 the number of regions in the same size-classes declined to 11. However, the number of regions in the highest size- class of 1.00 and above remained unaltered during 1970-86. It is important to note that the number of regions in the middle 3 size-groups ranging between 0.45 and 0.99 increased from only 3 in 1970 to 6 in 1986. This is, no doubt, an improvement in the pattern of the regional deposit mobilisation in 1986 over 1970.

A clear line of distinction between the pattern of the regional distribution of bank deposits in 1970 and 1986 can easily be drawn by using the disparity indices (see the notes in Table 4). Table 4 and Map I display the disparity indices and the indices of variations in the mobilization of deposits per million of population in each region in comparison with the national average during 1970-86. A comparison between the index of variation (IOV) of 1970 with that of 1986 makes it clear that the imbalances in the mobilization of bank deposits in the different regions of Bangladesh got reduced to some extent during 1970-86. The IOV of 462 estimated by deducting the lowest disparity index (DI) of 15 for Faridpur region from the highest DI of 477 for Dhaka region indicates the existence of a wide range of imbalances in the regional distribution of bank deposits in 1970. The smaller IOV of 414 measured by

deducting the lowest DI of 18 for the region of Mymensingh from the highest DI of 432 for Dhaka implies that the imbalances in the regional distribution of bank deposits declined to some extent by 1986.

TABLE 3
Changing Pattern of the Regions According to the Size Class
Distribution of Their Location Quotients During 1970-86.

Size class of L.Q.	Number of Regions	
	1970	1986
1	2	3
0.15-0.29	9	5
0.30-0.44	5	6
0.45-0.59	1	4
0.60-0.74	1	0
0.75-0.99	1	2
1.00 and above	2	2
Total:	19	19

Source: Adopted from Table 1.

A look into the figures of Table 4 makes it clearer that the magnitude of imbalances was relatively small among the Divisions and relatively large among the Regions. The IOV between the top Division of Dhaka with DI of 200 and the bottom Division of Rajshahi with DI of only 32 was 168 (200-32) in 1970, while that between the top Region of Dhaka with DI of 477 and the bottom region of Faridpur with DI of only 15 was as high as 462 (477-15) in the same year. Table 1 clearly shows that the rank positions of the Divisions remained unchanged during 1970-86. The IOV between the top region of Dhaka with DI of 432 and the bottom Region of Mymensingh with DI of 18 was 414 (432-18) in 1986 as against the IOV between the top Division of Dhaka with DI of 177 and the bottom Division of Rajshahi with DI of 36 was 141 (177-36) in the same year. It indicates that the regional imbalances were greater than the divisional imbalances in the distribution of bank deposits.

TABLE 4

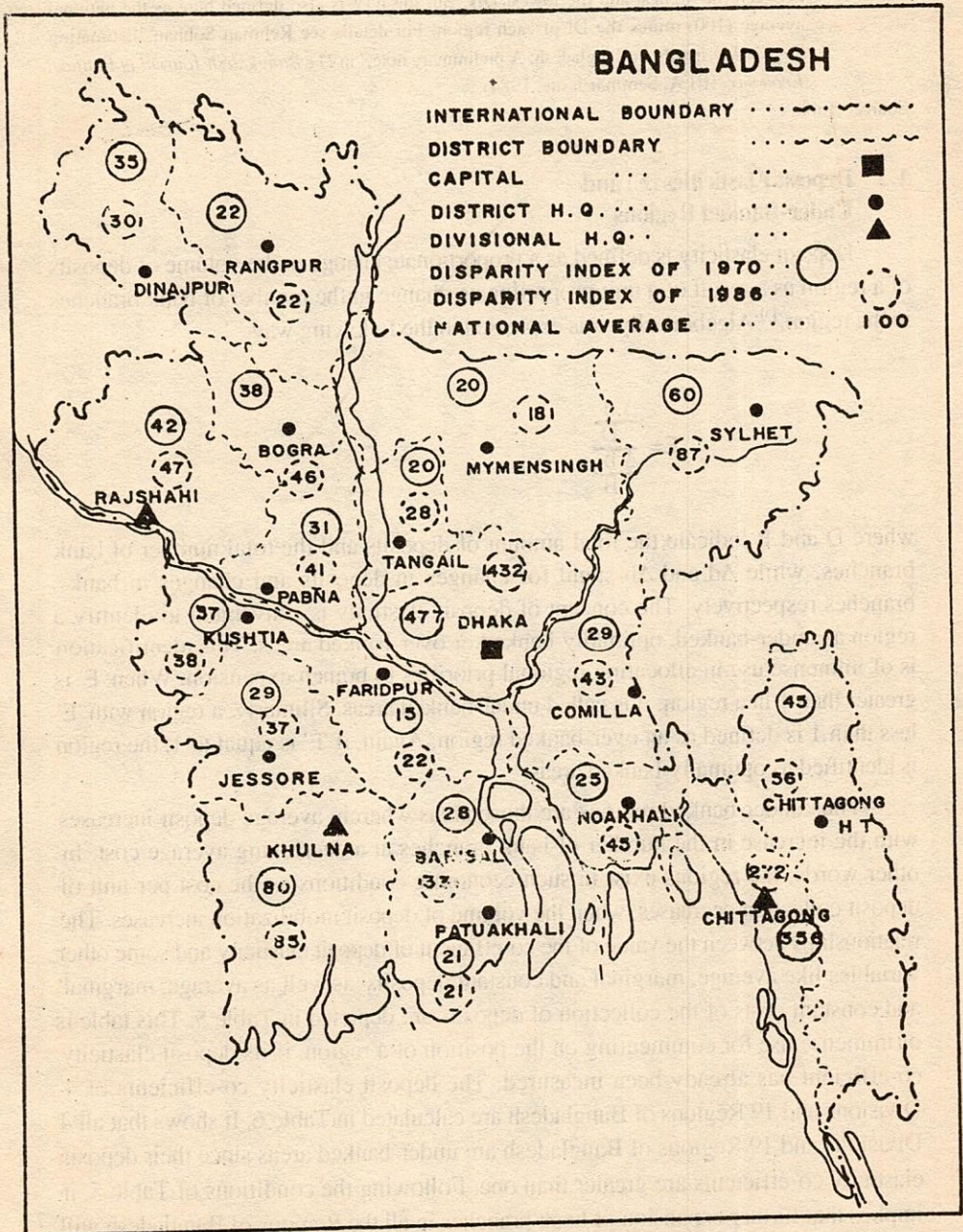
Disparity Indices (DI) and Indices of Variations (IOV) in the Mobilization of Deposits per Million of Population in Each Region in Comparison with the National Averages During 1970-86.

Region and Division	(Amount in million Taka)					
	1970			1986		
	Deposits per million of population	Disparity Index	IOV from N.A.	Deposits per million of population (Tk.)	Disparity Index	IOV from N.A.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Chittagong	156.59	356	+256	2772.46	272	+172
2. Chittagong Hill Tracts	20.00	45	-55	568.89	56	-44
3. Comilla	12.86	29	-71	436.42	43	-57
4. Noakhali	10.97	25	-75	457.78	45	-55
5. Sylhet	26.22	60	-40	886.72	87	-13
i) Chittagong Division	49.21	112	+12	1126.18	111	+11
6. Dhaka	210.00	477	+377	4398.14	432	+332
7. Faridpur	6.67	15	-85	220.36	22	-78
8. Mymensingh	8.77	20	-80	186.73	18	-82
9. Tangail	9.00	20	-80	288.62	28	-72
ii) Dhaka Division	80.05	200	+100	1805.39	177	+77
10. Barisal	12.11	28	-72	336.55	33	-67
11. Jessore	12.90	29	-71	371.70	37	-63
12. Khulna	35.00	80	-20	863.53	85	-15
13. Kushtia	16.47	37	-63	383.33	38	-62
14. Patuakhali	9.33	21	-79	209.09	21	-79
iii) Khulna Division	18.30	42	-58	470.15	46	-54
15. Bogra	16.67	38	-62	470.63	46	-54
16. Dinajpur	15.42	35	-65	305.53	30	-70
17. Pabna	13.70	31	-69	418.25	41	-59
18. Rajshahi	18.50	42	-58	482.58	47	-53
19. Rangpur	9.80	22	-78	224.16	22	-78
iv) Rajshahi Division	14.29	32	-68	363.78	36	-64
Bangladesh (N.A.) =	44.01	100		1017.42		100

Note: 1. IOV = Index of variation from national average; N.A. = National Average.

2. Disparity Index (DI) is calculated by raising the national average amount of deposits per million of population to 100 and then expressing the regional average amount of deposits per million of population as its percentage. The index of variation (IOV) is defined as the difference

Map 1: Indices of Disparity in the Distribution of Bank Deposits in Different Regions in 1970 and 1986.



SOURCE : TABLE - 4

between the highest and the lowest DIs. But the IOV is also defined here as the national average (100) minus the DI of each region. For details see Rehman Sobhan, "Estimating Regional Disparity in Bangladesh: A preliminary note," in *The Bangladesh Journal of Political Economy*. (BEA, Seminar Issue, 1984).

Source: Table 1.

1.3 Deposit Elasticities (E) and Under-Banked Regions

Deposit elasticity is defined as a proportionate change in the volume of deposits of a region as a result of a unit proportionate change in the number of bank branches in the region.¹⁹ Algebraically, it is expressed in the following way:

$$E = \frac{\frac{\Delta d}{D}}{\frac{\Delta b}{B}}$$

where D and B indicate the total amount of deposits and the total number of bank branches, while Δd and Δb stand for changes in deposits and changes in bank branches respectively. The concept of deposit elasticity is convenient to identify a region as under-banked, optimally-banked or over-banked areas. This identification is of immense use in allocating regional priorities to branch expansion. When 'E' is greater than 1 in a region, it is called under-banked areas. Similarly, a region with 'E' less than 1 is defined as an over-banked region. Again, if 'E' is equal to 1, the region is identified as optimally-banked areas.

Thus under-banked regions are those areas wherein average deposit increases with the increase in the number of bank branches at a decreasing average cost. In other words, the regions exist in such economic conditions as the cost per unit of deposit collection decreases, when the volume of deposit mobilization increases. The relationships between the value of the co-efficient of deposit elasticity and some other variables like average, marginal and constant deposits as well as average, marginal and constant costs of the collection of deposits are depicted in Table 5. This table is of immense use for commenting on the position of a region, if its deposit elasticity co-efficient has already been measured. The deposit elasticity co-efficients of 4 Divisions and 19 Regions of Bangladesh are calculated in Table 6. It shows that all 4 Divisions and 19 Regions of Bangladesh are under-banked areas since their deposit elasticity co-efficients are greater than one. Following the conditions of Table 5, it implies that further expansion of bank branches in all the Regions of Bangladesh will increase the volume of deposits more than in proportionate to changes in the number of bank branches. The marginal deposit will be greater than the average as the latter

increases. As a result, the average cost of deposit collection will be lower than the marginal cost. The expansion process will continue upto the optimum point where the marginal and average costs become equal and the latter reaches its lowest level. Until that point is reached, per unit cost of bank operation in Bangladesh will be decreasing which will encourage banking expansion. This has similarity with the findings of the National Commission on Money, Banking and Credit (1984-86) which states, "banking industry in Bangladesh is at a growing stage and per unit cost of operation is still decreasing. Let the position continue until it reaches its lowest."²⁰

TABLE 5

The Relationship Between the Value of the co-efficient of Deposit Elasticity and some other variables Including Average, Marginal and Constant deposits; and Average, Marginal and Constant Costs of the Collection of Deposits.

Value of the Co-efficient of deposit elasticity (DE)	Corresponding nature of relationship between marginal and average deposits	Corresponding nature of relationship between marginal and average costs of deposits
Greater than one:	Average deposit increasing with marginal deposit greater than the average deposit	Averaging cost decreasing with marginal cost lower than average cost
Equal to one:	Average deposit is constant and marginal deposit is equal to it	Average cost is constant and marginal cost is equal to it
Lower than one:	Both are decreasing with marginal deposit being lower than the average deposit	Both are increasing with marginal cost being greater than average cost

Note: K.V. Ravindranath established the above relationships by empirical analysis of the relevant data (of 1966-74) of 19 districts of Karanataka State of India.

Source: Compiled from K.V. Ravindranath, "Economics of Bank Branch Expansion," in *Pigmy Economic Review* (Syndicate Bank: September 1979).

Divisional and Regional Distribution of Deposit Elasticities of Commercial Banks During 1970-1986.

Region/Division	(Amount in million Taka)											
	Br. in 1970	Br. in 1986	Total Bank branches (B=2+3)	Ab (3-2)	Ab B	Dr. in 1970 (Tk.)	Dr. in 1986 (Tk.)	Total deposits (D=7+8) (Tk.)	Ad (8-7) (Tk.)	Ad D	E=	E>1 or E<1
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Chittagong	135	384	519	249	.48	642	18021	18663	17379	.93	1.94	E>1
2. Chittagong Hill Tracts	12	57	69	45	.65	10	512	522	502	.96	1.48	E>1
3. Comilla	70	260	330	190	.58	72	3535	3607	3463	.96	1.66	E>1
4. Noakhali	30	175	205	145	.71	34	2080	2094	2026	.97	1.37	E>1
5. Sylhet	72	316	388	244	.63	118	5941	6059	5823	.96	1.52	E>1
D Chittagong Division	319	1192	1511	873	.58	876	30069	30945	29193	.94	1.62	E>1
6. Dhaka	272	790	1062	518	.49	1533	51898	53431	50365	.94	1.92	E>1
7. Faridpur	21	144	165	123	.75	26	1234	1260	1208	.96	1.28	E>1
8. Mymensingh	59	242	301	183	.61	64	1998	2062	1934	.94	1.54	E>1
9. Tangail	9	94	103	85	.83	18	837	855	819	.96	1.16	E>1
ii) Dhaka Division	361	1270	1631	909	.56	1641	59067	57608	54326	.94	1.68	E>1
10. Barisal	34	161	195	127	.65	46	1851	1897	1805	.95	1.46	E>1
11. Jessore	35	179	214	144	.67	40	1747	1787	1707	.96	1.43	E>1
12. Khulna	59	229	288	170	.59	119	4404	4523	4285	.95	1.61	E>1
13. Kusthia	29	119	148	90	.61	28	1035	1063	1007	.95	1.56	E>1
14. Patuakhali	8	60	68	52	.76	14	460	474	446	.94	1.24	E>1
iii) Khulna Division	165	748	913	583	.64	247	9497	9744	9250	.95	1.48	E>1
15. Begra	30	153	183	123	.67	35	1506	1541	1471	.95	1.42	E>1
16. Dinajpur	26	130	156	104	.67	37	1161	1198	1124	.94	1.40	E>1
17. Pabna	34	137	171	103	.60	37	1673	1710	1600	.94	1.57	E>1
18. Rajshahi	45	256	301	211	.70	74	2992	3066	2918	.95	1.36	E>1
19. Rangpur	45	199	244	154	.63	50	1726	1776	1676	.94	1.49	E>1
iv) Rajshahi Division	180	875	1055	695	.66	233	9058	9291	8825	.95	1.44	E>1
Bangladesh	1025	4085	5110	3060	.60	2997	104591	107588	101594	.94	1.57	E>1

Note: 1. Br= Bank branches in the region; Dr. = Deposits in the region in million taka. ΔB = changes in bank branches, ΔD = changes in deposits, E = Deposit Elasticity Co-efficient, $B = Br$ of 1970 + B of 1986 and $D = Dr$ of 1970 + D of 1986.

Source: Adopted from Table.1

In order to allocate regional priorities to expansion of bank branches in Bangladesh, the regions are distributed in Table 7 according to their deposit elasticities or deposit potentialities. The technique of scaling is used to identify regional priorities more selectively. According to this technique, 8 regions with deposit elasticities ranging between 1.50 and 1.99, fall under the category of highly-satisfactory-deposit-potential areas. In other words, these regions are considered seriously under-banked areas. Hence, further banking expansion can easily take place in these regions on a priority basis.

Another 8 regions with deposit elasticity co-efficients ranging between 1.30 and 1.49 fall under the category of satisfactory-deposit-potential regions or considerable under-banked areas. These may get second priority in the branch expansion process. Similarly, the remaining 3 regions with deposit elasticity co-efficient ranging between 1.10 and 1.29 may get third priority in the expansion process of bank branches.

TABLE 7

Distribution of the Regions According to their Deposit Elasticity Co-efficients/Deposit Potentialities.

Size class of deposit elasticity co-efficients	Scaling	No. of Regions	Name of Regions
1	2	3	4
1.10 - 1.29	Moderately deposit potential regions/ moderately under-banked regions	3	Faridpur, Tangail and Patuakhali
1.30 - 1.49	Satisfactory deposit potential regions/ considerable under-banked regions	8	Barisal, Jessore, Bogra, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Noakhali and Chittagong Hill Tracts.
1.50 - 1.74	Highly satisfactory deposit potential regions/seriously under banked regions	6	Comilla, Mymensingh, Khulna, Kushtia, Pabna and Sylhet.
1.75 - 1.99	-do-	2	Chittagong and Dhaka
Total :		19	

Source: Adopted from Table 6.

However, it is important to note that the deposit potentiality of a region may change in the long run depending on the change in its resource endowment. An over-banked region may turn into an under-banked area because of discovery of natural resources or implementation of a development project in the region. Similarly, an under-banked region may also be an over-banked area due to rapid expansion of bank branches. It may again turn into an under-banked region on account of the above reasons. So deposit elasticity co-efficients are useful in the short run planning of branch expansion. It is also indicative for the long run planning of branch expansion process.

1.4 Conclusions

In short, it follows from the analysis of this article that the divisional and regional imbalances in the distribution of bank deposits declined in 1986 compared with 1970. The decrease in the standard deviation of the L.Qs. from 1.2 in 1970 to 1.0 in 1986 and the increase in the median value of the L.Qs. from 0.31 in 1970 to 0.41 in 1986 confirm this view. All the regions with the L.Qs. above the national average of 1970 registered a decreasing trend until 1986; while except Mymensingh and Dinajpur, all the regions with the L.Qs. below the national average of 1970 showed an increasing trend upto 1986. The regional deposit elasticity coefficients (DE) indicate that all the 19 regions (old districts) of Bangladesh are still under-banked areas. There is ample scope for further expansion of bank branches. The analyses and the findings suggest that the public ownership of the banks should be continued for mitigating imbalances further.

APPENDIX TABLE.1

Relative Importance of Scheduled Banks' Deposits (excluding Interbank) in the Money Supply of Bangladesh (1971-86).

(Taka in Crores)

Year (end December)	Money supply						
	Demand deposits	Time deposits	Total deposits	Currency outside banks	Narrow money (M ₁ =2+5)	Broad money (M ₂ =6+3)	4 as % of 7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1971	126.66 (37)	212.76 (63)	339.42 (100)	206.60	333.26	546.02	62
1972	272.86 (42)	371.48 (58)	644.34 (100)	289.80	562.66	934.14	69
1973	375.30 (45)	456.31 (55)	831.61 (100)	320.80	696.10	1152.41	72
1974	412.92 (43)	552.61 (57)	965.53 (100)	410.30	823.22	1375.83	70
1975	428.84 (42)	600.55 (58)	1029.39 (100)	361.80	790.64	1391.19	74
1976	536.06 (39)	837.32 (61)	1373.38 (100)	381.70	917.76	1755.08	78
1977	662.19 (40)	997.19 (60)	1659.38 (100)	490.20	1152.39	2149.58	71
1978	748.44 (38)	1209.18 (62)	1957.62 (100)	632.90	1381.34	2590.52	76
1979	885.57 (36)	1554.87 (64)	2440.44 (100)	711.40	1596.97	3151.84	77
1980	1062.90 (37)	1820.15 (63)	2883.05 (100)	826.70	1889.60	3709.75	78
1981	1374.86 (36)	2435.86 (64)	3810.72 (100)	914.30	2289.16	4725.02	81
1982	1358.90 (32)	2944.30 (68)	4303.20 (100)	974.40	2333.30	5277.60	82
1983	1819.00 (30)	4226.20 (70)	6074.20 (100)	1344.30	3163.30	7389.50	82
1984	2501.50 (30)	5831.40 (70)	8332.90 (100)	1725.00	4226.50	10057.90	83
1985	2827.90 (29)	6832.10 (71)	9660.00 (100)	1767.20	4595.10	11427.20	85
1986 (June)	3271.30 (30)	7528.40 (70)	10799.70 (100)	1953.10	5224.40	12752.80	85

Note : 1. Figures in the parentheses show percentages.

2. Data include the deposits of BKB and BSB.

Sources: 1. Deposit figures for the years 1971-85 are taken from BB *Bulletin*, (September, 1986), pp. 42-43, and those for 1986 are taken from BB, *Economic Trends*, vol. XII, No. 5 (May, 1987), pp. 2-3.2. Figures of currency outside banks are obtained from BB, *Bulletin* (September, 1986), pp. 14-17.

3. Other columns are calculated by the researcher.

APPENDIX TABLE 2

Deposit Imbalances: Standard Deviations of the L.Qs. in 1970 and 1986.

1970			1986		
L. Q. (X)	(X - \bar{X})	(X - \bar{X}) ²	L. Q. (X)	(X - \bar{X})	(X - \bar{X}) ²
1	2	3	4	5	6
4.77	-4.03	16.24	4.32	3.58	12.82
3.56	-2.82	7.95	2.72	1.98	3.92
0.80	0.06	0.00	0.87	0.13	0.02
0.60	-0.14	0.02	0.85	0.11	0.01
0.45	-0.29	0.08	0.56	-0.18	0.03
0.42	-0.32	0.10	0.47	-0.27	0.07
0.38	-0.36	0.13	0.46	-0.28	0.08
0.37	-0.37	0.14	0.45	-0.29	0.08
0.35	-0.39	0.15	0.43	-0.31	0.09
0.31	-0.43	0.18	0.41	-0.33	0.11
0.29	-0.45	0.20	0.38	-0.36	0.13
0.29	-0.45	0.20	0.37	-0.37	0.14
0.28	-0.46	0.21	0.33	-0.41	0.17
0.25	-0.49	0.24	0.30	-0.44	0.19
0.22	-0.52	0.27	0.28	-0.46	0.21
0.21	-0.53	0.28	0.22	-0.52	0.27
0.20	-0.54	0.29	0.22	-0.52	0.27
0.20	-0.54	0.29	0.21	-0.53	0.28
0.15	-0.59	0.35	0.18	-0.56	0.31
Total:			Total:		
14.10		27.32	14.03		19.20
1970: $\bar{X} = 0.74$; Median = 0.31			1986: $\bar{X} = 0.74$; Median = 0.41		
S.D. = $\frac{\sqrt{\sum(X-\bar{X})^2}}{n} = \frac{\sqrt{27.32}}{19}$			S.D. = $\frac{\sqrt{19.20}}{19} = \sqrt{1.01}$		
= $\sqrt{1.44} = 1.2$			= 1.0		

Source: Table 1 of the text.

NOTES

1. C. Rangarajan and Paul Mampilly, "Economics of Scale in Banking" in *Technical Studies Prepared for the Banking Commission*, Vol. I. (Bombay: RBI, 1972), pp. 247-248.
2. The figures of deposits and deposit accounts for the year 1970 include those of Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP) and Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP). But their shares were very small and negligible. Here a billion is equal to a thousand million (U.S.). Data were compiled from SBP, *Banking Statistics of Pakistan 1969-70*, p.71, BB, Bulletin (July, 1973), p. 11 BB, *Scheduled Banks Statistics* (April-June, 1986), pp. 54-61.
3. A.M. Khusro and N.S. Siddharthan, "An Econometric Model of Banking in India," in *Technical Studies Prepared for the Banking Commission*, Vol. I. (Bombay: RBI, 1972), p. 14.
4. A. M. Khusro and N. S. Siddharthan, "Interrelations Between Deposits and Advances", (Delhi: Institute of Economic Growth), p. 7. (Mimeographed).
5. *Ibid.*, 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
7. Raj Kumar Sen, "Our Level of Living and Savings During the Plans" in *The Indian Economic Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (October-December, 1977), p. 97.
8. BB, *Economic Trends*, Vol. XII, No. 5, p. 9.
9. P. Krishnaji, "Strategies for Expanding Resource Base in Banks" in *The Banker*, Vol. XXXI, No. 5 (July, 1984), p. 13.
10. *Ibid.*
11. J.P. Jain, *Indian Banking Analysed* (Directory of banking in India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon), 3rd ed., Delhi: The Banking Experts, 1953), p. 4.
12. In Bangladesh 12 per cent of the savings deposits during 1972-79, 13 per cent during 1979-80, 14 per cent during 1980-81 and 15 per cent of the same from December 1981 onwards are included in demand deposits. See BB, *Bulletin* (September, 1986), p. 21
13. BB, *Economic Trends*, Vol. XII, No. 5, pp. 40-41.
14. Krishnaji, op. cit., p. 16.
15. See appendix Table 1.
16. See Appendix Table1. Narrow money consists of currency outside banks and demand deposits while broad money includes narrow money plus time deposits.
17. Vasant Desai, *Banking in India: Nature and Problem* (Bombay: Himaloya Publishing House, 1979), p.113.
18. Asish Kumar Roy, *The Structure of Interest Rates in India* (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1975), p. 25.
19. S.A.R. Bilgrami, *Growth of Public Sector Banks: A Regional Growth Analysis* (New Delhi. Deep & Deep Publications, 1982), p. 42.
20. National Commission on Money, Banking and Credit, *Management Study of Banks: Summary Report* (by Bangladesh Management Development Centre, Dhaka, 1985), p. 46.

NOTES

1. The first of these is the fact that the incidence of the disease is increasing in the United Kingdom, as in many other countries. This is particularly true of the younger age groups, and it is now common to find cases in children and young adults. The second is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The third is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The fourth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The fifth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The sixth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The seventh is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The eighth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The ninth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics. The tenth is the fact that the disease is now being recognized in many other parts of the world, including the tropics and sub-tropics.

Social Interactions, Mass Media Exposure and Modernity Among the Baruas of a Bangladesh Village

A.F. Imam Ali

[In the present study an attempt has been made to discern the patterns of social interactions, mass media exposure and level of modernity among the Baruas — a Buddhist minority group of a Bangladesh village.]

Introduction

Bangladesh is a country where various religious groups namely, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Christians live side by side with their own distinctly visible culture but the numerical strength of them is not same. The Buddhists contribute only 0.61 per cent to the total population (98.91 million) as estimated in 1981 (Statistical Yearbook 1986:4). The Buddhists of Bangladesh, more particularly in Chittagong, are divided into three major ethnic groups — the Baruas, the Chakmas and the Marma Rakhaines (Khan 1977:37). Individuals belonging to each of these groups, are further divided into various strata (upper, middle and lower) and classes — owner of the means of production and the non-owner. More precisely, among them, the socio-economic and political variables are unequally distributed and in such situations, it is expected, that social interactions, are restricted by religion, occupation and education giving rise to social exclusivism. Moreover, in a traditional society like this, the mass media exposure and modernity levels may not be same among them. All these go against the egalitarian ideals of Buddhism. However, in the present study, an attempt has been made to reveal the nature of social interactions, nature of mass media exposure and also to measure modernity levels among the Baruas living in a Bangladesh village located very near to the University of Chittagong. It is necessary to point out that data used in the present study are obtained from the respondents (heads of the households) following a survey method. For conducting survey method an appropriate 'Interview Schedule'

consisting of both structured and unstructured questions was prepared and it was pretested for making necessary modifications— omissions, additions etc. In the village, out of the total population (2,884), the Muslims represented 69.8 per cent; the Buddhists (Baruas) contributed 29.1 per cent and 1.1 per cent represented by the Hindus. Several attempts were made to obtain data from all the heads of the Barua-households (140) but for various reasons, we could obtain information from 117 respondents who represented 83.6 per cent to the total population (140).

Social Interactions: Intimate and Casual

Social interactions, which occur whenever human beings respond to the actions of other human beings, are of two types — intimate and casual. In a rigid type of society, it is usually found that these interactions are mostly restricted by religion, caste, occupation, education, age, etc. but in a fluid type, the influence of these factors become less significant (Ali 1983, 1986, 1987; D'Souza 1977; Jain 1975; Sohi 1977). Data with respect to the intimate and casual types of relationships are furnished in Table 1. A careful analysis of data shows that among the Baruas, intimate type of relationship (friendship) is largely restricted by religion, occupation, education and age but in this respect religion plays much more greater role as compared to other factors (occupation, education and age). A close look at data further shows that casual type of relationship (gossiping) is also restricted by these factors. However, in this respect, religion plays much more visible role than the role played by other factors — occupation, education, age. It is interesting to note among the Baruas both intimate and casual types of relationships are mostly restricted by religion, occupation, education and age: However in case of intimate kind of relationship the influence of these factors are much more visible when compared to casual type. Data also revealed that among the Baruas there was a tendency to choose friends and persons from higher occupational and education categories; not the opposite trend. This tendency can easily be explained in terms of hierarchical aspect of social stratification.

Patro-Client Relationship

Data also revealed (not shown in table) that the employers have chosen 65.8 per cent of their employees from their own religion while the remaining 120 persons (34.0%) are chosen from other religious groups. The employees are also asked to furnish religion of their three employers. Data (not shown in table) revealed that most of the employers are from same religion as that of the employees. In other words, among the Baruas, patron-client relationships are largely restricted by religion giving birth to social exclusivism which is an important aspect of social stratification.

TABLE 1

Religion, occupation and age of three best friends and three persons as mentioned by the respondents

Intimate (friendship) N= 351	Types of relationships	
	Casual (gossiping) N = 351	
1. Friends are from respondent's own religion	237 (67.5)	231 (65.8)
2. Friends are from respondent's own occupation	189 (53.8)	171 (48.7)
3. Friends are from respondents own educational category	168 (47.8)	156 (44.4)
4. Friends are from respondents own age category	208 (59.2)	198 (56.4)

Neighbourhoods

Social differences stems from various factors but among them as we have already seen, religion is the major contributor. The influence of religion is also expressed in residential patterns of the village. That is, in the village, the three religious groups namely, the Muslims, the Hindus and the Buddhists are completely segregated from each other. And this type of residential patterns can easily be explained taking into account the characteristics of the traditional social stratification of this village. Similar observation was also made among the Muslims and the Hindus of different Bangladesh villages by Ali (1983, 1987, 1987a) and Chowdhury (1978).

Marriages

Marriages are restricted by many factors - religion, caste, sect etc. With a view to showing the marriage patterns data are obtained which categorically indicated that

among the Baruas, marriage is fully restricted by religion. This is particularly true for respondent's parental generation but within respondents' generation, interreligious marriage though rare, is not unusual. Due to religious, social distance and differential food habit the Baruas (59.8%) usually do not take food together with the Muslims and the Hindus of this village.

Mode of Invitation

In a stratified society it is usually found that the members belonging to higher caste/stratum/class are invited personally by the lower ones. This is one of the important aspects of social stratification namely, cultural pattern.¹ Data indicated that among the Baruas almost 75.0 per cent mentioned that they invite persons having higher or lower status personally while only 25.0 per cent give special treatment to the members of the higher castes/classes. While the members of the higher castes/classes invite lower sections by cards or by hired persons. This aspect can well be explained in terms of two important aspects of stratification - hierarchy and social exclusivism.

Mass Media Exposure

Among the Baruas, the socio-economic and political variables are unequally distributed. This unequal socio-economic and political powers are manifested in the media exposure. Data shown in Table 2 point out that relatively greater number of the respondents listened to radio occasionally while only 12.0 per cent listen to radio daily. It is also found that among the respondents, 16.2 per cent never got the opportunity to listen to radio. A careful observation of data also shows that exposure to radio is relatively higher among those pursuing better occupations.

In this connection the respondents are asked to mention the programmes in which they are interested. For this question they were allowed to give more than one response. The programmes pointed out by the respondents are: news, political, cultural, religious, agricultural, family planning. Among them, the respondents are mostly interested in news (38.1) while 36.8 per cent are found to be interested in political news. It is interesting to note that the number of the respondents listening to

political news is relatively higher among the respondents pursuing better occupations than those belonging to two other occupational categories — Average and Low. Number of respondents listening to family planning programme is relatively much lower among the respondents bracketed in 'Good' occupational category.

TABLE 2

Exposure to radio as mentioned by the respondents by occupational categories

Occupational prestige categories	Radio exposure				Total
	Daily	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	
1. Good	3	20	5	1	29
2. Average	8	23	7	13	51
3. Low	3	13	16	5	37
	14	56	28	19	117
	(12.0)	(47.8)	(24.0)	(16.2)	(100.00)

Subscription to Newspaper

Data with respect to the subscription to newspaper are furnished in Table 3. One can see that out of the total respondents (117) only 16 subscribed newspaper and all of them belong to the relatively two higher occupational categories — Good and Average. In other words, subscribers are from relatively better occupational categories. It was found that among the subscribers belonging to 'Good' occupational category, 2 subscribed 3 types of news papers while others (6 respondents) subscribed one or two types of newspapers. Further, among them, 6 subscribed national and the remaining 2 subscribed both the types — local and national. Among the respondents bracketed in 'Average' occupational category, 5 out of 8 subscribed one or two types of newspaper while 3 of them subscribed two types of newspapers but none for three types. Further, 6 out of 8 subscribed national newspaper and only 2 of them subscribed both the types — local and national. All this show that among the subscribers there was a tendency to subscribe national newspapers which relatively give much more information about the national and international events covering problems of various types. Another interesting finding is that almost all the subscribers (14 out of 16) subscribed Bengali newspaper. This

trend can easily be explained if one takes into account the literacy rate of our country, more particularly that of the rural areas.

We have already seen that out of the total respondents only 16 subscribed newspapers. However, the respondents are asked to state whether or not they read newspaper. Data revealed (not shown in table) that 57.2 per cent (67 respondents) do not read newspaper while the remaining 42.8 per cent pointed out they read

TABLE 3

Subscription to newspapers as mentioned by the respondents by occupational prestige categories

Occupational categories	Yes	3 types of newspapers	2 types of newspapers	1 type of newspaper	Do not subscribe	Total
1. Good	8	2	2	4	21	29
2. Average	8	-	3	5	43	51
3. Low	-	-	-	-	37	37
Total	16	2	5	9	101	117

newspapers daily (15.7), occasionally (18.8) and rarely (8.5). This is obvious, because of low income, the respondents cannot subscribe newspaper but the village has some tea-stalls, grossery shops, clubs, socio-cultural organizations. These are the place where people read newspaper, cut jokes, discuss problems of day-to-day life. Among the news readers, data revealed that the respondents were mostly interested in secular news (68.0) while the remaining 32.0 per cent are interested in both the types (secular + non-secular) but none was interested in purely religious news.

With a view to assessing the role of various mass medias data are obtained from the respondents. Radio (national and international) appeared to be the most important media through which the respondents receive first information regarding important national and international events. This was followed by inter-personal communication system (39.0) while the third important media was newspaper (17.5). It is true that radio (national and international) is a powerful important media through which people get information regarding important events occurring in and outside the country. But this media do not always broadcast reliable news. Among the respondents almost

80.0 per cent categorically stated that foreign radio gives more reliable news than does the local one.

Modernity

Modernization has been viewed by different scholars from various perspectives. This concept was first used in economics, commerce and industries but its use was extended to other social sciences including sociology. To be precise, this concept was discussed under two models — economic and behavioural. The first emphasises on increasing production by exploiting natural resources through the use of modern technology while the behavioural school takes into account both psychological and social factors. However, modernization can be viewed from two dimensions — subjective and objective. In the present study individual modernity level has been measured on the basis of subjective criteria. For this, behavioural patterns of the individuals in some social situations (equality, civic responsibility, rationality, universality and specificity) have been considered.²

A careful observation of data (Table 4) shows that relatively greater number of the respondents (51.3) are modern while 34.1 per cent and 14.6 per cent are in 'highly modern' and 'somewhat modern' categories respectively. A close scrutiny of data in column 5 (Highly modern) shows that modernity is relatively higher among those doing service than those pursuing business or agriculture.

In order to show the relationship between education and modernity data are furnished in Table 5. A careful observation of data roughly indicates that there is positive association between education and modernity. In other words, education fosters modernity among the people. I have also made similar observations elsewhere (Ali 1987, 1987a).

Summary and Conclusion

The foregoing discussions indicate that among the Baruas, both types of social relationship namely, intimate and casual are restricted by religion which has largely fostered social exclusivism among them. Social relationships are also restricted by occupation and education. In this respect, there was a tendency among the respondents to choose friends and persons from higher occupational and educational status categories. This tendency can easily be explained in terms of an important aspect of stratification namely, social hierarchy. Moreover, the patron-clite relationships including the marriage patterns are also restricted by religion. And this

TABLE 4

Respondents' levels of modernity by occupations

Occupational categories	Modernity levels					Total
	1 Highly traditional	2 Traditional	3 Somewhat modern	4 Modern	5 Highly modern	
1. Agriculturae	-	-	10 (17.8)	30 (53.6)	16 (28.6)	56 (100.0)
2. Service	-	-	1 (5.0)	9 (45.0)	10 (50.0)	20 (100.0)
3. Busainess	-	-	6 (14.6)	21 (53.6)	14 (31.8)	41 (100.0)
Total	-	-	17 (14.6)	60 (51.3)	40 (34.1)	117 (100.0)

TABLE 5

Respondents' levels of modernity by education

Occupational categories	Levels of Modernity					Total
	1 Highly traditional	2 Traditional	3 Somewhat modern	4 Modern	5 Highly modern	
1. Un-Educated	-	-	11 (29.7)	18 (48.6)	8 (21.7)	37 (100.0)
2. Educated (class 1-10)	-	-	6 (10.6)	33 (55.0)	21 (35.0)	60 (100.0)
3. Highly Educated (S.S.C to Post-Graduation)	-	-	-	9 (45.0)	11 (35.0)	20 (100.0)

kind of exclusive type of relationship is expressed in the physical structure of the village. That is, in the village, the three religious groups namely, the Muslims, the Hindus and the Buddhists are completely segregated from each other. Similar observation was made by Ali in different studies of Bangladesh villages (Ali 1983, 1987 1987a).

Among the Baruas, exposure to radio is unequal. That is, relatively greater number of them (47.8), occasionally listened to radio: 12.0 per cent listened to radio daily while 16.2 per cent had no access to radio. Among them, only 16 persons, out of 117, subscribed newspapers and this trend was higher among the respondents pursuing relatively better occupations. Further, among all the subscribers (16) of newspaper 14 persons subscribed Bengali newspapers and 42.8 per cent appeared to be newspaper readers. However, this lower rate of subscribing newspaper and higher reading of Bengali newspaper can be related to low income and lower literacy rate respectively.

Among the Baruas, radio is the most important media through which they get first information about important national and international events and this is followed by inter-personal communication system. In this village, people read newspaper, listen to radio and discuss problems of various types in the tea-stalls, grocery shops, socio-cultural clubs and schools. These places also serve as the centre for interpersonal communication and recreation.

Among the Baruas, none belonged to highly traditional and traditional category and relatively greater number of them are in modern category. And level of modernity was found to be higher among the respondents pursuing service than those following after two occupations: agriculture and business. Data also showed a positive association between education and modernity. That is, modernity was found to be relatively higher among the respondents who have higher education.

In conclusion it can be said that restricted social interactions (intimate, casual, patron-client, marriage) among the Baruas are the product of unequal distribution of socio-economic and political variables. In this respect, role of religion is very significant. This restricted types of relationships have created social exclusivism among the Baruas. In order to create social inclusivism among the various sections of this religious group, steps should be taken to bridge the gap between them. Exclusivism stems from many factors but among them, religion makes the major contribution. Integration among the members of different religious groups is a necessary pre-condition for overall development of our country which can be achieved only through a system based on social justice.

NOTES

1. Cultural pattern refers to mode of expression of status hierarchy among caste/ethnic groups which is specific to each culture (See D'Souza 1981).
2. Two statements on each of these situations are prepared and these were given to the respondents and the responses are given different weightages (1-5) depending on the nature of statements. The score varied from 8 to 40. To measure individual modernity level the total score was divided into the following five categories — highly traditional (score upto 8), Traditional (score 9-16), Somewhat modern (score 17-24), Modern (score 25-32) and Highly modern (score 33-40) on the traditional modern continuum.

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National Policies and Regional Growth and Distribution of Industries: A Case Study of the Northern Region of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The northern region is lagging behind the other regions of Bangladesh in respect of industrialization. There is a sharp disparity in respect of concentration of industries; most of the industries are concentrated in the central and eastern regions and again within the northern region there exists a variation in the percentage share of industries. This paper through normative approach attempts to assess the impact of national industrial policies at different periods of time and more precisely before and after independence of Bangladesh. The paper rationalizes the fact of relative backwardness in industrialization of the northern region identifying political, social, economic, geographical and institutional loopholes and recommended some policy measures for rapid industrialization in the northern region of Bangladesh.

The northern region of Bangladesh is located in the north-west part of the country. It lies between 23 degree and 26 degree 35 minutes north latitude and 88 degree and 90 degree east longitude. The area is bounded in the east by the Jamuna river on the other side of which is the central region (Dhaka division), in the south by the Padma river on the other side of which is western region (Khulna division), in the west Maldah and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal (India) and in the north Maldah, West Dinajpur and Coochbihar districts of West Bengal (India). The northern region has an area of 34000 sq. km., 22 million population and 2.13 million hectares of cultivable land, which in all respects represents one quarter of the whole of Bangladesh. The region is represented by one of the four administrative divisions (Rajshahi division popularly known as North Bengal) and is divided into 16 districts and further divided into 123 *upazila*¹ comprising of 17681 *mauza*²/*mahalla*³. There are 26622 villages⁴ in the whole of the region.

The northern region is lagging far behind the other regions of Bangladesh in respect of industrial growth. Of course, there is a kind of conflict that exists between

industry and region.⁵ The problem with industrialization is that it seems to be inextricably bound up with an increase in spatial disparity. The growth of industry in a particular place sets into motion a set of mechanism which encourages a continuing development there.⁶ Multiplier effects create new demands in the retail and service sectors. Expansion of manufacturing may also help other firms and through these developments encourage a cumulative process to operate, a process that sends the point of initial expansion further ahead of its rivals. Admittedly the benefits may spread to other areas but the main beneficiaries are generally a few large metropolitan areas.⁷ Industrialization encourages primacy, the condition of one city's domination of the space-economy of a nation.⁸ This city tends to drain the rest of the nation of its entrepreneurs, manpower and capital. However, primacy is a stage that may be passed and as development continues various subcentres grow and gradually the whole national space-economy becomes functionally organized and all areas benefit to the full from economic development.⁹

In many ways the less developed regions within a country are in one of dependency situation which is difficult to break through. Larger companies tend to have their offices in the core areas and the peripheries remain unindustrialized and lacking economic and political power.¹⁰ Thus poorer regions face the need to build their own firms and to counteract the power of the large companies in their economies. The difficulty lies in the lack of any formal powers over most crucial economic areas.¹¹ In true sense, spatial imbalance in respect of industrialization is inevitable since the life blood is drawn from rural areas and concentrated in urban centres where most industries locate.¹² In fact, from the locational distribution point of view of industrialization in Bangladesh, it is quite evident that even after the liberation, the northern region is lagging behind the eastern, central and western regions of the country. An inventory of the Appendices I and II revealed the fact that only a handful number of industries are located in the northern region. One of the most important argument in favor of this back-log may be highly dependency situation with poor industrial base for last few centuries.

The northern region is predominantly an agricultural area. The people of this region who were interested in any kind of industrial pursuits, were more akin to cottage and small industries. There existed and still exists some kind of cottage and small industries in most of the urban centres and villages in this region. Some of the villages are specialised in some kind of cottage and small industries. All the former administrative districts in this region are still famous for one or more cottage and small industries. The district of Pabna is famous for handloom, raw hosiary goods, cane and bamboo products, earthenware, sweet-meats and milk-made goods. The district of Rajshahi is best known for silk, ketachu, lac, brass and bell-metal

products. Rangpur and Dinajpur districts are well known for tobacco and rice industries respectively. The district of Bogra is famous for a pretty long time specially for yoghurt.

The industries which have by now grew in this region are mostly agro-based. Paddy, jute, sugarcane, pulses, oil seeds, tobacco, hides, green spices, fruits and vegetables are the most important agricultural produce in this region. It is to be sure that there was no such industrial pursuits before the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. There were only two large scale fine sugar manufacturing industries at Gopalpur (presently under Rajshahi district) and at Setabganj (presently under the district of Thakurgaon) and both of these industries were established during 1933-34 under private ownership.

Rajshahi bears a very old tradition for production of raw silk and silk products. During the Mughal rule, silk industry was in flourishing state; and later during the British rule, when Bengal was called the store house of Indian silk, Rajshahi was one of the most important silk growing areas of the then Bengal. The silk products of Rajshahi were of very rich quality. W.W. Hunter stated that silk spinning and weaving has been carried on in Rajshahi district for several centuries past.¹³ L.S.S. O'Mally commented that in the 18th century, the silk filatures of Rajshahi were famous. The district was an emporium of silk trade with large export, and lucrative mulberry plantation covered a large area.¹⁴ In 1759, Holewell mentioned that raw silk and six varieties of cloth were exported from Natore (formerly under Rajshahi district) both to Europe and the markets of Bussora, Mocha, Jedda, Pagu, Acheen and Malacca.¹⁵

In the 18th century, the British East India Company maintained two silk factories, one each at Rajshahi and Sardah, about sixteen miles away from Rajshahi town. During 1830's the silk trade developed rapidly and in the 19th century, silk of Rajshahi enjoyed good reputation and clothes made of them were highly appreciated by the Nawabs.¹⁶ The *matka*¹⁷ silk turned out by Rajshahi weavers, even today bears reputation throughout the country. According to a report there was silk factory in Bogra near Nandapara in 1871.¹⁸ About 1868, a fair quantity of silk was manufactured by local people of Bogra. Towards the end of the 19th century, the silk industry began to languish in both Bogra and Rajshahi owing to competition with other countries like China, France, Italy and also because of diseases in the silk worm.¹⁹ The other reason may lie with the fact that the British rulers find it more profitable to cultivate indigo in Rajshahi area than silk manufacturing and for this reason the British rulers compelled the silk weavers and silk growers and mulberry planters to cultivate indigo instead of silk production.

The raw sugar industry was one of the oldest industry in the northern region.

Buchanan Hamilton found large refineries over the whole extent of present day Panchbibi and Khetlal *upazila* in Jaipurhat district and Badalgachhi *upazila* in Naogaon district. He specially mentioned that sugar produced in Badalgachhi was the best quality to be get in this part of the country.²⁰ During 1840 this industry was adversely affected by large importation of fine sugar from north-western part of India by *Marwariee*²¹ merchants. It is said that considerable transactions in sugar were carried on at Jamalganj (presently under Jaipurhat district) in 1872.²² In 1875 a sugar refinery was opened at Damdama, whence sugar was exported to Rajshahi and Murshidabad (West Bengal, India). There was a sugar depot at Laksmahati (presently under Natore district) owned by an European Company. Raw sugar or molasses was also manufactured in the former districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Pabna but the quantity was small compared to Rajshahi and Bogra districts.

A kind of paper used to be manufactured in the villages of Shahazadpur and Majira under present Bogra district headquarters during the last quarter of the 19th century.²³ W.W. Hunter stated that this paper was manufactured using jute, lime, water and paste of *atap-rice*²⁴ as raw materials. Hand made paper was also manufactured in other districts of the region including Pabna, Rangpur and Dinajpur during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁵

Handloom or weaving was an important industry during the early 20th century throughout the northern region especially in the districts of Pabna and Bogra.²⁶ Weaving in the former district of Bogra includes such fabrics as *dhui*,²⁷ *chadars*,²⁸ *silk-alwans*,²⁹ *thans*³⁰ and handkerchief and other coarse cloths. Weaving in the district of Pabna and in the district of Sirajganj included cotton coarse *sarees*,³¹ *gamchha*,³² hosiary goods like vests, under garments, towels etc. A kind of coarse cloth locally known as *phota*, of jute and cotton was manufactured in Baliadangi and Chirirbandar *upazila* in Dinajpur district were commonly worn by women of the cultivating class.³³ A good deal of coarse gunny cloth was also produced from jute in Baliadangi and Atwari *upazila* of Dinajpur district and were exported to Calcutta (presently capital of West Bengal, India) in the form of bags.³⁴

The manufacture of brass and bell-metal was practiced in the whole of the northern region, and especially it was extensive in the former district of Rajshahi. In the early years of present century, the industry was carried on extensively at Nawabganj, Kalam (under Natore district), Bogra, Sherpur (presently under Bogra district), Chatmohor, Muladuli (presently under Pabna district), Pabna and Sirajganj. These industries manufactured utensils of brass, bell-metal and *bharan*.³⁵ *Bharan* was used for making tumblers. Moulds were used for the manufacture of *ghoti*.³⁶

Rajshahi was once noted for blacksmithy and blacksmith factories were found in villages and weekly market places. In 1907, there were six hundred fifty blacksmith

factories employing three thousand five hundred labours and manufactured besides other things like suitcases, trunks, iron-chests, boxes etc. But after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, with the out-migration of efficient blacksmiths this industry declined.³⁷

It seems to be true that because of the prevailing colonial rule for a period of about two hundred years till 1947, the winds of Industrial Revolution of the mid-19th century in Europe could not influence the areas now comprise Bangladesh in general and the northern region in particular. But the situation could be reverse. Because the areas now comprise Bangladesh have tremendous potentialities atleast for the jute industries since the region is the main producer of raw jute. Instead of establishing jute mills in this country, the colonial rulers have established jute mills in places like Dundee and Manchester in England. It simply testifies the fact that the colonial rulers only tried to exploit the resources available in the country and even were not interested in sharing with the natives.

In fact there was no industrialization policy before 1947. At the time of the creation of Pakistan, the areas now comprise Bangladesh was a primary producing area with very little industry except a variety of small and cottage industries. There were only a handful of large-scale industries which include a few cotton textile mills, a few sugar mills, one cement factory and a number of jute bailing presses³⁸ and interestingly, except some of the sugar mills, all the industrial units were located beyond the northern region.

After the creation of Pakistan, government policy for industrialization was manifested through private entrepreneurship but unfortunately, response from private sector was rather limited at first.³⁹ This was true in general for East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and lamentable for the northern region. The industrial development in Bangladesh started with jute manufacturing. In 1949, jute mills were set up in the central region near Dhaka and Narayanganj under private ownership but with government patronage. The government policy on industrialization remained basically the same for the next two decades since it was enunciated in 1948 and that was industrialization through private entrepreneurs.⁴⁰

In 1949, government established the Pakistan Industrial Finance Corporation to extend credit facilities to the private entrepreneurs once they established industries. In 1961, this institution was converted to the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan to make advance loans for establishing new industries as well as to the existing industries. In 1957, the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation was established to make loans and provide equity investment for expansion or for establishing new industries. The most notable institution, the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation was established in 1950 to undertake promotional activities

through equity finance and managerial support. During 1960's, it was divided into two entities—the West Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (WPIDC) and the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC). The EPIDC was responsible for East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) exclusively.

But as a matter of fact, there was very little response from investors of the northern region of the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), for establishment of new industries in the northern region though the EPIDC was committed to provide institutional and other logistic supports. Only a few industries were established in the northern region by private entrepreneurs and most of these industries were comparatively small in respect of production capacity, capital investment as well as labour intensiveness. The large industries of the northern region during the Pakistani regime were virtually established by either the PIDC or the EPIDC. The fact can be grasped from the list of major industries established during 1947-71 and provided in Appendix III.

The industrial development policies during Pakistani regime virtually helped to create a small class of 'Robber Barons' as Papanek labelled them which clustered around twentyfour families.⁴¹ Official policies were intentionally formulated to increase the income share of the capitalists and industrialists; social and welfare programme were avoided; and the rural and agriculture sectors were directly and indirectly taxed in favour of industrialization.⁴² It was argued for instance that functional inequalities were essential in the early stages of capitalist development in order to stimulate savings and investment and encourage dynamic entrepreneurship.⁴³ This theme can be understood through the 2nd 5-year plan⁴⁴ and 3rd 5-year plan⁴⁵ of Pakistan.

It is worth mentioning here that the potential of the small and cottage industries for output and employment generation remained largely unexplored throughout the Pakistani regime. According to a survey report in 1969, there were 330400 number of industrial units in rural areas of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) of which about 82.0 per cent were classified as cottage industries.⁴⁶ Small and cottage industries sector continued to suffer from many problems including improper planning, lack of skills, lack of technical know-how, capital shortage and the like. In 1957, the East Pakistan Small Industries Corporation was set up with a view to promote and support logistically small industries. But this institution could not play any significant role. There were a few industrial estates developed by this institution in the northern region namely at Rajshahi, Bogra and Thakurgaon.

East Pakistan became independent in late 1971 through a war of liberation. During the war of liberation, the industrial sector suffered seriously. There were damages to buildings, loss of machineries, equipments and tools, raw materials, spare parts and

also finished goods. There remained various problems as a consequence of war including shortage of managers and skilled workers as a result of forced out-migration of non-Bangalee skilled personnels, labour unrest in a new political situation, shortage of power energy due to damage to the system, lack of transportation facilities due to dislocation and damages caused in the war, shortage of working capital in an uncertain socio-economic condition, inadequate flow of foreign exchange, inexperience of industrial imports in handling cumbersome licensing procedures etc.⁴⁷

Besides the usual consequences of war, the enunciation of the nationalization programme on the 26th March 1972 also affected the industrial sector adversely. With the nationalization programme, government formally tookover the ownership of all industrial assets abandoned by the Pakistani owners and also nationalized all units in the jute manufacturing and cotton textile industries, thereby also taking over the Bangladeshi owned units in these two kinds of industries. As a consequence of nationalization programme, the share of the private sector in the fixed assets of the modern industrial sector came down from about 64.0 per cent to only 10.0 per cent⁴⁸ and the situation continued for quite some time until the private investment ceiling was fixed to 100 million taka⁴⁹ in December, 1975. The most fundamental implication of the nationalization of industries for private capitalism in Bangladesh is its simple elimination from large-scale industrial ownership.

Since the change of government in mid-1975, the successive governments have carried further changes in industrial policy favouring private sector for industrialization in the country. The important features of the industrial policy that were enunciated in July 1986 include (i) increased emphasis on private sector participation for effective growth of industries, (ii) lay emphasis on small, cottage and handloom industries as a priority sector, (iii) limit role of the public sector to the establishment of strategic and heavy industry, (iv) encourage geographic dispersal of industries and (v) encourage foreign investment in export oriented and labour intensive industries.⁵⁰

The objectives of the industrial policy clearly indicate that the present government has taken opposite turn prior to 1975 and that is towards the capitalist mode of production from socialist one encouraging private entrepreneurs both from domestic and joint ventures of the foreign capital. It has also been stated in the said policy that the existing public sector enterprises may be converted to public limited company and the corporations into holding companies in appropriate cases.⁵¹ In fact, the role of the private sector in the economy is difficult to state without reference to the kind of society to be developed.

Appendix III also provides information on the major industries established during

1972-1986 in the northern region. The mentionable number of major industries is limited to twenty and of which eleven were established by private initiative but mostly with the credit facilities from financial institutions like Bangladesh Silpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS), Bangladesh Silpa Bank (BSB) both of which are entrusted with the industrial promotional responsibilities. Six industries were established by the Bangladesh Industrial Development Corporation (BIDC; formerly PIDC) itself, two industries were established by respective department of government and one was established by another corporate body Bangladesh Sericulture Board. The industries established by the private entrepreneurs are comparatively small in all respect while those established by the government departments and other corporate bodies are large.

A comparative statement of the number of major industries by regions in Bangladesh for 1977 has been provided in Appendix I. It appears that the highest number of industries being 1420 were located in the central region followed by the eastern region being 452. The lowest number of major industries being 65 were located in the western region while 120 were located in the northern region. But with respect to the employment pattern in these industries, it appears that the lowest number of employees were in the northern region being 19358 while the highest number of employees existed in the central region being 170349 followed by the eastern region being 106649. The western region provided 51029 employment. This indicates that the size of industrial units in the northern region is comparatively small even to that of the western region where the employment position is almost three times greater than in the northern region.

There are certain kind of industries, that are totally non-existent in the northern region which include beverage, footwear, wood and cork, furniture, paper products, leather and its products, rubber products and coal manufacturing, basic metal products, electrical and machinery products and transport manufacturing although primary raw materials for many of these industries are adequately available.

A general statistics for cottage industries under eight broad heads and by regions of Bangladesh for 1983 has been provided in Appendix II. It is revealed that the highest number of cottage industries exist in the central region being 83459 followed by the northern region being 72064, the western region being 69863 and the eastern region being 68284.⁵² The percentage share of cottage industries ranges between 23.25 in the eastern region and 28.42 in the central region. The northern region represents 24.54 per cent while western region represents 23.79 per cent. The percentage share by the regions in terms of number of industries and employment situation can be said to be more even. The central region provides 28.50 per cent employment followed by 24.47 per cent in the northern region, 23.68 per cent in the

western region and 23.55 per cent in the eastern region.⁵³

Within the northern region there exists a variation in the percentage share of industries. The former administrative district-wise distribution of industries by size and employment in 1976 has been provided in Appendix IV and a general statistics for cottage industries by type and by former administrative districts in the northern region for 1983 has been provided in Appendix V.

It appears from Appendix IV that the district of Pabna ranked the top in percentage distribution of big and small industries being 38.33 followed by 22.50 in Dinajpur, 15.83 in Bogra, 14.17 in Rajshahi and 9.17 in Rangpur.⁵⁴ The rank distribution differs significantly when big and small industries are examined separately. The district of Dinajpur and the district of Pabna topped the ranks when big and small industries are considered separately respectively while the position of the district of Rangpur remained the last in rank in both cases.

With respect to the employment situation, the district of Pabna topped the rank when big and small industries are considered together being 40.20 per cent followed by 25.65 per cent in Rajshahi, 11.59 per cent in Rangpur, 11.35 per cent in Bogra and 11.21 per cent in Dinajpur.⁵⁵ The districts of Bogra and Rajshahi ranked the lowest positions when big and small industrial employment are considered separately respectively while the district of Pabna retained the top position in both cases.⁵⁶

Therefore it becomes clear that within the northern region, the district of Pabna is more industrialized both in respect of the total number of big and small industries and industrial employment. The district of Rangpur is the least industrialized district both in respect of the number of industries while the district of Dinajpur is least industrialized in respect of industrial employment. The district of Rajshahi lagged behind the district of Bogra in respect of the number of industries but the district of Bogra lagged behind the district of Rajshahi in respect of industrial employment.

It appears from Appendix V that in respect of cottage industries, the district of Rangpur shared the highest percentage in the northern region being 29.53 per cent followed by 23.35 per cent in Rajshahi district, 19.71 per cent in Dinajpur district, 14.32 per cent in Pabna and 13.09 per cent in Bogra district.⁵⁷

In the northern region, there were one hundred twenty eight types of cottage industries and out of which the highest percentage share belonged to bamboo and cane products being 14.16 per cent followed by 13.73 per cent tailoring, 6.73 per cent pottery, 6.32 per cent fish-net making, 5.41 per cent oil milling, 4.28 per cent rice milling, 4.04 per cent wood products, 3.44 per cent sweet-meat making, 3.17 per cent jute handicrafts and 2.96 per cent mat producing. These ten types of cottage industries covered 64.24 per cent of the total cottage industries in the northern region.⁵⁸ The highest percentage share of cottage industries in the districts of Bogra,

Rajshahi and Pabna belonged to tailoring being 14.01, 17.15 and 13.53 per cent respectively while in the district of Rangpur and Dinajpur, it was bamboo and cane products and jute handicrafts being 17.83 and 12.13 per cent respectively.⁵⁹

From the above analysis, it can be derived that tailoring, bamboo and cane products and jute handicrafts are the most important cottage industries in the northern region of Bangladesh. Because of the poor development in readymade garments industries, tailoring still remained as the major source of clothings. The abundance of the production of raw jute inspired for the handicrafts made of jute. Bamboo and cane products are sometimes essential for household works and the substitutes of which are more expensive and are not at all available that in turn kept the market situation demanding for these products.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The northern region of Bangladesh is the most depressed region in respect of socio-economic development standards in the country. The region shares one-quarter of total geographic area and population of the country. Truly, it is an agricultural area but has got natural resources potentialities in coal, limestone, hard rock and other metallic minerals. The reasons of relative backwardness in respect of industrialization process in the region can be viewed from political, economic, social, geographical and institutional point.

From political point of view, the most important fact is that there was no political commitment or will for industrialization of this region at any time. There was always a scanty representation in the cabinet of ministers from this region. The members of the parliament who were supposed to bring issues on industrialization for northern region in the parliament, unfortunately were rather weak in their voice and boldness and more probably were not quite aware of the essence and implications of industrialization. The people of this region are also politically not that much aware as in other regions. Though after independence some high ranking military personnel from this region headed the governments for some time but because of alienation, perhaps having commitment could not take appropriate step towards industrializing the region. Besides, the machinery which virtually runs the government is highly bureaucratic in nature. The top level bureaucrats who actually are policy makers to a great extent in true sense, mostly belong to regions other than the northern region; and as a matter of fact there prevails a kind of hidden regional feeling in respect of development policies among them. This regional attitudes and disfavour might have played some back-pulling role in the process of industrialization in the northern region.

Socially, the people of the northern region are, to some extent, less developed in

the sense that they are generally not enterprising and enthusiastic in their activities and attitudes rather a simple way of living is their innate tendency. They are more home-bound, and hence there prevails a kind of communication gap with the outer world. The average literacy rate in this region was 17.78 per cent while it was 23.10 per cent in the western and 20.28 per cent in the eastern regions and 20.20 per cent for the nation in 1974.⁶⁰ The lower rate of literacy might have played a role in making poor social, economic and political awareness which in turn, was responsible for slow industrial growth in this region.

Economically, the people of the northern region are not better-off. The average per capita income in the districts of the northern region is far below the national average per capita income. Per capita income in the northern region was taka 1928.00 against national rate of taka 2015.00, western region of taka 1942.00 and eastern region of taka 3387.00 in 1983.⁶¹ With respect to the GDP, the northern region lags behind other regions. The GDP for the northern region was 23.12 per cent of the national GDP while the contribution of the central region was 27.65 per cent and of the eastern region was 29.86 per cent in 1983.⁶² The lower percentage of contribution in the gross domestic product by the northern region might be attributed to the lower industrial output. The comparatively poor economic base of the northern region seems to have played a significant role in the slow process of industrialization in the northern region.

Geographically, the northern region is located in the north-western part of the country separated by the river Jamuna in the east and by the Padma in the south while the north and west are bounded by international borders surrounded by India. The region is well connected by railway with the Mongla Seaport of the western region having railway bridge over the Padma at Pakshy while by road it needs to use steamer launch to cross the Padma. The region is still not well connected with the central and eastern regions neither by railway nor by roads since it is a must both for railways and roads to use steamer launch. In railway traffic even transshipment is necessary. In this situation transportation of raw and finished goods from the northern region to other regions and outside the country is more difficult compared to other regions. Besides, the climate in the northern region is more arid than the other regions. These geographical features certainly played a definite role in the process of slow industrialization in the northern region.

Institutionally also the northern region is not in a favourable position for rapid industrialization. The headquarters of all the sector corporations namely, the BIDD, the BSB, the BSRS, the BITAC and the BIIAC which are entrusted with the responsibilities of promoting industrial pursuits in the country are located at Dhaka in the central region. The district and regional level offices of these institutions are

virtually not empowered though should be competent enough for local level policy decisions. The financial power of these district and regional offices are limited in respect of sanctioning loan for establishing any major industry to the potential entrepreneur. The institutional mechanism is complex and cumbersome especially in getting loan and particularly when it involves foreign exchange allocation even for capital goods and machinery. Besides, the training facilities are almost absent in the northern region which gave rise to the shortage of skilled man-power required for industries. These institutional inadequacies might have played certain role in the slow rate of industrialization in the northern region.

In this situation, it is recommended that a comprehensive policy on industrialization exclusively for the northern region is needed urgently because the want of the depressed region is the distribution of economic power not of system,⁶³ failure of which may intensify the regional conflict and class conflict may agitate the body polity violently.⁶⁴

The policy should focus on the strategy for rapid industrial development in the northern region providing greater incentives, concessions etc. over other regions and consider (a) creation of a separate corporate body for the northern region to be entrusted with the responsibility of the establishment of large industries; (b) establishment of a separate institution for industrial technical assistance; (c) decentralization of industrial finance institutions with maximum authority in respect of sanction of loans and credits; (d) availability of adequate credit facility both in local and foreign exchange at a lower rate of interest than other regions; (e) credit facility for capital investment and working capital; (f) establishment of a separate industrial licencing board; (g) creation of a separate industrial marketing board; (h) greater tax exemption and tax holidays than other regions; (i) availability of gas or supply of electricity and furnace oil at a reasonable price costing at par with gas in other regions and (j) transportation and communication network including the development of the nearest seaport Mongla with greater harbour facilities.

NOTES

1. *Upazila* is the next lower level of administrative unit under a district. Former *Thana* jurisdiction is more recently renamed as *upazila*. Former *Thana* area was the administrative boundary of a police station.
2. *A mauza* is a revenue unit in a village.
3. *A mahalla* is synonymous to a *mauza* and is applicable for urban areas.
4. The number of villages has been computed from information contained in the *Bangladesh Population Census - 1981: Analytical Findings and National Tables*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka, 1984 pp. 169-171.
5. Roux, Jean-Michel, "Industrialization and Regional Disparities" in D.F. Walker (ed.) *Planning Industrial Development*, John Wiley and Sons, Toronto, Canada, 1980, pp. 71-97.
6. Pred, A.R. "Industrialization, Initial Advantages and American Metropolitan Growth" in *Geographical Review*, Vol. 55, 1965, pp. 158-185.
7. Friedman, J. *Regional Development Policy: A Case Study of Venezuela*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A. 1966, pp. 35-77.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Walker, D.F. "Introduction" in D.F. Walker (ed.) *Planning Industrial Development*, John Wiley and Sons, Toronto, Canada, 1980, p. 4.
10. Pred, A.R. *City-System in Advanced Economies*, Hutchinson, London, 1977, p.18.
11. Walker, D. F. *Op. cit.*, pp. 129-148.
12. Roux, Jean-Michel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 71-97.
13. Hunter, W.W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Rajshahi*, London, 1876, p. 32.
14. O'Mally, L.S.S., *Bengal District Gazetteers: Rajshahi*, Calcutta, 1916, p. 24.
15. Ashraf Siddique quoted in the *Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Rajshahi*, Government Press, Dhaka, 1976, p. 154.
16. Nawabs are like Barons in England.
17. *Matka* is a special quality of silk cloth usually good for shirts and punjabies (a very special type of loose and long full sleeves shirts).
18. Bari, Latiful K.G.M., *Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Bogra*, Bangladesh Government Press, Dhaka, 1979, pp. 149-150.
19. Ashraf Siddiqui, *Op. cit.*, p. 155.
20. Bari Latiful, K.G.M. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.
21. *Marwariee* is a sect in Jain religion and hails from the north-western part of India and are traditionally merchants.
22. Bari Latiful, K.G.M. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
24. *Atap-rice* is a kind of rice extracted by husking the simply sun-dried paddy, that is, without boiling the paddy before husking.

25. Ashraf Siddiqui, *Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Dinajpur*, Bangladesh Government Press, Dhaka, 1975, p. 148.
26. Bari Latiful, K.G.M. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.
27. *Dhuti* is a kind of long cloth made of fine cotton thread and worn by the males.
28. *Chadar* is a kind of cloth made of cotton thread of heavy quality and used either as wrapper or used as bed sheets or bed spreads.
29. *Silk-alwans* are a kind of wrapper made of silk-cloth.
30. *Thans* are long cloths made of cotton threads used for the manufacture of shirts, trousers, blouses, etc.
31. *Saree* is a kind of cloth usually 5-6 yards long and 1-yard wide worn by the women exclusively.
32. *Gamchha* is a kind of light or thin towel.
33. Bari Latiful, K.G.M. *Op. cit.*, p. 157.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
35. *Bharan* is an alloy of copper and zinc.
36. *Ghoti* is a kind of small water jar.
37. Ashraf Siddiqui, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.
38. Ahmed, Rakibuddin, "Strategy of Industrial Development in Bangladesh" in *Political Economy*, Journal of the Bangladesh Economic Association, Vol. 2, No. 1, Dhaka, 1976.
39. Ahmed, Q.K. "The Manufacturing Sector of Bangladesh: An Overview" in the *Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. VI, No. 4, Autumn, 1978, Dhaka, pp. 386-387.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
41. Papanek, G.F. *Pakistan's Development: Social Goals and Private Incentives*, Harvard University Press, Mass., U.S.A. 1987, p. 31.
42. Mehmet, Ozey, *Economic Planning and Social Justice in Developing Countries*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1978, p. 142.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Pakistan Planning Commission, *The Second Five Year Plan 1960-65*, Manager of Publications, Govt. of Pakistan, Karachi, 1960, p. 49.
45. Pakistan Planning Commission, *The Third Five Year Plan 1965-70*, Manager of Publications, Govt. of Pakistan, Karachi, 1965, p. 33.
46. Ahmed Q.K. *Op. cit.*, p. 393.
47. Ahmed. Q. K. *Op. cit.*, p. 396.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
49. *Taka* is local currency in Bangladesh, 33 *taka* equals 1 US dollar approximately.
50. Govt. of Bangladesh. *Industrial Policy -1986*, Ministry of Industries, Dhaka, July 1986, p.1.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
52. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, *Cottage Industries of Bangladesh— A Survey*, Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1983, pp. 81-84.

53. Computed on the basis of information contained in *Cottage Industries of Bangladesh - A Survey*, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Dhaka, 1983, pp. 81-84.
54. Computed on the basis of information contained in *Detailed Report on the Census of Manufacturing Industries for 1976-77*, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Govt. of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1981, pp. 30-489.
55. *Ibid*
56. *Ibid.*
57. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation. *Op. cit.*, pp. 81-84.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. Computed on the basis of information contained in 1983—*District Statistics, Bogra*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka, 1983, Table: Selected Socio-Economic Indicators by Districts.
61. *Ibid*
62. *Ibid*
63. Miller, J. "The Distribution of Political and Government Power in the Context of Urbanization" in Miller, J. and Gakenheimer, R. (eds.), *Latin American Urban Policies and the Social Sciences*, Sage, Biverley Hills, 1971, p. 211.
64. Ahmed, E. "Development Strategy in Bangladesh: Probable Political Consequences", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVIII, November, 1975, p. 136.

APPENDIX 1

Number of major industries by group and by regions of Bangladesh - 1977

Major industrial groups	Regions of Bangladesh			
	Eastern	Central	Western	Northern
Food manufacturing	167	99	10	56
Beverage	2	3	1	-
Tobacco	2	11	4	4
Textile	74	418	20	44
Footwear etc.	15	74	-	-
Wood, Cork, etc.	2	12	-	-
Furniture	1	20	-	-
Paper and paper products	6	20	2	-
Printing and publishing	5	88	-	1
Leather and its products	7	89	1	-
Chemicals and its products	74	224	5	7
Rubber products	-	4	-	-
Petroleum and Coal manufacturing	2	-	-	-
Non-metallic products	6	45	-	1
Basic metal products	11	28	3	-
Metal products	48	109	3	4
Machinery ex-electrical	13	71	8	-
Electrical machinery	9	30	1	-
Transport manufacturing	3	15	1	-
Miscellaneous industry	5	60	6	3
Total number of industries	452	1,420	65	120
Total number of employees	1,06,649	1,70,349	51,029	19,358

Source : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Detailed Report on the Manufacturing Industries for 1976-77, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1981, pp. 20-22.

APPENDIX II

Number of cottage industries under eight broad classification and by regions of Bangladesh -1983

Broad classified industries	Number of Industries				Total
	Eastern region (Chittagong Divn.)	Central region (Dhaka Divn.)	Western region (Khulna Divn.)	Northern region (Rajshahi Divn.)	
Food, beverage and tobacco	12808	11751	15283	16834	56676
Textile, wearing and leather	20227	25800	23454	18424	87905
Wood products and furniture	18071	21946	13992	16778	70787
Paper and printing	355	927	180	280	1782
Chemical, coal, petroleum and rubber	330	658	170	205	1363
Non-metal and mineral products	3983	4906	4348	5309	18546
Fabricated metal products	5069	6874	6092	5156	23191
Other industry and handicrafts	7441	10597	6344	9078	33460
Total :	68,284	83,459	69,863	72,064	2,93,670

Source: Computed on the basis of information contained in *Cottage Industries of Bangladesh - A Survey*, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Dhaka, 1983, pp. 81-84.

APPENDIX III

List of major industries established during 1947-1971 and during 1972-1986 in the northern region of Bangladesh

Name of industry	Location/ district	Year of establishment	Sponsor
<u>During 1947-1971</u>			
1. Habib Match Factory	Bogra	1948	Private
2. Sakur Sarda Factory	Rajshahi	1951	Private
3. Aziz Match Factory	Rajshahi	1953	Private
4. Syedpur Railway Workshop	Nilphamari	1954	Government
5. Bhandari Glass Works	Bogra	1956	Private
6. Thakurgaon Sugar Mill	Thakurgaon	1958	P.I.D.C.
7. Mahimaganj Sugar Mill	Gaibandha	1960	P.I.D.C.
8. North Bengal Paper Mill	Pabna	1960	P.I.D.C.
9. Virginia Tobacco Mill	Bogra	1960	Private
10. Quomi Jute Mill	Sirajganj	1961	P.I.D.C.
11. Textile Mill	Nilphamari	1961	E.P.I.D.C.
12. Sugar Mill	Jaipurhat	1962	E.P.I.D.C.
13. Hariari Sugar Mill	Rajshahi	1965	E.P.I.D.C.
14. Jute Mill	Rajshahi	1966	Private
15. Calico Textile Mill	Pubna	1968	Private
16. Automatic Flour Mill	Sirajganj	1968	Private
17. Norrani Flour Mill	Bogra	1968	Private
<u>During 1972-1986</u>			
1. Square Pharmaceutical	Pabna	1972	Private
2. Bogra Autos	Bogra	1973	Private
3. Santahar Silo	Bogra	1973	Government
4. Adco Pharmaceuticals	Rajshahi	1974	Private
5. Textile Mill	Rajshahi	1976	B. I. D. C.
6. Textile Mill	Dinajpur	1976	B.I.D.C.
7. Edruc Pharmaceuticals	Pabna	1974	Private
8. Sugar Mill	Panchagarah	1976	B.I.D.C.

9. Auto Rice Mill	Dinajpur	1977	Private/B.S.R.S.
10. Rangpur Jute Mill	Rangpur	1977	B.I.D.C.
11. Leather Complex	Bogra	1978	B.I.D.C.
12. Auto Rice Mill	Thakurgaon	1978	Private/B.S.R.S.
13. Auto Rice Mill	Naogaon	1978	Private/ B.S.B.
14. Thakurgaon Silk Mill	Thakurgaon	1979	Sericulture Board
15. Readymade Garments	Rajshahi	1982	Private/B.S.B.
16. Ato Rice Mill	Rajshahi	1982	Private/B.S.B.
17. Auto Flour Mill Bank	Rajshahi	1985	Private/Sonali
18. Natore Sugar Mill	Natore	1986	B.I.D.C.
19. Auto Bricks	Bogra	1986	Private/B.S.R.S.
20. Railway Carrier Mfg.	Nilphamari	1986	Government

Source: 1) District Gazetteers :Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur, Rangpur.

2) District Statistics: Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur, Rangpur.

3) Department of Industries, Govt. of Bangladesh.

Note: Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (P.I.D.C.); East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (E.P.I.D.C.); Bangladesh Industrial Development Corporation (B.I.D.C.); Bangladesh Silpa Rin Sangstha (B.S.R.S.); Bangladesh Silpa Bank (B.S.B.) and Sonali Bank (Scheduled Commercial Bank).

APPENDIX IV

Number of major industries by size and group and by number of employees in the former districts of the northern region of Bangladesh, 1976-77.

Former district/ Industrial group	No. of Industries			Number of employees		
	Total	Big	Small	Total	Big	Small
<u>Bogra</u>	19	16	3	2198	2122	76
Food manufacturing	8	7	1	201	188	13
Textile	3	1	2	202	1139	63
Chemical	2	2	-	440	440	-
Non-metallic	1	1	-	82	82	-
Metal products	4	4	-	214	214	-
Misc. industries	1	1	-	59	59	-
<u>Dinajpur</u>	27	25	2	2170	2150	20
Food manufacturing	24	24	-	2105	2105	-
Textile	2	1	1	62	45	17
Chemical products	1	-	1	3	-	3
<u>Pabna</u>	46	14	32	7782	6377	1405
Food manufacturing	7	7	-	154	154	-
Textile	36	4	32	7116	5711	1405
Printing & Publishing	1	1	-	21	21	-
Chemical products	2	2	-	491	491	-
<u>Rajshahi</u>	17	15	2	4965	4947	18
Food manufacturing	10	9	1	2955	2944	11
Tobacco	2	1	1	42	35	7
Textile	4	4	-	1689	1689	-
Chemical Products	1	1	-	279	279	-
<u>Rangpur</u>	11	9	1	2243	2225	18
Food manufacturing	7	5	2	1936	1918	18
Tobacco	2	2	-	220	220	-
Misc. industries	2	2	-	87	87	-
Total:	120	79	41	19,358	17,821	1,537

Source : Computed on the basis of information contained in *Detailed Report on the Census of Manufacturing Industries for 1976-77*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, Govt. of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1981, pp. 30-489.

APPENDIX V

General statistics for cottage industries by type and by former districts in the northern region of Bangladesh - 1983

Sl. No.	Type of Industries	Number of industries by districts					Total
		Rajshahi	Bogra	Rangpur	Dinajpur	Pabna	
1.	Dairy products	68	113	4	15	24	224
2.	Ice cream	35	9	11	3	16	74
3.	Dal mill	13	8	10	3	5	39
4.	Flour mill	24	15	33	6	35	113
5.	Other grain mill	517	-	94	688	2	1301
6.	Oil Mill	39	892	1945	1020	656	4552
7.	Rice mill	1105	762	705	38	471	3081
8.	Wheat crushing	116	42	171	421	58	808
9.	Other food products	21	44	1127	-	124	1316
10.	Bakery	81	17	91	46	38	273
11.	Biscuit and Bakery	24	14	24	19	9	90
12.	Molasses making	419	1	9	58	473	960
13.	Confectionery	23	7	8	15	26	79
14.	Food for fowl	3	-	-	1	1	5
15.	Ice factory	1	-	3	2	9	15
16.	Catachu	62	-	-	-	-	62
17.	Sweet-meat	1053	158	524	419	325	2479
18.	Honey process	2	1	-	-	1	4
19.	Bidi factory	42	5	459	100	31	637
20.	Hukka tobacco	32	-	7	11	-	50
21.	Zarda and quimam	9	1	1	1	13	25
22.	Cotton products	3	9	-	2	14	28
23.	Thread spinning	16	1	-	-	4	21
24.	Cloth printing	1	-	-	-	3	4
25.	Yarn dyeing	2	-	-	-	9	11
26.	Embroidery	17	57	1	40	6	121
27.	Woolen goods	87	235	71	345	29	767
28.	Coir mat	2	3	7	-	1	13
29.	Mat	1133	251	408	54	286	2132
30.	Hemp jute coir	163	28	95	67	18	371
31.	Thread ball	1	-	1	1	343	346

32. Fish net	600	652	2425	217	2	3896
33. Blanket	17	2	6	1	13	39
34. Readymade garments	38	-	8	9	-	55
35. Cap making	1	1	-	1	-	3
36. Tailoring	2887	1321	2558	1734	1397	9897
37. Hides caring	68	9	33	42	10	182
38. Other leather products	2	4	-	-	1	7
39. Leather footwear	290	95	22	8	65	480
40. Jute bailing	12	-	1	2	2	17
41. Saw mill	66	19	37	25	26	173
42. Wood products	266	75	1291	916	371	2919
43. Bamboo and cane	2351	1256	3794	1448	1355	10204
44. Other wood products	260	1	79	51	113	504
45. Sports goods	1	3	-	-	-	4
46. Toy making	2	15	-	-	2	19
47. Boat making	88	35	4	1	104	232
48. Mathal	516	30	64	2	54	666
49. Wooden furniture	613	138	229	182	754	1916
50. Cane furniture	38	8	-	65	5	116
51. Hardboard making	3	-	-	-	2	5
52. Printing press	37	46	46	29	48	206
53. Book binding	21	1	1	2	6	31
54. Packaging	4	2	-	-	5	11
55. Ayurvedic medicine	4	1	1	8	5	19
56. Pesticide	9	-	6	5	10	30
57. Paint & Varnish	2	3	-	-	4	9
58. Soap factory	3	3	11	3	-	20
59. Glue and gum	38	-	-	-	-	38
60. Tyre retreating	4	8	1	1	-	14
61. Pottery	1306	1094	515	862	1078	4855
62. Mirror	5	6	-	-	2	13
63. Bricks	49	4	-	20	9	82
64. Tiles	62	-	-	1	5	68
65. Hand edge tools	235	191	1	266	387	2030
66. Steel furniture	5	7	17	3	2	34
67. Cooking stove	8	1	5	-	-	14

68. Aluminium utensil	2	5	1	1	-	9
69. Copper products	76	2	50	1	6	135
70. Bucket & ridging	5	2	13	7	2	29
71. Tin water tank	1	2	1	2	7	13
72. Steel trunk	9	3	2	1	14	29
73. Bolts and nuts	1	-	1	-	-	2
74. Sanitary wares	2	2	7	-	-	11
75. Block making	2	-	-	-	-	2
76. Lantern	1	1	-	-	-	2
77. Agril. implements	17	12	-	356	-	385
78. Light engg. works	76	117	56	35	49	333
79. Elect. appliance	25	103	3	38	28	197
80. Auto repair	18	37	23	11	21	110
81. Cycle repair	137	165	797	522	117	1738
82. Wooden handicraft	118	697	460	582	270	2127
83. Paper handicraft	7	1	-	1	4	13
84. China ceramics	5	-	1	23	3	32
85. Metal handicraft	781	150	381	460	15	1724
86. Jute handicraft	63	36	423	1723	38	2283
87. Other handicraft	63	161	43	12	119	398
88. Nakshi kantha	36	32	297	70	161	596
89. Jewellery	256	55	76	42	154	583
90. Goldsmithy	160	104	555	266	198	1283
91. Imitation jewell	1	-	1	3	2	7
92. Musical instrument	2	-	2	5	6	15
93. salt crushing	-	7	-	-	-	7
94. Mantle making	-	1	-	-	-	1
95. Socks	-	4	37	1	1	43
96. Tannery	-	1	1	-	7	9
97. Other footwear	-	6	1	-	-	7
98. Other paper pds	-	19	-	1	-	20
99. Metal print	-	3	-	1	3	7
100. Unani medicine	-	1	1	-	-	2
101. Perfumary	-	1	-	-	1	2
102. Ink	-	2	-	1	-	3
103. Battery	-	8	8	3	3	27

104. Optical glass	-	6	-	-	-	6
105. Cement products	-	1	-	1	-	2
106. Lime products	-	47	147	60	40	296
107. Locks	-	7	2	-	-	9
108. Fish drying	-	-	11	-	-	11
109. Beverage	-	-	3	-	-	3
110. Cigar	-	-	5	-	1	6
111. Handloom	-	-	8	-	-	8
112. Footwear repair	-	-	22	-	-	22
113. Umbrella	-	-	3	4	13	20
114. Homeo medicine	-	-	3	-	-	3
115. Agarbati	-	-	1	-	-	1
116. Plastic products	-	1	1	-	-	2
117. Shil patta	-	-	2	-	-	2
118. Plastic handicraft	-	-	16	-	-	17
119. Spice grinding	-	-	-	2	2	4
120. Shatifoed	-	-	-	32	-	32
121. Hosiery	-	-	-	1	54	55
122. Plywood products	-	-	-	1	-	1
123. Comb and button	-	-	-	-	1	1
124. Lighting equip.	-	-	-	-	3	3
125. Boot polish	-	-	-	-	33	33
126. Chalk manufacturing	-	-	-	-	1	1
127. Chalni making	-	-	-	-	2	2
128. Launch body making	-	-	-	-	2	2
Grand total	16,829	9,430	21,279	14,203	10,323	72,064

Source: Computed on the basis of information contained in *Cottage Industries of Bangladesh - A Survey*, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Dhaka, 1983, pp. 209-230.

Preventive Detention in Bangladesh: A Legal Analysis

Syed Kamal Mostafa

ABSTRACT

The expression 'preventive detention' implies detention of a person without trial in a court of law. This paper depicts the provision and operation of the laws relating to preventive detention as they exist in the constitution of Bangladesh. This is preceded by an historical background of such laws in Bangladesh. The paper analyses 'safeguards regarding preventive detention in Bangladesh', 'period of detention and advisory board', 'grounds of detention and right of representation', 'as soon as may be', 'non-disclosure of facts' and 'judicial control — satisfaction of detaining authority'. It also examines social necessity of the laws of preventive detention. A critical review of such laws is also discussed. Leading cases relating to preventive detention in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Burma, Malaysia and U.K. have also been cited. In conclusion, it is argued that the power of detention should be used sparingly only in exceptional circumstances. The rights of the people in the constitution will then be real and not get eclipsed as it is today.

Introduction

The provision of preventive detention has been included in the Constitution of Bangladesh. The expression "preventive detention" implies detention of a person without trial in a court of law. It authorizes the executive to impose restraints upon the freedom of an individual who may not have committed a crime but who, if apprehended, is about to commit acts that are prejudicial to public order or safety etc. It has three special features. The first is that it is detention and not imprisonment; the second is that it is detention by the Executive without trial or enquiry by a Court; and the third is that the objective is preventive and not punitive.¹

In the case of *Gopalan V. State of Madras* it was observed: "A person is punitively detained only after a trial for committing a crime and after his guilt has been established in a competent Court of justice. Preventive detention, on the other hand, is not a punitive but a precautionary measure. The object is not to punish a man for having done something but to intercept him before he does it and to prevent him from doing it. No offence is proved, not any charge formulated, and the justification is

justification is suspicion or reasonable probability and not criminal conviction which only can be warranted by legal evidence."²

A direct provision in the western constitutions for preventive detention is absent. Ghana, Malaysia, Burma, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and some other states have enacted constitutional and statutory provisions in respect of preventive detention. This paper depicts the provision and operation of the laws relating to preventive detention as they exist in the constitution of Bangladesh. This is preceded by an historical background of such laws in Bangladesh.

Historical Background of Preventive Detention in Bangladesh

The history of the law of preventive detention can be traced to the East India Company Act, 1793. The Act stripped the Courts of their usual powers and in the Wahabi case the Courts in Bengal were obliged to hold that the direction of the Governor-General must prevail over any writ that the Court had power to issue.³ Afterward came the Bengal Regulation of 1812 which granted the local government authority to detain emigrants in certain cases.⁴ The Bengal State Prisoners Regulation III of 1818 gave the government power to detain persons without trial. The Presidencies of Madras and Bombay made similar Regulations in 1819 and 1827 respectively.⁵ The next statute was the State Prisoners Act, 1850 and of 1858 which enabled the government to confine the prisoners within the limits of the Supreme Courts of Judicature in the respective areas.⁶

There was another Act, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, which provided for the more speedy trial of certain offences, and for the prohibition of associations dangerous to the public peace.⁷ The First World War necessitated the making of the Defence of India Act, 1915 to provide for special measures to secure the public safety and the defence of British India and for the more speedy trial of certain offences. The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919 provided special law for dealing with subversive movements.⁸

Then the Defence of India Act, 1939 empowered the Central Government to frame rules, *inter alia*, to provide for the detention of any person suspected of being hostile origin etc. During the Second World War rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules was framed for the detention of such person as intended above. But it was declared invalid in *Keshav Talpade V. Emperor*.⁹ To get over the decision the Governor-General promulgated Ordinance No. 14 of 1943 and declared valid all orders made under rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules. Defence of India Act, 1939 remained in force during the period of World War II and till six months thereafter.¹⁰

After the partition of India the condition of Pakistan necessitated Pakistan Public Safety Ordinance XIV of 1949, the Pakistan Public Safety (Amendment) Act XXXVI of 1950, the Pakistan Public Safety Ordinance VI of 1952 and the Security of Pakistan Act XXXV of 1952. Besides these, the Provinces enacted more than a dozen of Public Safety Acts and Ordinances.¹¹

Article 7 of the Constitution of 1956 of Pakistan and fundamental right number 2 of the Constitution of 1962 of Pakistan provided for preventive detention. The Defence of Pakistan Rules, 1965 conferred extensive powers of detention on the Government.

The most significant feature of the Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972 was the absence of a provision for preventive detention. The provision of preventive detention was incorporated in the Constitution by the Constitution (Second Amendment) Act, 1973. Article 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh was substituted in line with Article 22 of the Constitution of India to provide for laws of preventive detention.

Safeguards Regarding Preventive Detention in Bangladesh

Article 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh deals with two separate matters: (a) persons detained under the ordinary criminal law and (b) persons detained under the law of preventive detention. Sub-paragraphs (4) and (5) under Art. 33 do not directly authorise preventive detention of any person but prescribe certain guarantees in respect of persons detained under the law of preventive detention. These can be discussed under the following heads :-

I. Period of Detention and the Advisory Board

Clause (4) of Art. 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh contemplates detention of a person for an initial period not exceeding six months. This clause also authorises the formation of an Advisory Board consisting of three persons, of whom two shall be persons who are or have been, or are qualified to be appointed as Judges of the Supreme Court and the other shall be a person who is a senior officer in the service of the Republic. The function of the Advisory Board is to report to the Government, after affording the detenu an opportunity of being heard in person, whether detention is necessary for a period exceeding six months. The report for the extension of the detention beyond six months must have been made before the expiration of the said period of six months. Section 12(2) of the Special Powers Act 1974 of Bangladesh, stipulates that where the Advisory Board has reported that there is no sufficient cause for the detention of the person concerned, the Government shall cause the person to

be released forthwith. No concurrence of the Advisory Board is necessary where detention does not exceed six months.

The setting up of the Advisory Board shows that the detenu's interest has not been left without any safeguard; absolute discretion has not been conferred on the Government. Referring to a similar provision in the Indian Constitution the Supreme Court of India in *Puran Lal V. Union of India* holds: "The setting up of an Advisory Board to determine whether such detention is justified is considered as a sufficient safeguard against arbitrary detention under any law of preventive detention."¹²

The case of *Manik Choudhury V. Government of Bangladesh* seems to be relevant in this context. The case of the detenu was not sent to the Advisory Board within the prescribed period as provided in section 10 of the Special Powers Act of 1974 of Bangladesh. The order of detention passed against the detenu was, therefore, declared to be without lawful authority.¹³ In *Belayet Hossain V. Deputy Commissioner* it is stated that the initial order of detention for six months was long over and there had been no order passed by the Government for extending the period in respect of the petitioners. The Court held that the petitioners were in custody without any lawful authority and directed that they should be set at liberty forthwith.¹⁴

But it should be noted that the Constitution fails to give a person detained for less than six months any quasi-judicial protection from a hasty and ill-considered order of detention. In other words, the Constitution seems to rely on the satisfaction of the detaining authority alone for a period of six months.

II. Grounds of Detention and Right of Representation

Clause 5 of Article 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides two rights to a detenu. First, the detenu is to be furnished with "the grounds on which the order has been made" and that has to be done "as soon as may be". In the case of *Golam Kabir V. Government of Bangladesh* it has been observed that grounds must offer the basis upon which the detaining authority must be satisfied that it was necessary to make the order of detention. They must exist at or before the time of the making of the order.¹⁵ In analysing what the grounds are it has been cited on the above mentioned case that by their very nature the grounds are conclusions of facts and not a complete detailed recital of all the facts. No part of the grounds can be held back nor can any more grounds be added thereto. What must be supplied are the "grounds on which the order has been made" and nothing less.

The grounds must be distinguished from the material in the form of information, confidential communications and other matters, by which the detaining

authority is moved to take action. The clause does not require the detaining authority to communicate to the detenu the sources of information or the actual information received about the detenu and his activities.¹⁶

Section 3(2) of Special Powers Act, 1974 of Bangladesh specifies the prejudicial acts of a person on which the order of detention can be made. These are (a) to prejudice the security of Bangladesh or to endanger public safety or the maintenance of public order; (b) to create or excite feelings of enmity or hatred between different communities, classes or sections of people; (c) to interfere with or encourage or incite interference with the administration of law or the maintenance of law and order; (d) to prejudice the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community; (e) to cause fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public; (f) to prejudice the economic and financial interest of the State.¹⁷

Secondly, the right that clause 5 of Art. 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides is that the detenu is to be afforded earliest opportunity to make representation against the order. The purpose of furnishing of grounds is to enable the detenu to make the representation. The clause does not specify to whom the representation is to be made. It seems that the clause contemplates that the representation is to be made before the detaining authority. In *Firoz Ahmed V. Government of Bangladesh* the High Court held that the provisions for submission of representation "has, by implication, imposed a legal obligation on the Government to consider such representation".¹⁸

The detenu is not entitled to appear by any legal practitioner in any matter connected with the reference to the Advisory Board and its report.¹⁹ The right to make a representation does not necessarily carry with it a right to lead evidence or the constitution of an independent judicial tribunal to consider the representation.²⁰

Mention of a few cases seems to be relevant here. In *Anwar Hossain V. Bangladesh* it is stated that grounds of detention were not served upon the detenu. The High Court considered the non-service of the grounds of detention as a fatal defect in the proceeding for detention, because it deprives the detenu from making necessary representation to the Advisory Board.²¹

In *Abdul Latif Mirza V. Government of Bangladesh* the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court held that grounds to be supplied to the detenu must be clear, precise and not vague in order to enable him to make representation.²² In *Harikisan V. the State of Maharashtra* the Supreme Court of India set aside the order of detention as the order was in English.²³

In *Mrs. Aruna Sen V. Government of Bangladesh* it is stated that if some of the grounds are relevant, but some other grounds are irrelevant or non-existent the

satisfaction of the detaining authority may be said to have been caused by both valid and invalid grounds and such satisfaction can not be held to be sufficient. Similarly, if some of the grounds are vague and indefinite, but some other grounds are not so, the constitutional requirement can not be said to have been complied with.²⁴ In the case of *Humayun Kabir V. State* the High Court held that the detenu must be supplied with the necessary writing materials, or an opportunity of interview with his lawyer, etc.²⁵

III. As Soon as May be

Article 33(3) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, as already stated, stipulates that when any person is detained the detaining authority shall, "as soon as may be" communicate to such person the grounds of detention. The term "as soon as may be" implies "as soon as feasible". In *State of Bombay V. Atma Ram* the term is explained as follows:

"The expression allows the authorities reasonable time to formulate the grounds on the materials in their possession. The time element is necessarily left indeterminate, because activities of individuals tending to bring about a certain result may be spread over a long or short period or a larger or a smaller area or may vary with individuals. The time required to formulate the proper grounds of detention on information received, is bound to vary in individual cases".²⁶ But this does not mean that the time for the purpose may be extended indefinitely.²⁷

Referring to a similar provision in the Indian constitution the Supreme Court of India in *Tarpara Dev V. State of West Bengal* held that a delay of sixteen days did not violate the constitution "under the circumstances of the case".²⁸ In *Khan Ghulam Muhammad Khan V. The State* it is stated that the grounds of detention were not communicated to the detenu until sixteen days had passed after the order of detention. The Court observed that the delay clearly violated the constitutional safeguard.²⁹

Section 8(2) of Special Power Act, 1974 of Bangladesh provides that in the case of a detention order, the authority shall inform the person detained of the grounds of his detention at the time he is detained or as soon as thereafter as is practicable, but not later than fifteen days. This provision prevents the authority from taking advantage of the vague expression "as soon as may be" and goes some way to mitigate the suffering of the detenu.

IV. Non-Disclosure of Facts

By a proviso to Clause 5, Article 33 of the Constitution of Bangladesh the authority ordering the detention is invested with discretion to disclose to the detenus only so much as may be safely stated. It may "refuse to disclose facts which such

authority considers to be against the public interest to disclose". It must be noted that there is the complete obligation to disclose all "the grounds" though not "facts". What facts are against public interest is vested in the subjective satisfaction of the detaining authority. In the case of *Government of E. Pakistan V. Rowshan Bijaya* the Supreme Court observed:

"What facts can be revealed will, of course, depend upon the circumstances of each case. But they must, in any event, be such as would enable the person in question to make an effective representation as a total suppression of all material facts would render the constitutional safeguard illusory".³⁰

The proviso is based on the doctrine enunciated by Lord *Maugham* in *Liveridge V. Anderson*:

"It is beyond doubt that he (Secretary of State) can decline to disclose information on which he has acted on the ground that to do so would be contrary to public interest. There must be a large number of cases in which the information on which the Secretary of State is likely to act will be of a very confidential nature".³¹

Mr. Justice M. A. Munim observes, "The proviso to clause (5) has separated 'facts' from 'grounds'. 'Facts' means the evidence or data from which conclusions are derived The proviso gives the authority the right to withhold particulars, if it would be against public interest to disclose them. 'A wide latitude is left to the authorities in the matter of disclosure'.³²

V. Judicial Control-Satisfaction of Detaining Authority

The question of a person being detained under the law of preventive detention is left to be determined upon the subjective satisfaction of the detaining authority. This satisfaction is a matter into the existence of which the courts will not set on foot any inquiry unless it is alleged that the order of detention is a *mala fide* one.³³ In other words, the court can determine whether the law of preventive detention has been used for any purpose other than that for which it is enacted. As the Dacca High Court in *Ranabir Das V. Ministry of Home* observes: "A detention order is made *mala fide* when it is made contrary to the object and purpose of the Act or when the detaining authority permits himself to be influenced by conditions which he ought not to permit".³⁴

Here reference of a few cases seems to be relevant. In the case of *Anwara Ahmed V. Bangladesh* the High Court held that satisfaction of the detaining authority is subject to an objective test before the superior courts since these courts have got a constitutional duty to be satisfied that preventive detention is made with lawful authority as well as in a lawful manner. The detaining authority must be ready to

produce before the court the materials on which it has passed the order of detention. In this case the Court directed that the detenu be set at liberty at once if not wanted in any other case.³⁵

In the case of *Habibullah Khan V. S. A. Ahmed* the Appellate Division held that it is not only that the government is satisfied that the detention is necessary, but it is also for the court to be satisfied that the detention is necessary in the public interest.³⁶

In *Krishna Gopal V. Govt. of Bangladesh* the Appellate Division held that an order which is going to deprive a man of personal liberty can not be allowed to be dealt with in a careless manner, and if it is done so, the Court will be justified in interfering with such order. The court held the detention order unlawful.³⁷

In the case of *Mrs. Aruna Sen V. Govt. of Bangladesh* the High Court concludes: "Having considered the facts and circumstances of the case from all its aspects we are of the opinion that there is no material before this court on the basis of which a reasonable man may be satisfied as to the connection of the detenu with the illegal activities of a secret organisation and as to the necessity of detaining him for the purpose of preventing him from acting prejudicially to the security of the state, public safety or public order. We, therefore, hold that the order of detention ... is illegal and we quash the order of detention".³⁸

The onus of proof of the "satisfaction" of the detaining authority ordinarily would lie on the Government.³⁹ But when an order duly authenticated by a competent authority is produced which contains a statement that the authority was satisfied that a particular person be detained, it would be sufficient for the purpose of putting the detenu on his defence. It is then for such a detenu to discharge the onus that the executive authority was in reality not satisfied at all. In other words, it would be for the detenu to place proper material on the record of the case to substantiate his contention that the order is a *malafide* one.⁴⁰

Preventive detention is a serious invasion of personal freedom and such meagre safeguards as the constitution has provided against improper exercise of the power must be anxiously watched and enforced by the courts of law.

Necessity of the Law of Preventive Detention

Preventive detention in times of war or emergency is well recognised. The necessity of having such provisions in time of peace has been felt to combat certain types of situations. In many newly independent states subversive movements, abuse of personal liberty and freedom of speech appear to imperil the fabric of society. Law of preventive detention is most effective to control anti-social activities.

Peace and order had not become the normal feature even after the first ebullitions of independence of Bangladesh. The Government had to fight disturbing forces. As Mr. Abdul Jalil, Chief Whip of Awami League Parliamentary Party, said in the Parliament:

"The Special Powers Act was introduced to combat looting of police stations, setting fire on jute godowns, slogan of Muslim Bengal, Naxalite activities and above all to combat the nefarious tendency to destroy the sovereignty of the state".⁴¹

The necessity for preventive detention further arises in the sense that such detention of a person is required by the fact that the evidence in possession of the authority will not be adequate to make a charge or to secure the conviction of a detenu by legal proof.

One of the reasons of incorporation of preventive detention in India was explained by Dr. Ambedkar as follows:

"There may be many parties and persons who may not be patient enough to follow constitutional methods but are impatient in reaching their objective and if for that purpose (they) resort to unconstitutional methods, then there may be a large number of people who may have to be detained by the Executive. In such a situation, would it be possible for the Executive to prepare the cases and do all that is necessary to satisfy the elaborate legal procedure prescribed"?⁴² Hence the virtual necessity of the law of preventive detention in certain situations can hardly be over-estimated.

A Critical Review of the Law Preventive Detention

Preventive detention makes an inroad on the personal freedom of a citizen. In a chapter of fundamental rights it is rather anomalous that there is a short code set out embodying the provision of preventive detention. There is no such law in democratic states like U.K. or U.S.A. particularly in times of peace.

Very often laws of preventive detention may be a weapon to suppress political opponents. The Government who made this law in Bangladesh in 1974 misused it to arrest and kill its opponents.⁴³ In the past fifty thousand persons were detained under the preventive detention law.⁴⁴ In Malaysia the Socialist Front is the party which has suffered most as a result of official concern over its activities, and there has been sporadic arrests of its members under the preventive detention ordinance.⁴⁵

An order of detention can be attacked on the ground that there may be a lack of bonafides on the part of the detaining authority. The object may be to prevent a person from being released on bail. In *Shamsun Nahar V. Bangladesh* it is stated that the detenu was in jail in pursuance of an order under the Special Powers Act of 1974

of Bangladesh and his detention was declared illegal. The Government brought him upto the jail gate and allowed him to have to glimpse of the outside world. Then a fresh order of detention under the Emergency Powers Act was served.⁴⁶ In the case of *Ranabir Das V. Ministry of Home* it is stated that earlier detention order under Special Powers Act was revoked and on the same date without releasing the detenu fresh order was passed under the Emergency Powers Rule.⁴⁷ The Court, however, held that both the detentions were illegal.

Regarding preventive detention under the Public Order Preservation Act in the constitution of Burma it has been repeatedly pointed out that the Act was enacted in the interest of preventive justice and not for the purpose of providing additional punishment for an act which would be penal under any law in force.⁴⁸

A study of cases under the law of preventive detention shows that the grounds of detention are often vague and indefinite and not clear and precise. The detenu is thus in difficulty to challenge the order of detention.

It can also be pointed out that the safeguard of review by the Advisory Board is not sufficient. It can hardly take the place of a judicial trial. To say that the Board is composed of two Judges of the Supreme Court, or persons qualified to be Judges of the Supreme Court and a senior officer is hardly a convincing factor. The procedure before the Board renders the whole thing useless. A mere reading of an accusation and an answer is meaningless. To judge a person requires evidence tested by cross-examination, assistance by pleader and arguments on law and fact. But the Board dispenses justice merely on papers.

In Bangladesh the usual period of detention is six months, whereas in Indian Constitution and in Constitutions of 1956 and 1962 of Pakistan it is only three months. The detention can continue for an unlimited period if the Advisory Board gives *carte blanche*. It may enable the executive authority to misuse the provision of the law by detaining for an indefinite period the political adversaries. In India under section 13 of the Indian Maintenance of Internal Security Act the maximum period for which any person may be detained shall be twelve months only.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Preventive detention was sanctified in the constitutional instrument because of social necessity. The Judiciary in the subcontinent including Bangladesh has consistently deprecated it though it is recognised in law. The frequent and arbitrary application of the laws of preventive detention in Bangladesh reveals the indifference of the Government towards the encroachment of individual liberty. The Government should remember that in an organised society it exists for the welfare of the people.

The power of detention is available no doubt, but it should be used sparingly only in exceptional circumstances. The liberty will then usher in better standards of civic life instead of being abused.

NOTES

1. Syed Sharfuddin Pirzada, *Fundamental Rights and Constitutional Remedies in Pakistan* (Lahore: All Pakistan Legal Decisions, 1966), p. 191.
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3. *Constitutional Documents*, Vol. I (Karachi: Govt. of Pakistan, 1964), pp. 126-27; S.S. Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
5. V.G. Ramachandran, *Fundamental Rights and Constitutional Remedies*, Vol. II (Delhi: Eastern Book Co., 1972), p. 221.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
7. *Ibid.*
8. S.H. Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
9. AIR 1943 FCI; *Mrs. Aruna Sen V. Government of Bangladesh*, 27 DLR (1975) 135.
10. S.H. Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
11. M.A. Munim, *Rights of the Citizen under the Constitution and the Law* (Dacca: The Bangladesh Institute of Law & Int. Affairs, 1975), p. 112.
12. AIR 1958 SC 163.
13. 27 DLR (1975) 295.
14. 28 DLR (1976) 305.
15. 27 DLR (1975) 216.
16. *Thangudu Varaha Naroinhamurty V. State*, AIR 1951 Orissa 215.
17. The *Jatiya Sangsad* (Parliament) on March 23, 1987 passed a bill amending the 1974 Special Powers Act with an objective to control smuggling and check sale of smuggled goods.
18. 27 DLR (1975) 580.
19. Section 11(4), Special Powers Act, 1974.
20. Cited by S.S. Mahmud, *The Constitution of Pakistan* (Lahore: The Pakistan Law Times Publications, 1965), p. 42.
21. 30 DLR (1978) 423; See also *Sultana Ara Begum V. Secretary*, 38 DLR (1968) 95.
22. 31 DLR (AD) (1979) 2; *State of Bombay V. Atmaram*, AIR 1951 SC 157; *Govt. of E. Pak. V. Rowshan Bijaya*, 18 DLR (SC) (1966) 214.
23. V.G. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, p. 269; see also M. Munir, *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Lahore: All Pak Legal Decisions, 1965), p. 104.

24. 27 DLR (1975) 124; See also *Krishna Gopal V. Govt. of Bangladesh*, 31 DLR (AD) (1979) 150.
25. 28 DLR (1976) 276.
26. V.G. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, p. 265.
27. Cited by S.S. Mahmud, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
28. S.S. Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 200-201.
29. M.A. Munim, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
30. 18 DLR (SC) (1966) 238.
31. V.G. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, p. 294.
32. M.A. Munim, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
33. See Section 34, Special Powers Act, 1974 of Bangladesh.
34. 28 DLR (1976) 53.
35. 30 DLR (1978) 200; *Asmatullah Miah V. Bangladesh*, 28 DLR (1976) 25; *Abdul Latif Mirza V. Government of Bangladesh*, 31 DLR (AD) (1979) 1.
36. 35 DLR (AD) (1983) 78.
37. 31 DLR (AD) (1979) 149.
38. 27 DLR (1975) 154.
39. A.K. Brohi, *Fundamental Law of Pakistan* (Karachi: Din Muhammadi Press, 1958), p. 427; S.S. Mahmud, *op. cit.*, p. 32; *Kripa Sindhu Hazra V. The State*, 30 DLR (1978) 104.
40. A.K. Brohi, *op. cit.*, p. 42; *Humayun Kabir V. State*, 28 DLR (1976) 266-67.
41. 15 March 1987, *Sangbad*.
42. V.D. Mahajan, *Select Modern Governments* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1972) p. 84.
43. Speech of Deputy Prime Minister in Parliament, 24 March 1987, *Bangladesh Observer*.
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46. 30 DLR (1978) 33.
47. 28 DLR (1976) 50.
48. Maung Maung, *Burma's Constitution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. 100.
49. Ershadul Bari, *Martial Law in Bangladesh: A Legal Analysis*, (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis) (University of London, 1985), p. 374.

A Short Genesis of Social Mobility Studies in India and Bangladesh

Aslam Bhuiyan

Introduction and A Glimpse on the Mobility Studies in India

In comparison to a large number of mobility studies done in western countries, social mobility studies in India and Bangladesh are rather few in number. There seems to be a historical reason behind it. Scientific innovation and technological development brought industrial revolution in the West in the early 16th century. The industrial revolution in England was followed by a phase of an ideological enlightenment in the West. Significantly, the slogan of fraternity, brotherhood and liberalism of Rousseau (1712-1778) and Voltaire (1694-1778), had shaken the European societies which had culminated in the glorious accomplishment of the French Revolution (1789). The French Revolution had brought changes in the mode of production and ideological basis of politics. It had transformed the feudal French into a capitalist French.

As a result of this qualitative structural change, there had been an extensive vertical social mobility. The extensive social mobility had broken the old traditional feudal power structure, transforming it into a modern democratic nation. The new democratic authority declared the openness and equality of opportunities to achievement for all citizens. Since then the concept of social mobility had been very much associated with the capitalist economy and democratic political system, based on achievement orientation of the members of a society (Davies, 1970:13).

On the contrary, we have observed that Indian society had remained more or less static (without any fundamental structural change) with its old traditions till the advent of the British in India. "While in England, Italy, Germany and some other European countries, the substitution of a feudal economy by the capitalist economy, was accomplished by the respective bourgeoisie classes of those countries, in India this was mainly achieved by the capitalist class of Britain and not by any class of

indigenous capitalist" (Desai, 1976:30).

The British had brought a qualitative change in the traditional society of India through various economic and political measures such as new land revenue system, flourishing of money economy, introduction of English education, development of communication and industrialization and urbanization however weak that might have been. The British had generated the process of transformation of Indian feudal mode of production. The age-long caste-bound traditional society had started changing. Thus a process of social mobility had been initiated, resulting in the emergence of new social classes* in the system of social stratification (Desai, 1976:175-176). This process of social mobility was further accelerated by the national government after the achievement of Independence (Chauhan, 1982).

The extent of mobility was further getting inputs from the rapid development of industries, urbanization, expansion of modern and scientific education and modernization in agriculture etc. This kind of qualitative change in the various aspects of the social structure as well as the system of social stratification, induced the social scientist in general, and sociologists and anthropologists in particular, to carry out social investigation into the processes of such change.

This new concern has led to a number of studies in India and Bangladesh by sociologists and anthropologists dealing with some aspects of mobility e.g., Beteille (1966), Barber (1968), Baily (1957, 1960), Dubey (1975), Sharma (1969) and Das (1968), Ahmed (1983), Mukherjee (1957, 1971), Bertocci (1970), Zaidi (1970). These studies cannot be classified distinctively in terms of different trends as observed in the mobility studies in the West. But the Indian studies may however be classified into two groups: (a) Urban mobility studies and (b) Rural mobility studies.

Major studies conducted on the problems of urban mobility are by Sovani *et. al.* (1956), Dhakney (1959), Goode (1963), Sen (1960), Chibber (1968), Chekki (1971), Jorapur (1979) and Dubey (1975). The findings as revealed through these studies may be summarised as follows: (1) The people in the urban areas are more mobile than their counterparts in the rural areas; (2) The rate of mobility is high in the city because of various processes of development viz, industrialization, urbanization;

* A.R. Desai delineates the newly emerged social classes in agrarian areas in the following manner. According to him the principal classes were: A. (1) Zamindar, (2) Absentee landlords, (3) Tenants, (4) The classes of peasant proprietors divided into upper, middle and lower strata, (5) Agricultural labourers, (6) The modern classes of merchants and (7) modern classes of money-lenders. B. In urban areas, following were the principal classes: (1) The modern classes of capitalists, (2) The modern working class, (3) The class of petty traders and shopkeepers, (4) The professionals class etc. For details, see, A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1976, pp. 175-76. Also see, Andre Beteille (1966), R.P. Dutta (1940), O. R. Gadgil (1933), O. Malley (ed.) (1941).

new kinds of jobs get created in the process which meet partially the growing needs of the cities; (3) Modern education has created opportunities for upward mobility of individual and groups going for professional occupations; (4) The rate of mobility differs from city to city and from town to town due to the differential development of cities and towns and (5) caste system as an institution can no more retard the processes of social mobility in the cities and towns.

Most of the urban studies which analyse the process of social mobility, show the divergent functions of caste, power and class in the determination of social status mobility. Despite the impediment of the caste system, a quantum of social mobility and occupational mobility as fairly increased owing to economic development and political modernization (Dubey, 1975 and Chauhan, 1972).

Changes in the occupational structure in the rural areas can be traced in the work of Beteille (1969:102-104). He points out four major factors primarily affecting the changes in the occupational structure. They are: (i) State legislation from time to time on the Land Tenure system, (ii) Money economy, i.e. Market relationship and influx of cash money in the village economy; (iii) Western education, which ensures white-collar jobs and helps people settle down in towns and cities and (iv) Close proximity of the village to the nearby cities and towns.

According to Beteille these are the factors responsible for social mobility which in turn, accelerate the process of polarisation in the class structure of the village. As a result of such polarisation, the class system acquires a certain degree of freedom. Thereby he says, "The class system has in part detached itself from the caste structure, although as we have seen, class position in the village are by no means entirely, or even "caste free" (Beteille, 1969:223).

Other studies on rural occupational mobility are by Sohi (1977), Ishwaran (1966), Das (1968) and Sharma (1969). Sharma observes that there is a significant occupational mobility among various caste population in the rural areas. He holds that "even the upper caste had given up its traditional occupation." Das observes that there is an increase in the proportion of landless agricultural labourers which indicates the higher degree of downward mobility in the rural areas (1968:44). Ishwaran notices a considerable amount of occupational mobility in the villages. But he concludes that the low level of economy of the village is responsible for a change from the traditional to non-traditional occupation (Ishwaran, 1966:26). The above findings contradict the findings of Sohi (1977:225), who observes that occupational mobility is comparatively high in the developed villages than in the less developed ones.

Both urban and rural studies in India reveal that they mainly deal with social stratification, and to some extent, power structure only within the matrix of the caste

structure. It is Beteille who tries to find out the type of interrelationships that exist between the caste system on the one hand and class and power, on the other. His study also tries to examine the effects of occupational mobility on the social structure (e.g., stratification system and power structure).

II

The Context of Mobility Studies in Bangladesh

No systematic attempt has so far been made to study the specific problems of social mobility and occupational dynamics in Bangladesh. Particularly no sociological inquiry was made to bring out the various aspects of inter-generational and intra-generational mobility in the rural areas.

There are a number of village studies conducted in Bangladesh. These studies mostly deal with the problems of social stratification. To a limited extent, these studies focus on change in the rural power structure. But by and large they fail to indicate the forces determining such changes in the order of stratification system and power structure. This is because most of them lack an indepth analysis of the cause and effect of the changes in the occupational structure of the village which plays the key role in bringing about changes in the social stratification system. Almost all of them have been recently conducted by sociologists and social anthropologists.*

Village study with sociological insight in rural Bangladesh first appeared in the work of R.K. Mukherjee. His prominent works are: (a) "The Dynamics of a Rural Society" and (b) "Six villages of Bengal", mainly concerned with the pre-British Bengal social structure and changes in the stratification system. "Mukherjee extending the dialectical mode of social change analysis to the rural society. He attempted to analyse the social structure and stratification in a historical process in terms of its dynamic class structure and the process of inherent contradictions. He laid emphasis on the systematic and organic character of society for understanding its processes of changes" (cf. Singh Y. 1974:412).

He observes the static production relation in rural Bengal in pre-British period and the absence of a vertical class mobility. According to him (a) Self-sufficient village economy; (b) Absence of private property and (c) Subsistence character of

* Before sociologists and anthropologists began to study the village, the British administration had already carried out village studies about which they later wrote (Metcalf, 1872; Baden Powell, 1896, 1899; Maine, 1871). These studies mainly deal with the village society as a self-sufficient unit, or try to focus on the land settlement as land tenure system. The studies conducted by such scholars were generally in the nature of intensive survey mainly connected with the government revenue collection system.

production with no surplus of marketing, are the factors responsible for the unchanging features of social stratification in the villages of Bengal (Mukherjee, 1957:16-18 and 27).¹ Mukherjee indicates the change in the patterns of social stratification due to a certain extent of vertical occupational mobility only after the advent of the British in India. He very clearly depicts how the polarisation of social class takes place in the villages of Bengal. Mukherjee also describes how the village society is divided into various contradictory and conflicting classes² due to the process of social mobility (Mukherjee 1957:10, 30-31 40 and 184).

Mukherjee in his second book, "Six Villages of Bengal" attempts to offer a long-term view of mobility patterns. He finds that no less than 79 per cent of all households in six villages of Bogra district in the northern part of Bangladesh, shows socio-economic mobility in the famine period of 1942-1944 (Mukherjee 1971:179). He claims that "similar albeit less frantic mobility had taken place in the twenty years period preceding the famine, and that unrelenting polarisation is in fact not only a feature of the history of these villages, but inherent in Bengal peasant society throughout the period" (cf. Schendel, 1982:23).

Bertocci (1970), in his study of two villages in Comilla district of the eastern region of Bangladesh gives a different picture of peasant mobility. He points out mobility of individual families between the economic class and the status groups which is an important feature in understanding of the social stratification system of the village societies. He describes this process as "cyclical kulakism", "where there followed a regular rise and fall of families, a decline of wealth (and hence power) for some families, and an increase of these for others between middle and upper strata. This was found in a process which probably prevailed during a period of three or four generations" (Bertocci, 1970:96, 97 and 103). According to him, stratification of these villages are yet flexible between the middle and upper strata. Schendel (1982), however, shows that both, Mukherjee and Bertocci differ in their analyses and interpretations of the village societies and the causes of such differences in these two studies may be attributed due to the fact that these have been carried out in two different localities and as they have been conducted in a different period of time, and finally owing to their differences in conceptualizing social change.

There are a few recent studies (Ahmed, 1983; Chowdhury, 1978; Islam, 1974; Jahangir, 1979 and Zaidi, 1970) which focus on some aspects of social mobility without being concerned exclusively with the problem of mobility in general. These studies have not followed the scientific tools for its analysis. Some piecemeal descriptions of mobility in these studies do not meet the imperative requisites to indicate the governing process of social mobility, and to identify the major determinants responsible for occupational dynamics in the villages of Bangladesh.

Islam (1974; 163), in determining the relationships between changes in the formal organization and changes in the process of political action, points out increasing economic contact with outside village as a factor creating a new occupational group influencing the power struggle in the village. Similarly, Jahangir (1979), shows how the landless peasants as an occupational group are forming a class for themselves and how they are being organised by left-wing political parties. This occupational group challenges the existing power structure dominated by rich farmers' group, who are structurally aligned with the civil and military bureaucracy and the rising petty bourgeoisie in the urban areas.

Chowdhury (1978) deals with the problems of stratification in a Bangladesh village. He analyses the changing patterns of stratification in terms of class, status and power relations. He indicates political aspects like the partition of Bengal (1906, partition of India (1947), and the emergence of Bangladesh after a bloody freedom struggle in 1971, and the land reforms (1793) and 1950) which are the major causes affecting the patterns of village stratification system (Chowdhury, 1978:27).

Some reflections on the changing aspects of occupational structure are found in a study by Ahmed (1983). He finds the rural society of Bangladesh as a "fast, mobile" society. He indicates that the war of independence and democratisation of life make the people aware of their position and encourages them to improve the living conditions by altering the traditional occupation. The rural folk are obtaining more and more new beneficial and productive occupations by acquiring new skills that are in high demand with the changing process of development and modernization (Ahmed, 1983:76-77 and 88).

Last but not the least, is Van Schendel (1982), who attempts to give an overview of peasant mobility in two different regions in rural Bangladesh. He has re-studied the villages earlier studied by Mukherjee (1971) and Quader (1960). Schendel finds two trends of peasant mobility in the rural areas of Bangladesh: (1) First, starting at the turn of the century to 1960, a general downward mobility of all categories.* (2) In the second trend, he finds specially in the 1970s, a complete polarisation. All the categories except category "B", continued their downward

Van Schendel has categorized the peasants into following four categories: "A" represents households which were unable to provide for themselves for twelve months at a very low standard of living during 1976-77. It was impossible for them to get loans. They regularly starved; "B" represents the households which could just manage to provide for themselves for twelve months at a very low standard of living in 1976-77; "C" represents the households which were able to provide for themselves for twelve months at a moderate standard living in 1976-77 and even one to three months in excess of that; and category "D" represents the households which were able to provide for themselves for twelve months at a comfortable standard of living in 1976-77, and for more than three months in excess. For details see, Van Schendel Willem, *Peasant Mobility: The odds of life in Rural Bangladesh*, New Delhi (1982:90-91).

mobility. Whereas the percentage of category "D" began to increase. Thus began the process of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. More interesting aspects in his findings are that between 1960-1970, category "A" and "D" that is the top and the bottom of the hierarchy, show a net increase while the middle categories of "B" and "C" declined. Thus a class polarisation is taking place in the villages of Bangladesh.

His indicative variables determining hierarchical categories of peasant households for measurement of the extent of vertical mobility are not beyond criticism. The income and expenditure used as the indices of hierarchical order of the peasant households, cannot be properly assessed on the following grounds:

- i. First, a large number of villagers cannot keep accounts due to their illiteracy;
- ii. Secondly, for fear of government taxes, theft or robbery etc. they decline to give the exact figure. This view is also supported by the findings of Ali, (1983:153) and Wallace, (1984:61).
- iii. Thirdly, in terms of income, most of the villagers understand the cash income; but income of a large number of villagers accrue from the kind like crops, cows, milk, commodities, poultry items, own labour and so on.
- iv. Fourthly, their expenditure is very much concealed and it does not reflect the income. They consume most of their own produce which cannot be estimated exactly.
- v. Finally, they never speak of their savings. Normally, they keep cash in hiding at home. Most of them do not deposit their cash in the Banks. They preserve their savings in kind like gold, silver and other precious metals.

Therefore, the use of income or expenditure as an index for measuring the hierarchical order of peasant households in Bangladesh villages, may not be a sound approach. It may rather lead to an ambiguous and biased analysis. Beteille (1969) points out the difficulties for collection of such data in an agrarian society. To quote him "... with the broad relationships between the different social classes, we do not enter into a consideration of the details of income, expenditure and the like. For one thing, such data are notoriously difficult to collect in an agrarian economy" (Beteille, 1991:02).

Schendel also ignores the various aspects of mobility among the non-agrarian occupational groups of the villages. He does not consider the amount of occupational mobility between the agrarian and non-agrarian lines of the occupational structure of the villages. The major forms of social mobility viz. inter-generational and intra-generational mobility have not been considered by Schendel. The consequences of

social mobility on the social structure, specially on the stratification system and power structure do not reflect in his study. Schendel's study, thus, appears to have certain shortcomings on methodological grounds. Nevertheless his work is an important contribution to the study of the dynamics of rural Bangladesh.

III

Concluding Comments

In view of the above discussions we can arrive at a conclusion that due to structural differentiation between the occidental and oriental societies, the extent of social mobility was insignificant and did not bear any importance for bringing in social change in Indian societies until British advent in India. Therefore, studies of social mobility did not attract the attention of social researchers of this area. Studies on social mobility were undertaken by social scientist in general and sociologist and anthropologist in particular after the independence of the sub-continent from the British rule which brought a significant change in the social structure of Indian societies.

Indian studies can be classified into two categories — urban mobility studies and rural mobility studies. And most of these studies deal with the patterns of mobility among the various caste groups in India. In the context of Bangladesh society no study has yet been carried out specifically on the issue of social mobility. Van Schendel's study has not considered the major dimensions of the social mobility viz: inter-generational mobility, intra-generational mobility and the consequences of social mobility. Therefore, it can be said that there is an ample scope for studies on social mobility in Bangladesh. And to understand the dynamics of social change taking place in our societies, social scientists particularly sociologist and anthropologist should come forward to undertake this vital issue of social mobility for highlighting the major dynamics of social change which is now undergoing in our society.

NOTES

1. For instance, also see, A.K.N. Karim, *Changing Society in India and Pakistan*, Dhaka, Oxford Press, 1956, pp. 7-8.
2. Mukhrjee finds three distinct hierarchical classes emerging in the villages of Bengal. According to him class I represents landlords, supervisory farmers; class II represents self-sufficient farmers, traders, and class III represents share-croppers, agricultural labourers, service holders and others who mainly work for the wealthier folks. For instance, see, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, Akademies Verlag, Berlin, 1957: pp. 10, 84.

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Social Policy and Social Development Under Government Auspices: A Review of Bangladesh Experience

Mohammed Sadeque

ABSTRACT

The paper begins with a brief introduction to the socio-economic scenario of this young nation. About 85 per cent of about 113 million people live in rural areas, and three-fourths subsist under poverty-line. The twenty year perspective development plan calls this socio-economic situation as a "syndrome of poverty". The author's one recent study is quoted to illustrate the poor's survival pattern.

The purpose of the paper is, however, to discuss the role of government in planned social development activities. It outlines the broad policy-objectives of the three development plans that were already put into operation. Reduction of poverty was the declared aim of the government. Accordingly, poverty-focussed programmes were specially emphasized. But research and evaluative works on the performances of the plans show that the government's planned efforts have not alleviated the conditions of the poor. In fact, their condition has worsened overtime. An unequal economic, administrative and political power structure is identified as a basic malaise that thwarts any attempt at social development. The processes of how the structural influences have led to the continuation of a *status quo* in health and education sectors are explained as examples. The main features of this power structure are delineated.

To overcome the stalemate, the necessity to undertake land reform and other asset redistribution is underscored at the end. Two proposals of redistribution suggested by two social scientists are also presented, in short, in order to generate further discourse on this difficult issue.

The paper will address social development under government auspices.

Socio-Economic Scenario

Bangladesh, which constituted the eastern wing of Pakistan for more than two decades (1947-71) severed relationship with the western wing on regional disparity, regional autonomy issue and emerged as an independent nation after a protracted civil war in 1971. More than 85 per cent of her about 113 million people live in rural areas. The country has a land area of only 144 thousand sq. kms. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy providing nearly 60 per cent of the GDP, and about 61.3 per cent of the population are engaged in agriculture and agriculture-related income-

producing activities. About 46.7 per cent of the population are below 15 years of age and only 30 per cent are in the civilian labour force. Women's household works are not accounted for in GDP.

Land ownership is very uneven since 8 per cent of the rural households control about 45 per cent of 23 million acres of cultivable land, and an overwhelming majority (84 per cent) are the small, marginal and landless farmers (Jannuzi & Peach, 1977). Large-scale unemployment and underemployment, growing rate of landlessness (with about two-thirds of rural households are landless), and above all, an ever-increasing pauperization process complicate the problem of improving the conditions of the poor. An alarming population growth rate of more than 2.32 per cent and recurring natural calamities are creating a great burden on the country's meagre resources. The twenty year perspective development plan calls our overall socio-economic situation as a "syndrome of poverty". Whatever criteria is adopted to measure poverty, it can very well be called massive since about three-fourths of the people live under poverty-line (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1980).

The present writer's one recent study (Sadeque, 1986) is quoted to illustrate how the poor (85 per cent of the households) of the study village strive to survive on a day-to-day basis. A very low and uncertain income compelled the poor households to resort to numerous improvising mechanisms for sheer physical survival: 90 per cent of the earnings were spent for procuring a carbohydrate diet; 40 per cent of the poor households could barely meet about three-fourths and another 40 per cent failed to meet even half of the required carbohydrate diet (about 450 grams of rice or wheat or both combined per head); 60 per cent prepared only one meal, preferably in the evening, a day; 80 per cent owned one-room huts with scanty floor space and having no household articles for comfortable living, and most households ignored disease conditions as long as physical survival was not endangered. The poor were also subjected to a wide variety of invisible deprivations. Traditional family and kinship support systems were dying out; the heavy burden of paying marriage gift made some assetless and rootless; education of children was not considered relevant to survival needs; and above all, their perennial dependence on patrons and alienation from socio-political affairs relegated them to a low social position in the community.

To arrest a progressive deterioration in the country's conditions as well as to try to improve the socio-economic conditions of the large masses of the poor people was an uphill task which could only be faced by the determined efforts of a government. In fact, the government in post-liberation periods undertook social policies and programmes in order to alleviate poverty and the purpose of this paper is to briefly outline them and assess their impact.

Policy-Objectives of the Development Plans

Some changes in the traditional approach towards the poor have already been taking place with the acceptance of social policy and social planning as important components of our national planning perspective. The governments' intentions to improve the lot of the poor are well reflected in the broad aims of the first five year plan (1973-78), two-year plan (1978-80), the second five year plan (1980-85) and the third five year plan (1985-90).

The country's 1972 constitution sought to bring about a socialistic transformation of the economy and the first development plan was framed with that end in view. Equitable rural income distribution, appropriate institutional framework for development, massive rural works programmes, etc., were accordingly emphasized (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1973). Reduction of poverty was the avowed objective of the plan. Key industries were nationalized, control on financial institutions tightened and ceilings on land ownership (33 acres per household) and private investment imposed.

The two-year hardcore plan did not set any new targets but sought to achieve the unfulfilled tasks of the first development plan. In this plan too special emphasis was given to employment-generation sectors. Reduction of poverty, generation of employment opportunities and mass mobilization for development were also among the important policy-objectives of the second and third plans.

Poverty-Focused Programmes

Reduction of poverty was sought through implementing the following programmes: rural development, rural works programme, rural social services and Grameen (village) bank. The rural development programme, seeking to establish institutions for forging closer relationship between the villagers and the government officials set up a village-based agricultural co-operative society known as *Krishi Samabaya Samity* (KSS) and its federation at the *upazila* level called *Upazila Central Co-operative Association* (UCCA) to support the village co-operative with supervised credit, inputs, and extension services. This model of rural development is based on what is popularly known as Comilla approach which the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) at Comilla in Bangladesh experimented for about a decade in the 60s. The overall administration of this programme is vested in the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) under the ministry of rural development and co-operatives.

The BRDB later brought the rural landless men and women within this two-tier co-operative structure with financial assistance from aid-giving agencies and special grants from the Bangladesh Bank. This programme known as Rural Poor Programme (RPP) set up 8,637 landless co-operatives called *Bittohin Samabaya Samity* (BSS) and 6,399 landless women's cooperatives called *Mahila Bittohin Samabaya Samity* (MBSS) by June 1986 (Director-General, 1986).

Rural works programme, another experiment of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), was undertaken to build rural infra-structure as well as to generate employment opportunities for the rural poor. Later in 1975-76, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, with wheat grants from World Food Programme and USAID, introduced food-for-works programme to increase food production and to help rural poor women survive through adversity.

Rural Social Service Programme (RSS) of the Ministry of Social Welfare aimed to provide a "model of multidimensional approach" in order to promote awareness among the rural poor of their deprivations as well as potentials, and to organize children, youth, women and landless adults into work-groups to better their living conditions since 1974. RSS implemented the following services: skill training and production centres, revolving credit to promote self-employment, health aid and health education and family planning.

Urban Social Service Programmes (USS), also of the social welfare ministry, has long been organizing slum-dwellers around economic, educational/cultural and health activities mostly on self-help basis. Establishing voluntary agencies of people, co-ordinating the activities of such agencies and utilizing the services of nation-building departments of the government are some of the strategies of the USS.

A professor of Economics at the University of Chittagong in Bangladesh experimented with the idea of providing small amounts of loans to assetless villagers to help them engage in home-based small enterprises: poultry raising, rice husking, rearing milk cows, etc. Initially he arranged credit from the local University branch of a bank against personal guarantee. His experiments gave birth to village bank or *grameen* bank scheme in 1978.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) also lately started experimenting with a women development programme. The purpose is to provide easy credit and training facilities to rural poor women in order to help them raise their level of living through undertaking their self-employment activities.

Review of Social Development Activities

By June 1986, the number of Bangladesh Rural Development Board's village-based agricultural societies (KSS) reached a peak figure of more than 64,000 covering 449 *upazilas* (Director-General, 1986). About 30 per cent of the total development allocations were made for agriculture, water resources and rural development in the first plan (Bangladesh Government, 1979). Hence, the impact of this national programme is considered crucial in either reducing or increasing poverty. It would be appropriate to quote Jone's (1979), Razia Ahmad's (1983) and Rahman's (1979) evaluation of the rural development programme of the BRDB. According to them, the two-tier co-operatives succeeded in accelerating agricultural production but clearly failed to achieve equity since the big land owners dominated the management positions in the KSS and UCCA and derived disproportionate amounts of benefits as compared with the small and marginal farmers. The big land owners not only invested additional profits in urban-based business and grain hoarding or capital intensive agro-industries but also purchased the land of the marginal farmers. Khan (1971) found the same performance of KSS in Comilla Kotwali *upazila*, the BARD's own laboratory area where the Academy provided concentrated supervision for about a decade. Molla (1974), Ahmed (1979) and Sobhan (1982) are equally critical of the role of village societies which, according to them, addressed to individual gain rather than collective social development. As a result, the big farmer emerged as a powerful political force. In addition, the UCCA/KSS relied mostly on government finance and support (Third Plan; p. 213), instead of trying to become self-reliant.

Similarly, a recent study of the Rural Development Board's Rural Poor Programme (RPP) Co-operatives by Kabir *et al.* (1986) also shows that the *Mohila Bittihin Samabaya Samity* (Landless women's co-operatives) could not do much to improve the socio-economic condition of the co-operative members due to domination by rich farmers, official corruption in the disbursement of loan, kinship bias and marketing problems.

The Food-For-Works Programme and the Rural Works Programme generated 1.156 million and 34 million man-days of employment respectively during the Second plan period (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1985). One inherent weakness of these programmes was that they can only be implemented in dry season. Moreover, the programmes are accused of breeding corruption. Sobhan (1968) long ago brought charges of corruption against the first military ruler of Pakistan who

purchased votes from the members of the "Presidential Electoral College" through this "loosely administered" works programme in the 1960s. Rahman (1979) too found the large majority of the *Union Parishad* (local body) members (about 78 per cent) involved in the misappropriation of funds allocated for implementing the programmes.

Until the recent administrative reorganization, Rural Social Services (RSS) was operative in a few *upazilas* serving again only 8 villages in each *upazila* since 1974. Although this programme has now been given national coverage (it covers 402 out of 460 *upazilas*), it has not been accompanied by programmatic expansion. The budget allocations for the social welfare sector is also so meagre (it ranges from 0.45 to 0.34 per cent) that RSS programme cannot claim to have achieved much in raising the quality of life of the rural poor. After visiting many RSS projects in northern Bangladesh in connection with field supervision of social work students for many years, the author was convinced that the women's as well as the landless people's organizations failed to raise the members' critical consciousness as organization-building was hastily done. In a recent evaluation study, Ali (1985) found that the programme benefits were not reaching the poor since the development funds received from the government were being wasted in non-productive activities; and the production centres were being monopolized by the elites who provided accommodation for these centres. Mia (1980) also strongly opined that the programme was more welfare oriented than community development oriented and the aided families were unable to survive when RSS loan was suspended.

Social welfare ministry's another programme with wider coverage, urban community development (now renamed Urban Social Services) which is functioning in 42 urban areas since 1953, failed to raise the level of living of the urban poor primarily for lack of adequate finance. A former social welfare Director disclosed that only 13 per cent of the people in the project areas were the programme beneficiaries.

Lastly, the *grameen bank* has established 295 branches in 5000 villages at the end of 1986 and 73 per cent of the beneficiaries are women (Yunus, 1987). It is claimed that the bank has one of the lowest loan default rates (recovery is 98 per cent). Razia Ahmad (1983) points out two major obstacles to the programme's long-term survival: (i) It is heavily dependent on outside capital resulting in an inability to build a reasonable re-lending capacity from retained earnings; and (ii) The income generated by the bank is at variance with its costs or expenses. The coverage of Bangladesh Cottage Industries Corporation's women development programme is also too small to create any impact on the lives of the poor women.

The poverty-focused programmes, in reality, represent the modified versions of

the neo-classical development approach which could never solve the basic issues of social development, i.e., mass unemployment, income concentration, etc.

Neo-Classical Development Strategy

For more than two decades of Bangladesh's partnership with Pakistan, we followed this neo-classical development strategy emphasizing the growth of GNP, capital formation, capital-intensive technology, industrialization, dependence on foreign aid, etc. based on "trickle down" theory. The post-liberation Bangladesh continued the same approach inherited from Pakistan (Rahman, 1985). As a result, the performances of the development plans did not bring about any real breakthrough in the living conditions of the poor. In fact, their condition has worsened overtime. Ahmed (1974) rightly apprehended that the increase in the labour force was going to be much larger than the estimated number of 393 lakhs during the first plan period. The backlog of the unemployed and the under-employed would also remain the same. An evaluation study (Islam *et. al.*, 1980), on the performances of the first plan reached almost a similar conclusion. Due to failure of desired investment, the number of the unemployed during the second development plan period continued to increase. Their number is estimated to shoot up to 11 million in 1990 (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1985).

Basic Malaise

The neo-classical development approach, as a matter of fact, failed to deliver the desired goods primarily because of the existence of an unequal economic, administrative and political power structure. The power elites consisting of the "rural conglomerates" (Gupta, 1970) and the "indigenous bourgeois" and the "neo-classical metropolitan bourgeoisie" (Alavi, 1973) are exercising pervasive control in our economic, social and political affairs. Large landholders, principal traders, shopkeepers, and local officials comprise the rural conglomerates. The bureaucratic-military oligarchy can very well be merged with the interests of the three classes to maintain the existing social order. This power structure is retarding all attempts as social development. Their unholy relationship is surviving on continued foreign assistance. The country utilised \$ 11,438.6 million of a committed aid of \$ 15,757.8 million up to June, 1984 since independence (Rahman, 1986). Such assistance not only created debt burden and corruption but also accentuated the prevailing inequality in the society (Ahmed, 1979; Sobhan 1982; and Hamid, 1986). This power structure has also retarded domestic resource mobilization, led to the inefficient running of the nationalized economic growth and created unprecedented inflation.

The processes of how the structural influences have led to the continuation of a *status quo* in education and health can very well be cited. The structural realities in our education system can be located in historical context. The British and the Pakistan rulers wanted to create a landed gentry and an English-knowing urban group in their own interest (Farouk, 1976). The Bangladesh Education Commission in 1974 recommended the introduction of compulsory free primary education. But the successive governments had always put it off on some pretext or other. As a matter of fact, our present education system has completely failed to respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. The continuation of the *status quo* serves the interest of the power elites ensuring the continuation of widespread illiteracy and ignorance of the masses of their rights, responsibilities and potentialities. The position of low female literacy is also a reflection of our socio-economic system.

Like many other developing countries, we have for long been pursuing technical and curative health policies ignoring the preventive measures. Those who formulate health policies and control health budget are too often urban-based and favour highly technical medical education and hospital-based health services. The ruling elites and the health professionals trained in colonial health education system had no honest intentions to alleviate the sufferings of the rural population. The situation did not change in post liberation Bangladesh since the class character of the ruling elites and health planners are more or less the same (Huq and Huq, 1982). For the same reason, people's participation in planning and implementation of primary health care programmes cannot also be ensured. As evident in a recent impact study of an UNICEF-Assisted Village Development Project, participation was usurped by those who belonged to the power structure (Mia, *et. al.*, 1984).

Consensus on the Need for Change

The links between the rural landed gentry and the rulers at the national level have evolved overtime. The educated offsprings of the landed gentry joined the colonial bureaucracy, commercial ventures and formed the early batches of the urban elites. They continue to do so even today. The emergence of Bangladesh did not alter this situation. The stronger bureaucratic-military oligarchy after 1975 coup has emerged more stronger and established coalition with the rural "tycoons" to bolster their selfish motives (Rahman, 1979; Uzzaman, 1980). This desperate situation has created a consensus among social thinkers of the overriding necessity to change the present social structure.

There is also a broad unanimity on the necessity to change the ownership of land and other assets as a first redistributive measure. We, now present very briefly a few reform proposals with a view to generate further thinking on this rather difficult issue. Alamgir (1976) suspected long ago if a land ceiling of 100 *bighas* or 33 acres per household would release sufficient land for redistribution among the landless cultivators. Ahmad (1979) recommends a redistributist reform plan to be carried out in five phases. After initial efforts to establish land records in phase one, the ceiling should be fixed at 20 *bighas* or less than 7 acres, the retrieved land be redistributed among the landless and near-landless and production co-operatives be formed in phase two; production co-operatives should include land owners having 10 to 20 *bighas* in the third phase; surplus wealth should be mobilized for setting up large scale industries in phase four and when co-operatives are strongly rooted steps towards collectivization may be taken in the final phase.

Sobhan's (1982) proposals are also more or less similar. A ceiling of 5 acres would release about 4.7 million acres which, if redistributed among households owning 2 acres, would affect about 40 per cent of the landless. He recommends that rigorous analysis would be required to work out in detail the implications of land redistribution with variations of 5, 10, 20 and 30 acres ceiling. His proposals to set up compulsory co-operatives would seek to distribute work and earning capacities as equitably as possible. Razia Ahmad (1983) feels strongly that the landless labourers, small producers, artisans and petty traders who form the majority of the rural poor should be brought into the production process under the formal capital market through which they will either be provided employment or be self-employed. This will require a strong political will and government commitment.

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