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Address for Correspondence :

The Editor, IBS Journal, Instiute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

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S. A. AKANDA
EDITOR

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CONTRIBUTORS

Safiuddin Joarder	Professor, Department of Islamic History & Culture, Rajshahi University.
Shahanara Husain	Professor, Department of History, Rajshahi University.
Bazlur R. Khan	Associate Professor, Department of History, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dacca.
Golam Morshed	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Rajshahi University.
S. A. Akanda	Professor of Social History, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University.
Abul Fazl Huq	Chairman, Department of Political Science, Rajshahi University.
Z. I. Choudhury	Professor, Department of Law, Dacca University.
Kabir Chowdhury	Professor, Department of English, Dacca University.
Fazlur Rashid Khan	Professor, Department of Sociology, Rajshahi University.
Mohammed Sadeque	Chairman, Department of Social Work, Rajshahi University.

Tenancy and Land Revenue in the Non Permanently Settled Areas of Rajshahi: Some Case Studies

Safiuddin Joarder

The declaration of Permanent Settlement on March 22, 1793 by Lord Cornwallis was an event of great importance. It fundamentally altered the existing agrarian relations and released forces which affected the entire socio-economic fabric of Bengal.[1] It was praised, mainly by its promoters, as a system that brought order out of chaos and greatly improved the agricultural sector—hence other sectors—of the economy. Its detractors point accusing fingers at the creation of a class of absentee landlords of the proliferation of subinfeudation, of the employment of the surplus from the agricultural sector to economically unproductive activities and at many other evils. That an issue as vitally significant as the Permanent Settlement would generate heated

1 The literature on the Permanent Settlement and its effects is very extensive. The following are some of the important sources : C. D. Field, *Landholding and the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Various Countries* (Calcutta : Thacker, Spink & Co, 1885) ; J. H. Harington, *An Elementary Analysis of the Laws and Regulations Enacted by the Governor General in Council* (Calcutta, 1814-15) ; S.C. Mitra, *The Land Law of Bengal : Tagore Law Lectures, 1895* (Calcutta : Thacker, Spink & Co., 1898) ; B. H. Baden Powell, *The Land-Systems of British India*, 3 vols. (Oxford : At the Clarendon Press, 1892) ; E.H. Whinfield, *The Law of Landlord and Tenant* (Calcutta : Wyman & Co., 1869) ; M. Finucane and Ameer Ali, *A Commentary on the Bengal Tenancy Act* (Calcutta : The Cranenburgh Law Publishing Press, 1911) ; R.H. Robinson, *An Account of the Land Revenue in British India* (London : W. Thacker & Co., 1856) ; R. H. Hollingbury, *The Zemindary Settlement of Bengal* (Calcutta : Brown & Company, 1879) ; W. K. Firminger, *Historical Introduction to the Fifth Report* (Calcuta : R. Cambray & Co., 1917) ; F. D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal* (Oxford : At the Claredon Press, 1917) ; Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal ; An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris : Mauton and Co., 1963) ; S. Gopal, *The Permanent Settlement in Bengal and its Results* (London, 1949) ; Abhoy Charan Das, *The Indian Ryot, Land Tax, Permanent Settlement and the Famine* (Calcutta, 1881) ; Badruddin Umar, *The Bengal Peasantry under the Permanent Settlement* (Bengali Text), (Dacca : Mawla Brothers, 1972) ; Muntassir Mamoon (ed.), *The Permanent Settlement and the Bengali Society* (Bengali Text), Dacca : Mawla Brothers, 1977 and Sirajul Islam, *Land Systems and Social Problems in Bangladesh* (Bengali Text), (Dacca : Samaj Nirikshan Kendra, 1978).

debate and controversy is only natural. The Permanent Settlement, because of the complexity that it created in the agrarian relations, has also created a good deal of confusion about its conspectus. One area of confusion is the belief that the Permanent Settlement was in operation in the entire cultivated or cultivable area of Bengal. This is not true. That this is not true will be evident from a perusal of the proportion of revenue from the permanently settled lands to that from lands not so settled. The total land revenue of Bengal, according to the Board of Revenue's report for the year 1888-'89' was Rs. 3,81,00,000 of which an amount of Rs. 3,23,00,000 was realised from the permanently settled lands, Rs. 58,00,000 from the temporary settled lands. In other words, roughly about 15 per cent of the lands of Bengal belonged to the latter category. In this category, again, there were two types of lands : (i) 'lands held by persons recognized as proprietors, but not under the Permanent Settlement law ; (ii) lands which do not belong to proprietors, i.e. in which no proprietory right other than that of Government exists.'[2]

Lands under category (i) may be of three kinds :

(a) territory acquired either by means of treaty or conquest after 1793 ;

(b) newly-formed lands or revenue-free lands which have, for one reason or another, been resumed by the Government ; and

(c) 'alluvial accretions to temporarily-settled estates, which, under the law, may belong to the estate-owner, but be liable to pay revenue'.[3]

Period of Settlement	*Nature of Settlement*
1850-1860	Regular proprietory
1860-1864	Summarily settled
1864-1869	Regular proprietory
1869-1879	Regular proprietory
1879-1889	Regular proprietory
1889-1894	*Khas* management
1894-1904	Regular proprietory
1904-1914	Regular proprietory
1914-1921	Summarily settled
1921-1926	Regular proprietory
1926-1930	Summarily settled

[2] B. H. Baden-Powell, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 443.
[3] B. H. Baden-Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

Most of the non-permanently settled areas of Rajshahi belonged to categories (b) and (c).

A. Period of Settlement

In the non permanently settled estates, settlements were more frequent and for different periods. The following is the pattern of settlement of the estate Char Alatali :[4]

We come across a different pattern of settlement in the case of the estate Diara Chowdala.[5]

Period of Settlement	*Nature of Settlement*
1841-1849	Regular proprietory
1849-1859	do.
1859-1869	do.
1869-1879	do.
1880-1902	do.
1902-1921	do.

A still different pattern, period-wise, is noticed in the estate Diara Mahal of Raja Rao Jogendra Narayan Ray Bahadur and others :[6]

Period of Settlement	*Nature of Settlement*
1921-1936	Regular proprietory
1936-1939	do.
1939-1954 (proposed)	do.

Some of the diara lands resumed by the Government were 'permanently' settled. An estate[7] measuring 834 *bighas*, 10 *kathas* and 14 *chattaks* was settled on 28 August 1869 with Syed Muhammad Taha, Syed Ataur Rahman, Syed Abdul Fattah, Khariba Bibi, Taleya Bibi, Syed Muhammed Yahya, Fatima Bibi, Syed Muhammad Musa, Basimunnesa Bibi and Syeda Bibi 'on a permanent basis' (*chirasthayi bondobasta kara gelo*). Another estate[8] measuring 481 *bighas*, 12 *kathas* and 6 *chattaks* was settled similarly on a permanent basis with Syed Muhammad Taha and others on September 2, 1869.

4 Touzi No. 826, J.L. No. 164, P.S. Nawabganj.

5 Touzi No. 278, J. L. No. 143, P.S. Gomasthapur,

6 Touzi No. 740, J. L. No. 162, P.S. Nawabganj,

7 Touzi No 3025, *mouza* Nayansukh alias Nayanpukhar and Rajarampur of the paraganah Mohammadpur.

8 Touzi No. 3024, *mouza* Char Nayansuk alias Char Baragharia Akandabaria of the parganah Mohammadpur.

B. Mode of Settlement

Settlement in the temporarily settled estates was made through a process in which the officials of the Department of Settlement—the Attestation Officers, the Qanungoes, the Jamabandi Officers, the Assistant Settlement Officers and the Settlement Officers—played the most important part. Preliminary enquiries were made regarding the general condition of the estate, the fertility of the soil, the nature of rights of those claiming proprietorship, the condition of the estate during the previous settlement, the proportion of different types of lands in the estate, the different types of tenants in the estate, fair rent for each type of land etc. The total *rayati* assets of the estate was then shown from which *malikana* (allowance to the proprietor) and allowance to the tenure-holders[9] of varying percentage were deducted and the remainder was shown as revenue. Notice was then served under section 10, clause 4 of Regulation VII of 1822 upon the proprietor/proprietors to appear and engage for revenue. If the proprietor/proprietors did not engage for revenue, the estate might be taken under the *khas* management or could be leased out perenially on the same rent (*mudami ijara*) or for a definite period (*myadi ijara*).

Brief history of each estate which is given in the Report for the Final Confirmation of Rent Roll, throws interesting light on the nature of the estate and the proprietorship which was not infrequently contested by persons supposedly having claim over it. Examples from a few estates will make it clear.

The following is the report on Diara Chowdala:

"This is a temporarily settled private estate. It was an alluvial accretion to *mouza* Chowdala in the river Mahananda. In 1832 an area

[9] It is not easy to make a distinction between a *raiyat* and a tenure-holder. The Rent Law Commission of 1880 maintained that if a person took land and at once sub-let it, he became a middleman (tenure-holder) and did not acquire a right of occupancy in such land, that 'if a *raiyat* who had acquired a right of occupancy in land sub-let such land, he did not thereby forfeit his right of occupancy' and that 'such a *raiyat* could not, by so doing, alter the nature of his holding and convert it into an under-tenure.' (The Report of the Rent Law Commission, 1880, paragraph 19). The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 grappled with the problem and came out with the following conclusion:

"In determining whether a tenant is a tenure-holder or a *raiyat*, the Court shall have regard to (a) local custom; and (b) the purpose for which the right of tenancy was originally acquired. Where the area held by a tenant exceeds one hundred standard *bighas*, the tenant shall be presumed to be a tenure-holder until the contrary is shown" (Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885, sections 5(4) and 5(5). This also did not make the distinction very clear, and an element of vagueness continued to exist.

of 1860 *bighas* was undertaken for resumption under Regulation II of 1819 and Regulation III of 1828 which was concluded in 1841 for an area of 1437 *bighas* 15 *kathas* 15 *chataks*.[10] The first settlement was a proprietory one. It was concluded for 1841 to 1849 at an annual revenue of Rs. 345-10-6. All subsequent settlements were also proprietory and the revenue gradually rose upto Rs. 761-5 with an area of 2784 *bighas* 5 *kathas*. There was no measurement when the fifth settlement of 1880-1902 was sanctioned. The term of the last regular settlement expired on 31st March 1921. Since then there has been annual summary settlements.

The soil of the estate is not very fertile. It is composed of alluvial formation. Some portion of this estate goes under water annually by the flood water of the Mahananda river. The tenants are fairly prosperous and most of them do not employ hired labourers. The main crop is *Bhadoi* paddy. As it is situated on the bank of the river and not far away from a steamer station, the produce of the land finds a ready market. *Bhadoi* paddy and *kalai*[11] or mustard or gram are grown on *danga*[12] land. Vegetables are grown on *bhita*[13] land. The *bagan*[14] is mainly mango garden.

The last settlement was concluded with the proprietors for a term of 10 years from 1st April 1902 to 31st March 1921. Being ripe for resettlement, it was taken up under Government Notification No. 16035 L. R. dated the 24th February 1928 by my predecessor Moulvi Nazir Hossain—Assistant Settlement Officer who submitted the preliminary Report on the settlement of fair rent of the estate on 31st July 1932 pending the solution of the material and difficult problem as to how to restore about 64 acres of lands which properly belongs to this estate but which, owing to wrong pillars being put by the Khas Mahal Kanungo in 1918, was improperly included in the neighbouring Zamindary (the Taherpure Raj). The present settlement records were also prepared according to those wrong pillars and the *Jamabandi*[15] work of this estate could not make any real headway as a result. It may be noted that

[10] 16 *Chataks* make a *katha* and 20 *kathas* make a *bigha*, roughly one-third of an acre.

[11] A kind of pulse.

[12] Land away from the river-bed or any body of water ; sometime known also as *dofasali* (double cropped) land because two crops used to be harvested from this kind of land.

[13] Relatively high land.

[14] Orchard.

[15] Preparation of rent-roll.

during the last settlement (1902) the proprietors of adjoining *mouza* Gomasthapur, known as the Taherpur Raj claimed about 200 *bighas* of land as appertaining to their estate No. 193 and contended that the area was wrongly included in the boundaries of the estate under report."[16]

The proprietory right and the right of tenure were often contested. Such a conflict concerning the estates Char Alatali and Ramchandrapur appears from the report of the Assistant Settlement Officer of Rajshahi :

"The important question to be dealt with was what status should be given to the middlemen, Kumars Hemendra Narain Roy and Satyendra Narain Roy, the proprietor's two sons who stood between the actual cultivators of the soil and the proprietor. Raja Jogendra Narain Roy of Lalgola is the present proprietor of the estate. His adopted grand mother Dula Debya was the proprietress from 1850 to 1860. He being a minor, his adopted mother Rani Syama Sundari was the settlement-holder on his behalf from 1864 to 1869 and 1869 to 1879. During this period, the estate was actually kept *khas* for indigo cultivation as the proprietor had an indigo-factory, though in the settlement paper it was parcelled out as *Benami*[17] *jotes* in the names of some *amlas*[18] of the estate such as Ram Sundar Roy, Iswar Chandra Sanyal, Sriram Roy and others. From 1874, extensive litigation began between Raja Jogendra Narain and Rani Syama Sundari as the latter refused to recognise the former's adoption. When the next settlement began in 1879, Jogendra Narain Roy applied to the Collector not only to be recorded as proprietor but also to get it in his *khas* possession. His first prayer was granted but Rani Syama Sundari was recorded as a tenant under him as she proved that her late husband had made a gift of the *Jotedari* right of the whole estate to her. In the settlements of 1879 to 1889 and 1889 to 1894, she was recorded as the sole *raiyat* of the estate, although she used to get the cultivation done by subtenants. Peace being at last made

16 Touzi No. 278, J.L. No. 143. The boundary dispute of this estate was referred to the Board of Revenue which remarked : "It would have been only reasonable and proper for the Taherpur Raj to give up the area and not base its claim on an obvious fraud or mistake but it looked as if it was wasting time unnecessarily" (Order No. 16 S & S dated 30th October 1905). It was decided that the eastern boundary of the est ate should be relaid and demarcated. This was done by Babu Nalini Prosanna Gupta, Technical Adviser to the Settlement Officer, in the presence of the parties on the 28th April 1935. He re-adjusted the wrong pillars and put up new enes. No objection to this re-lay and demarcation was made by any party.

17 Settled in the name of person/persons other than the real proprietor.

18 Petty Officials.

between her and Raja Jogendra Narain Roy, she made a gift of her *jotedari* right to the latter's sons Kumars Hemendra Narain and Satyendra Narain in 1892. When the next settlement began in 1894, the sub-tenants who were 606 in number contended that they should be recorded as *raiyats* and the Kumars as tenure holders, while the latter argued that the former were merely *thikadars* or tenants-at-will and should not be shown in the records. The Settlement Officer of Jangipur[19] recorded the Kumars as occupancy-*raiyats* and the sub-tenants of whom 266 were in Char Alatoli and 340 in Char Ram Chandrapur as their under-*raiyats*. There is no mention of the Acts under which the former settlements were made. Considering that a whole estate with an area of about 5000 *bighas* of land was in the Rani's possession and that from the time she obtained the *Jotedari* right she had settled tenants on the land, she apparently comes under the category of a tenure-holder according to the definition of a tenure-holder given in Section 5 of the Bengal Tenancy Act. To record her or her successors as *raiyats* will be prejudicial to the interest of the sub-tenants as they will be lowered to the position of under-*raiyats* and the principal object of the Bengal Tenancy Act which was to safeguard the right of the actual cultivators of the soil will be frustrated. A mere entry in the settlement record cannot deprive a man of a right which naturally accrues to him by virtue of the rent laws of the land. I have therefore disallowed the objection of the middlemen and recorded them as tenure-holders."[20]

C. Rate of Assessment

Assessment on different types of land—and on the same land—varied from settlement to settlement depending on the report of the official making the survey before each settlement. The preliminary proposal was then published under rule 337A of the Survey and Settlement Manual. Any tenant or tenants could file an objection. After considering the objection, the Settlement Officer, might order a reduction of the revenue as prayed for or might uphold the rate proposed in the preliminary report. We come across the following report on the assessment of the estate Char Alatali :

"At the last settlement, out of 188.18 acres only 127.41 acres were assessed. The contractual rate varying between Rs. 1 to Rs. 2 per

[19] Previously the estate was under the district of Murshidabad. It was later transferred to the District of Malda and, after 1947, became a part of Rajshahi district.

[20] Report on Touzi No. 182, J. L. No. 442.

bigha of cultivated lands was maintained at the last settlement. Since 1328 B.S., large number of tenants have been inducted at an uniform rate of Re 1 per *bigha*. At the present settlement[21] it was at first proposed to maintain the rate and the preliminary proposal was duly published...The tenants in a body filed an objection against the proposed rate."[22]

The matter was then referred to the Settlement Officer who gave his verdict and remarked :

"Heard the parties in as great details as possible. I have inspected the land too and traversed on foot practically the whole *char*. The land is under development. Parts are quite well-developed while parts are in varying state of development. The land is still subject to annual flood and till the area is more developed and rises above the flood level, it will be difficult to determine the quality for certainty and the rent for a fairly long period. The landlords introduced a uniform rate of Re 1/1 per *bigha*. From the statements, however, as filed, it will appear that in no one year they could realise the full amount at that rate or anything near it. In 1332,[23] they remitted nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the arrears then pending at about that rate for a period varying between 3 to 15 years. I think it unfair to impose a rent which leaves such unsatisfactory results and when such drastic remissions have got to be given for years to clear accounts.

From the enquiries, I am convinced of two things. First, the land is more or less uniform and as such one ought to be introduced and secondly the rate of Re 1/1 was never realised and led to heavy arrears and remissions.

The problem then is to fix the equitable rate. In view of the quantity of crops grown, in view of the fact that the land, though not yet, is likely to yield good results in future, I think, on the whole, it will be fair to assess the the rent at annas 12 per *bigha* and I direct accordingly."[24]

Classification of land differed sometimes—though not always—from one settlement to another, and this created some difficulty for the official making the preliminary survey in making recommendation. This is clear from the report on the estate Diara. Chowdala :

"The land, which is fit for cultivation, is only fairly fertile...the character of the soil is that of ordinary *Char* lands. *Bhadoi* paddy and *Rabi*

21 The report of the Jamabandi Officer is dated July 2, 1929.

22 The report of the Official mentioned above.

23 Bengali year.

24 Report on Touzi No. 565 of Murshidabad Collectorate (transferred to Malda Collectorate under Touzi No. 826).

crops are the principal crops grown, some vegetables and chillies are also grown on high lands and lands close to the homesteads. There are also some mango gardens.

The lands on the bank of the river (Mahananda) are, at times, subject to flood which damage the crop but does not improve the soil, as the water of the Mahananda are not known to carry any rich fertilising silt.

The existing rates ..were fixed at the last settlement (1902). Like some other preliminary reports, in the preliminary report of this estate also, assessment was proposed on the arbitrary assumption that certain classes of land of the last Settlement correspond to certain classes of this Settlement e.g. "*Bastu*"[25] and "*Udbastu*"[26] of the last Settlement to "*Bastu*" of this Settlement ; "*Ekfasla*"[27] of the last Settlement to "*Bhita*"[28] of this Settlement, and "*Dofasla*"[29] of the last Settlement to "*Danga*"[30] of this Settlement and so on.

This gave very inequitable results. Though existing rent was sought to be enhanced under Section 30(b) only, the rent usually more than doubled and in many cases rose as high as 4 to 10 times the original rent for practically the same area. It was therefore found necessary to revise the preliminary proposals for assessment.

By comparing the average local prices of foodstuff of 1903 to 1912 with that of 1922 to 1931 it is found that an enhancement of upto—/5/1 in the rupee can be claimed under Section 30(b) Bengal Tenancy Act."[31]

The Report then examines the rate in the neighbouring *mouzas* and recommends a 'fair rent' for the *mouza* under report. The average *rayati*-rates (per acre) of the neighbouring *mouzas* are given as below :

Mouza	*J.L. No.*	*Average rate*
I. Gomasthapur	156	4/-
2. Nayadiari	157	2/7/4
3. Sukrabarihat	142	2/5/3
4. *Mouza* under report (average of last Settlement)	143	3/6/11

25 Homestead.
26 Adjacent to the homestead.
27 Single cropped.
28 Higher land.
29 Double cropped.
30 Away from the river bank.
31 Touzi No. 278. J. L. No. 143.

The reporting official—the Assistant Settlement Officer—then remarked:

...''in view of the facts and circumstances of the lands under report, that of the present economic distress and also that of the neighbouring rates, an enhancement of 2/-annas in the rupee on the existing rate, subject to a maximum of 3/10/-per acre...was considered a fair mode of assessment and the Settlement Officer on a revised statement of facts and circumstances, was pleased to approve of it.

It may be noted that the lands of estate are considered almost as valuable as those of the *mouza* Gomasthapur and more valuable than those of the other 2 *mouzas* named above.''[32]

The assessment of rent in the estates Char Alatali, Kodalkathi (1st) and Kodalkathi (2nd) during two Settlements will clarify the procedure that was followed:[33]

Table IA

Assessment During the Settlement 1904-1914

Class of Land	Area B.K.C.	Rate	Rent R. A. P.
Bastu	11-18-1	5/4/-	62-8-0
Udbastu	1-3-9	21-10/-	3-1-6
Dofasli	792-4-13	-/15/-	742-11-6
Ekfasli	107-18-12	-/15/-	101-3-0
Sand	3052-2-11	-/3/-	572-4-6
Jungle	350-2-13	-/7/-	153 3-0
Road	10 8-10	not assessed	
Water	1093-15-9	do.	
Total :	5419-14-14		Rs. 1634-15-6
Deduct allowance to tenure-holders @ 20%			... Rs. 326 15-10
Net assets			Rs. 1307-15-8
Deduct *malikana* to proprietor @ 10%			... Rs 130.12-9
Revenue fixed			Rs. 1177-2-11
or in round figures			Rs. 1177/-

Source : Report on Touzi No. 565, R. S. No. 182, J. L. No. 443 and R. S. No. 72. J. L. No. 88.

32 *Ibid.*

33 The latter two estates belonged administratively to P. S. Lalgola in Murshidabad but the three were for some time jointly assessed.

In the Settlement proposed for the period 1921-1926, the rates (and the mode) of assessment were different which is evident from the following table:

Table IB

Proposed Assessment During the Period 1921-1926

(Rent of *raiyats* under the tenure-holder where existing contractual rent have been maintained)

Class of Land	Area in acre	Rent	Remarks
Homestead	3.57	Rs. 350-9-0	
Cultivated	106.92		
Cattle path	.14	Unassessed	
Road	3.98		
Total	114.61	Rs. 350-9-0	(1)

Where the rent is not paid but the land is liable to assessment :

Class of Land	Area in acres	Rate	Rent	Remarks
Cultivated	.52	3/-	1-9-3	
Road:	·05	Unassessed		
Total:	.57	1-9-0		(2)

The valuation of land in direct pessession of tenure-holders:

Class of land	Area in acres	Rate	Rent	Remark
Cultivated	16.40	3/—	49—3—3	
Sand	1503.95			
Cattle path	2.31			
Culturable fallow	104.31	Unassessed		
Road	.03			
River	144.00			
Totals	1771.00		49—3—0	(3)
Total *rayati* asset (total of 1, 2 & 3)	...		Rs. 401—5—0	
Deduct 30% as *malikana* and collection expense...			Rs. 120—5—0	
Balance or proposed revenue			Rs. 281/—	

proposed revenue is Rs. 281—0—0 against Rs. 1177/— of the last Settlement. Decrease in area is due to diluvion.

Source ; Report on Touzi No. 565, R. S. No. 182, J. L. No. 443 and R. S. No. 72, J. L. No. 88.

With a few exceptions, rents of the estates generally increased with each Settlement partly because of the increased productivity of the land but mainly because of an increase in the size of the estates due to alluvion. The following is an indication of the increase in revenue of the estate Diara Chowdala:

Table II

Increase of Revenue in Diara Chowdala

Period	Assessed B. K. Ch.	Unassessed B. K. Ch.	Total B. K. Ch.	Revenue Rs. A. P.
1841 to 1849	1251- 9-3	186- 6-12	1437-15-15	345-10-6
1849 to 1859	1232- 5-0	55-12- 8	1287-17- 8	362-13-0
1859 to 1869	1231- 2-3	990- 0- 0	2221- 2- 3	396-2 -6
1869-1879	1745- 4 3	1039- 1- 0	2784- 5- 3	761- 5-0
1880 to 1902	2049- 2-4	735- 2-15	2784- 5- 3	766- 8-0
1902 to 1921	1490-19-9	507-18- 8	1998-18- 1	773- 2-0

Source : Report on Touzi No. 278, J. L. No. 143.

Sometime the increase (or less often, fall) in revenue was fairly sharp due to factors stated before. This is evident from the quantum of revenue realised from Char Alatali over the years :

Table III

Increase of Revenue in Char Alatali

Period	Area in acre			Revenue
	Assessed	Unassessed	Total	Rs. A. P.
1850 to 1860	572.38	380.17	952.55	306-9-5½
1860 to 1864	Summarily settled			
1864 to 1869	1188.35	.25	1188.60	1004-0-0
1869 to 1879	1188.35	.25	1188.60	1048-9-00
1879 to 1889	1809.59	41.38	1850 97	1809-3-5
1889 to 1894	Under *Khas* management			
1894 to 1904	1600.14	16.84	1616.98	2143-5-5
1904 to 1914	1424.12	367.55	1791.67	1177-0-0
1914 to 1921	Summarily settled			
1921 to 1912	127.41	1758.77	1886.18	281-0-0
1926 to 1930	Summarily settled			
1930 to 1935	1069.75	50.94	1120.69	1699-0-0

Source : Report on Touzi No. 826, J. L. No. 164.

How did this compare with the rate of revenue in the areas under the Permanent Settlement ? In this respect, some general remarks are in order. Firstly, at the time of the Permanent Settlement, no inquiry was made either with regard to the value of the estate, its produce or the rent paid by the *raiyats* in order to determine the assessment of each estate. "Reference was simply made to the old records of the lump assessments under the native rulers ; and these were roughly adjusted in cases where such adjustment was needed, and the *Zaminder* or other owner was directed to pay this sum."[34] Secondly in the early days of the Permanent Settlement, the Government of the East India Company was more favourably disposed towards the *Zamindars* than towards the *raiyats* and was eager to protect the interest of the former section as is evident from Regulation XVIII of 1793 'which empowered certain specific landlords to distrain and sell the crops and products of the earth of every description, the grain, cattle, and all other personal property' (whether found in the house or on the premises of the defaulter or of any other person) belonging to their tenants. This continued to be the law until 1859.'[35] Though the Bengal Tenancy Acts of 1859 and 1885 limited to some extent the power of the *Zamindars* in this respect, the power of distrain was there and was used not infrequently by the landlords. Thirdly, though it was stated in the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 that 'every tenant shall be liable to pay additional rent for all land proved by measurement to be in excess of the area for which rent has been previously paid by him, unless it is proved that the excess is due to the addition to the tenure or holding of land, which, having previously belonged to the tenure or holding, was lost by diluvion or otherwise without any reduction of the rent being made',[36] the landlords, in most cases abused this provision and claimed additional rent on what was represented as an increase in the area of the land but which was only the consequence in the change in the standard of measurement. W.H. Nelson remarked on the situation in Rajshahi : "The most fruitful method of getting illegal enhancement in the district has been through change of the standard of measurement."[37] Fourthly, even after the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 which tried to ameliorate the condition of the *raiyat* somewhat, the *Zamindars* went on increasing rent on little or no pretext and instituted suits in ever-increasing

34 B. H. Baden–Powell, *op. cit*, vol. I. p. 414.

35 The Report of the Rent Law Commission, 1880.

36 The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, Section 52. sub-section (1) % clause (a).

37 W. H. Nelson, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Rajshahi, 1912-1922* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1922), paragraph 32.

number against the defaulters as the following figures for the district of Rajshahi show :[38]

Year		*Number of rent suits*
1880	—	1179
1881	—	1335
1882	—	1366
1883	—	1978
1884	—	1853

Fifthly, the *raiyats* under the Permanent Settlement had also to bear the burden of sundry imposts called *abwab* or *Siwai*. The *Zamindars* levied dffeirent kinds of cesses and made the hapless *raiyats* pay them. Baden-Powell remarks : "when such extras got numerous and complicated, there would be a compromise ; the account would be re-adjusted so as to consolidate the old rate and the cesses in one ; and this would become the recognized rate, till new cesses being imposed, a new compromise was effected."[39] That the imposition of *abwab* greatly affected the *raiyat* will be evident from their variety in the neighbouring district of Pabna. Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal conducted an enquiry in the district of Pabna ; the enquiry revealed the existence of as many as thirteen types of *abwabs* imposed by the *Zamindars*.[40] Thus, while it is

[38] Divisional Report, Rajshahi for the years 1880-1884, cited by Kalyan Kumar Sen Gupta, *Pabna Disturbances and the Politics of Rent, 1873-1885* (New Delhi : People's publishing House, 1974), p. 101.

[39] B. H. Baden-Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

[40] These were :

(i) *Dak-Kharcha* or contribution for the *Zamindari dak* of postal activities ;
(ii) *Tahirir*: A cess for the payment to the *amlah* or petty official who gave receipt;
(iii) *Nazur* : A casual payment made by the *raiyat* when he visited the *Zamindar* or his *amlah ;*
(iv) *Salami* : Amount paid at the time of the transfer of a holding ;
(v) Marriage Tax : Levied mostly on the lower orders of the *Zamindar's* tenants ;
(vi) *Hati-Kharcha* : Amount cellected for maintaining elephants ;
(vii) *Bheekha* : Amount imposed at the time of funeral, marriage or any such ceremony requiring a huge amount of money ;
(viii) *Jurrimana* or fine : The obstreperous *raiyats* were often fined which was extracted without mercy ;
(ix) *Tallabani* : Collected as remuneration of the messengers sent to *raiyats* for various purposes ;
(x) *Parboni* : annual present made to the *Zamindars* and to their agents ;
(xi) Cess for building roads ;
(xii) Tolls on bazars and fairs ;
(xiii) *Rashad-Kharcha* : A Charge for defraying the expenses of the *Zamindars* in connection with the tours of inspection of their estates, (Kalyan Kumar Sen Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25).

difficult to compare the rate of *rent as such* on land in the areas under the Permanent Settlement and on that under temporary settlement, it seems that the *raiyats* were definitely better-off in the lands under the temporary settlement.

D. Tenancies

A study of the classification of tenancies in the eastates under review shows that it was getting complicated though nowhere near the complication created by the Permanent Settlement. Because of frequent alluvion and diluvion, there were frequent changes in the number of *raiyat* of a particular category as the following tables show:

Table IV A

Classification of Tenancies in Char Alatali

(For the Settlement period 1930-1935)

Classes of tenants	Number	Khas possession	Sub-let	Total
Proprietor	1	—	1120.69 acre	1120.69
Tenure-holder under the proprietor	1	170.70 acrs	949.99	1120.60
Settled *raiyats* under the Tenure-holder	133	527.89	3.69	531.57
Occupancy *raiyats* under the Tenure-holder	—	—	—	—
Non-occupancy *raiyats* under the tenure-holder	306	405.57	12.85	418.42
Ordinary under-*raiyats* (produce paying)	6	16.53	—	16.53
	447	1120.69		

Source : Report on Touzi No. 826, J. L. No. 164,

Table IV B

Classification of Tenancies in Char Alatali

(For the Settlement period 1939-1954 (proposed)

Classes of tenants	Number	Khas possession	Sublet	Total
Proprietor	1	—	1760.42	1760.42
Tenure—holder under the proprietor	1	35.06	1725 36	1760.42
Settled *raiyats* under the tenure—holder	554	1205.59	6.90	1212.49
Occupancy *raiyats* under the tenure—holder	3	3.33	—	3.33
Non-occupancy *raiyats* under the tenure—holder	286	507.70	—	507.70
Dakhalkar (Union Board) under the tenure-holder	1	1.84	—	1.84
Under-*raiyats* : [U/S 48 (c)] Produce paying	1	6.90	—	6.90
	847	1760.42		

Source : As before.

A slightly different pattern of tenancies is found in the estate Diara Mahal of Raja Rao Jogendra Narayan Bahadur and others :

Table V

Classification of Tenancies in the Diara Mahal of Jogendra Narayan

(For the settlement period 1921-1936)

Classes of tenants	Number	Khas possession	Sublet	Total
Proprietor	1	18.34	189.37	207.71
Tenure-holder under the proprietor	1	—	38.93	38.93
Myadi ijaradar under the tenure-holder	1	4.22	34.71	38.93

Table V (continued)

Classes of tenants	Number	Khas Possession	Sublet	Total
Raiyats under the proprietor and *Myadi ijaradar*	218	149.01	35.66	184 67
*Chakran dakhaldar** under the proprietor and *mayadi ijaradar*	1	.48	—	.48
Under-*raiyats*:				
Cash-paying	1	1.43	—	1.43
Produce-paying	45	34.23	—	34.23
	268	207.71		

*Lands given to persons who perform certain services e.g. barbers and the operators of public forries.

Source : Report on Touzi No. 750, J.L. No. 162.

The nature of tenancy in the Diara Mahal of Maharaja Sashi Kanta Acharjya was slightly different as the following table shows:

Table VI

Classification of Tenancies in the Diara Mahal of Sashi Kanta Acharjya
(For the settlement period 1921-1936)

Classes of tenants	Number	Khas possession	Sublet	Total
Proprietor	1	—	447.02	447.02
Tenure-holders under the proprietor	4	—	288.43	288.43
Ijaradar under the proprietor	1	—	2.61	2.61
Tenure-holder under the proprietor and *ijaradar*	1	—	21.04	21.04
Settled *raiyats* under the proprietor and tenure-holders	489	447.02	—	447.02

Source : Report on the Touzi No. 752, J. L. No. 119.

E. Conclusions

After a study of the records of the estates under review, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions which, be it noted, are of a tentative nature because of the limited number of estates studied. Further research along this line may either confirm these conlusions or modify them.

Firstly, the settlements in the resumed estates or estates not under the Permanent Settlement were for varying periods ranging from five to twenty years. There were also summary settlements on a yearly basis ; we even come across resumed lands being given in settlement on a 'permanent basis'.

Secondly, the actual assessment in the resumed and alluviated lands depended on the proposal made by the officials of the Department of Settlement after preliminary survey. The tenants as well as the proprietors and the tenure-holders were given an opportunity to file objections to the preliminary assessment and the rate of assessment could be modified or retained intact by the Settlement Officer after a thorough enquiry. The sole object of the Settlement Officer was to see that the rent was 'fair rent.'

Thirdly, in some of the estates, the proportion of non-occupancy *raiyats* to the total tenants was fairly high. This to be explained by the nature of the estate viz. *char* land which were taken up for cultivation only recently. However, the proportion of occupancy *raiyats* gradually increased as is evident from the subsequent Settlement Reports.

Fourthly, though it was maintained in some quarters that the legislation of 1859 as interpreted by the judges of the High Court[41] 'has entirely changed the relative position of the *raiyat* and the *Zamindar*, taking away from the latter to give to the former a part of the proprietorship in the land itself,[42], the lot of the *raiyats* under the Permanent Settlement did not improve appreciably. This is borne out by the heavy burden of *abwab* that was imposed on the *raiyats* who in desperation were compelled to launch movement against this and other forms of tyranny of high-landlordism in certain areas like Pabna. This type of oppressive cesses do not seem to have been imposed on the *raiyats* in the temporarily settled estates—at least not in the estates reviewed in this paper. On the whole, the lot of the *raiyats* in the temporaily settled estates seem to have been better than that of their brethren under the Permanent Settlement.

41 This refers to the judgement of the Calcutta High Court on the case Thakooranee V. Bisheshhur (1865).

42 "The Great Rent Case," *Calcutta Review*, 41 : 82 (1865) pp. 398-418.

Glimpses in the Condition of Bengali Muslim Women during the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century : A Study Based on the *Bamabodhini Patrika*

Shahanara Husain

Almost the whole of the nineteenth century was a period of darkness, gloom and despair for the Muslims of Bengal together with the Muslims of the whole Indian subcontinent. They were suffering from decadence, ignorance, frustrations and were trammelled by the yokes of immobile customs and prejudices based on misinterpreted religious injunctions. As is usual in most backward societies the worst sufferers from all social ills of the Indian Muslims were the weak women. During the nineteenth century the socio-legal status of the Bengali Hindu women advanced greatly due to the efforts of great personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and others. Imbued with the spirit of humanism they felt for the women of their society and started movements for eradication of all social ills and injustices from which they had been suffering for centuries. In the field of Bengali women's education the Brahmo leading men took the lead. They started schools for giving formal education to girls and at the same time started organisations like Bamabodhini Sabha. Established in 1863 by Umesh Chandra Datta the Bamabodhini Sabha's aim was to spread women's education at home. The literary organ of this organisation was the *Bamabodhini Patrika* and it contained writings by women and writings for women. Its first editor was Umesh Chandra Datta himself and from 1909 to 1922 it was edited by women jointly with men. The *Bamabodhini Patrika* was a monthly published from Calcutta.[1] In its different issues of the 19th century we find occasional references about Bengali Muslim women and even some literary pieces composed by them.

From the latter half of the 19th century English education had began to spread among the Muslims of Bengal. We find Nawab Abdul Latif, Saiyed Amir Hussain and Saiyed Ameer Ali taking the lead for advancing their community in the path of Western education. In 1863 Nawab Abdul Latif established the Muhammedan Literary Society with the aim of making his community conscious about the need for spread of Western education.

1 Usha Chakravarty, *Condition of Bengali Women Around the 2nd Half of the 19th century*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 41, 189.

In 1868 in a meeting of the Bengal Social Science Association Nawab Abdul Latif read a paper on the condition of education in the Muslim society. In the discussion that ensued about the paper various leading Hindu and Muslim gentlemen took part. Peari Chandra Mitra (1814-1883), the noted Derozian[2] wanted to know whether like the Hindus Muslims were also taking steps to spread education among their women. In reply Maulavi Abdul Hakim of Calcutta Madrassa said in Urdu that the great prophet had prescribed education for both men and women and that no special attempt was needed for educating Muslim women. Female education in the Muslim society would advance along with the education of Muslim male. But, he added, Muslim girls could never go to school or college by breaking *purdah*. One Dr. Chakrabarti wanted to know whether like the orthodox Hindus Muslims were trying to spread female education through the *zenana* or home education system. What reply was given to Dr. Chakrabarti has not been recorded in the proceedings of the meeting.[3]

Thus we find that the Muslims were making little or no efforts for spreading female education in their society during the 19th century. They lavished almost all their efforts on boy's education.[4] As a consequence

[2] The Hindu college radicals who were students and followers of the famous Eurasian free thinker Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), were known as Derozians. They were also called Young Bengal. For details about them see Anisuzzaman "Young Bengal", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, vol. XII, No. 3, Dacca, December, 1967, pp. 371ff.

[3] Kazi Abdul Odud, *Bamlar Jagaran*, Visvabharati, 1956, pp. 120-122 ; Maziruddin, *Bamla Sahitya Muslim Mahila*, Dacca, 1967, pp. 39-40.

[4] From the eighties of the nineteenth century a slow change in the attitude of the Bengali Muslims is discernible in the activities of Dacca Muslim Friends Association established in 1883. The Association worked for spreading liberal ideas about women's rights and education and directed their energy to spread female education within their community through a home education system. The prominent workers of this organisation were Bengali Muslim men like Abdul Aziz, Fazlul Karim, Bazlur Rahim of Noakhali, who had been among the first Bengali Muslims to get Western education. The contemporary Muslim society in accordance with the prevalent trends of lavishing all efforts on boys' education criticised Dacca Muslims Friends' Association for giving so much attention to female education when even Muslim males were suffering from the lack of literacy. After 1886—1887 nothing more was heard about the activities of this association. See Begum Shamsunnahar Mahmud, *Rokeya Jivani*, p. 66 ; Abu Joha Nur Ahmed, *Muslim Jagater Mahiyasi Nari*, Dacca, 1966, p. 190 ; Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal*, Dacca, 1974, p. 248 ; Mohammad Abdul Qayum, 'Samayika Patre Sekaler Katha', *Bangla Academy Patrika*, 15th year, No. 1, pp. 49-50 ; Kazi Abdul Mannan, *Emergence and Development of Dobhashi Literature in Bengal*, University of Dacca, First Edition, 1966, p. 220. For additional information about the activities of the Dacca Muslim Friends Association not available in the books referred to above, I am indebted to Professer Abdul Mannan who is himself engaged in doing research on the social history of the Muslims.

while Hindu women of Bengal greatly advanced in the field of education during the 19th century and their socio-legal status was much improved as a result of the social reform movement initiated by great personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and other great men of the time the contemporary Muslim women lived in some sort of oblivion.

In the year 1864, according to the report of the *Bamabodhini Patrika*,[5] there were 95 vernacular schools for girls and the number of students was 2486. The number of students is not given per community, but the opinion of Mr. Wodrow, Inspector of the schools of the middle division, as recorded in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* seems to be significant. According to him, 'Muslims are never willing to impart education to their girls at schools'.[6] In an issue of the year 1867 the *Bamabodhini Patrika* again comments,[7] 'No advancement in the field of female education is noticeable among the Muslims'. But inspite of this dismal pictures about the condition of education among the Muslim women of Bengal we find some girls reading in schools. One such girl was Shrimati Bibi Taheran Lessa, a student of first class in Boda Girls' High School. She even wrote a letter to the editor of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* advocating the cause of female education on the ground that to make this world an abode of real peace the males should educate their women first.[8] It is written in classical Bengali and is as far as we know the first Bengali prose composition by a Bengali Muslim lady.

In the August 1873 issue of the *Bamabodhini Patrika*[9] the Report of Public Instruction of the year 1871-1872 is discussed. According to that Report there were 110 aided girls' schools and 2,584 pupils in Calcutta, besides 14 unaided schools having 732 girls. The number of Muslim students in these schools was only 58. In the *Bamabodhini Patrika* of March, 1880 we find the number of Muslim girls reading in the Eden Female School of Dacca was 1 out of a total of 153.[10] We also find several Muslim girls getting different scholarships.[11] Commenting on the Census Report about the state of female education in the city of Calcutta the editor of the

5 *The Bamabodhini Patrika*, No. 25, September 1865, p. 85.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

7 *Ibid.*, No. 50, October 1867, p. 604.

8 *Ibid.*, No. 19, March, 1865, pp. 275-277.

9 *Ibid.*, No. 120, August, 1873, p. 143.

10 *Ibid.*, No. 182, March, 1880, p. 149.

11 *Ibid.*, No. 206, March, 1882, vol. II, Part III, p. 344 ; No. 267, April, 1887, vol. III, part III, p. 354. Reporting one such event the editor comments: '*It's* a rare event' (see *Ibid.* No, 206, March, 1882, p. 344).

Bamabodhini Patrika in its issue of January, 1882 had this to say:

'The greatest advancement in the field of female education has taken in the Parsee society and the most miserable condition in this respect is in the Muslim society.'[12]

In 1896 a Muslim girl named Latifannessa passed medical examination from Campell School and obtained second place among 50 boys and 5 girls.[13] From 1895 we find Muslims of Calcutta taking initiatives for establishing a separate girls' school for the women of their society. The immediate cause of this was the refusal by the Bethune Hindu Girls School authority to admit Muslim girls.[14] In 1897 Lady Mackenjee, wife of the Lieutenant Governor, performed the inaguration ceremony of the first Muslim girls school of Culcutta and its chief patron was the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad Ferdaus Mahal who agreed to donate rupees one hundred fifty monthly for its expenditure.[15] On 23 March, 1898 the first annual prize distribution ceremony took place presided over by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Sir John Woobourne. The prizes were distributed by Lady Maclean, the wife of the chief justice.[16] According to the *Bamabodhini Patrika*:[17]

'In one year 46 girls have taken admission and due to the munificence of the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad the school has no lack of money. This is the only girls' school at Calcutta for Muslim girls. We wholeheartedly wish its advancement.'

In the *Bamabodhini Patrika* of April, 1902 we find the following news about the first Muslim girls' school of Calcutta:[18]

'Last 5th April prize distribution has been done in the Muslim girls' School with festivity. The Chief Justice Sir Francis Maclean performed the function of the president. All ladies and girls remained behind the curtain. The chief justice met them alone.'

In the May-June, 1903 issue of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* a review of the state of female education in Bengal has been made.[19] In the whole of Bengal 1,00,322 girls were getting education in schools. Only 1% of the total number of girls in Bengal got the opportunity of reading in schools. The number of girls who had obtained higher education was 3883. Among

12 *Ibid.*, No. 204, January, 1882, p. 262
13 *Ibid.*, No. 376, May, 1896, pp. 3, 29,
14 *Ibid.*, No. 369, October, 1895, p. 161 ; No. 382, November, 1896, vol. VI, Part 1, p. 193.
15 *Ibid.*, No. 385, February, 1897, p. 298.
16 *Ibid.*, No. 399, April, 1898, p. 442.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*, No. 447, April, 1902, p. 408,
19 *Ibid.*, No. 477-478, May & June, 1903, pp. 6-8.

them 439 girls were Hindus, 6 girls were Muslims, native Christian 183, and girls of other religions were 89. Only 7 per thousand women could read and write. The condition was much better in Calcutta where 17% girls of school going age could read and write. The number of literate girls in Calcutta as per religion mentioned in that review is given below :[20]

Hindu	—	9%
Muslim	—	3%
Christian	—	70%
Brahmo	—	53%
Buddhist	—	16%
Jew	—	45%

A statistics of the number of girls who obtained education in schools from 1896-1902 in the whole of Bengal was also given year wise : [21]

1896-1897	—	1,05,919 girls
1897-1898	—	98,000 „
1898-1899	—	97,929 „
1899-1900	—	99,607 „
1900-1901	—	96,857 „
1901-1902	—	1,00,322 „

In comparison to the number of girls of school going age in 1901-1902 only 1 girl out of a hundred was getting education. According to the government, causes of this miserable condition of female education in Bengal were the following : (1) Superstition of the Bengalis ; (2) the necessity of giving education to girls not properly understood ; (3) early marriage of girls ; (4) lack of educated teachers ; (5) lack of any arrangement to impart education to adult women at home and (6) lack of money.[22] In the same issue a statistics of the state of female education in Calcutta from 1881-1901 among the main religious communities has been given which is quoted below : [23]

	1881	1891	1901
Hindu	6%	7%	9%
Muslim	1%	1%	3%
Christian	67%	70%	70%
Brahmo	64%	65%	53%
Buddhist	12%	25%	15%

20 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 8. In the Report of the Census of India, 1901, 22 Muslim females of Bengal per 1000 is shown as literates. See *Report on the Census of India*, p. 178. Subsidiary Table II.

This report indicates the slow pace of advancement of female education in the Muslim community of Calcutta during the 19th century.

In the November 1882 issue of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* we find a poem written by one Basharat Karim Ahmed and entitled "Lamentations of a Daughter-in-law."[24] A short commentary on this poem with the heading "A picture of the condition of the Muslim ladies" is very interesting and indicative of the contemporary Bengali Muslim women's plight. It says :

> "We think that Hindu women are the most unfortunates of this world. But if we look at the condition of Muslim women we cannot but shed tears for them. In imitation of the Muslim appartment of seclusion the present Hindu innerapartment has been created and the latter is but a shadow of that original one. So it is easily conceivable what a terrible place the Muslim inner apartment is !... On the one hand husband's neglect and indifference, on the other hand opression by relatives—these are the two features of Muslim women's family happiness ! The door to social happiness is closed for them. The way to their mental and spiritual happiness is also not unhindered...."[25]

The editor further writes :

> 'The chest of India is not only being floated with the lamentations of the Hindu women. It is also being bathed with the tears of lakhs of Muslim females...."[26]

The poem "Lamentations of One Daughter-in-law" relates the woes of a woman whose husband is abroad : [27]

> To whom I shall weep my husband is abroad ;
> Who will listen to my sorrows in this world of illusions.
> No one can be more affectionate than the parents,
> But they are my enemies.
> Remembering me my father did not come even for one day
> To erase my heart's sorrows by visiting me.
> "Unfortunate daughter in law for whom do you weep ?
> Don't you think that your father has sold you ?"
> I can't bear the tormenting talks of my mother in law,
> My husband is alive but I suffer like a widow !

An interesting poem by one Latifannessa of Shahazadpur is published in the June 1897 issue of the *Bamabodhini Patrika.* The poem's

24 *Bamabodhini Patrika*, November 1882, pp. 220-221.
25 *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.
26 *Ibid.*, p. 220.
27 *Ibid.*

title is *Bangiya Muslim Mahilar Prati* (To the Bengal Muslim Women). Some passages from this poem is quoted below :

To whom you are looking at
With pitiful eyes my sister ?
Who will show kindness to us ?
Who will listen to our weeping ?
By putting a long veil
(So that no one can see you),
How long you will weep
Forgetting our own duties ?
Our fathers, brothers and husbands,
All are after their own welfare,
Seeing our plights
Their eyes get closed.
Oh ! in this land of Bengal
No one is perhaps as unfortunate as we are
Oh ! we are depressed—most depressed.[28]

In this poem we find a picture of the miserable condition of the Bengali Muslim women which was later on so vividly portrayed with irony, heart-felt feeling and attacks, by Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain in her works like the *Maticur*. But Latifannessa only laments. She does not show the spirit to stand against all social injustices.

The Nawab Begum of Murshidabad Ferdaus Mahal seems to have been a prominent lady of her time. Her activities as a patron of education of Bengali Muslim girls have already been referred to. Her works of charity and social activities are also several times mentioned in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*. The January 1897 issue of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* reports the awarding of one gold medal and two silver medals to the students of St. Xavier's College by the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad.[29] In its issue of March, 1897 we find the news of donation by her of rupees one hundred and rupees two hundred to the Muslim orphanage and other charitable institutions of Calcutta respectively.[30] Under her leadership Bengali Muslim women in 1897 sent congratulationary memorandum to Queen Victoria on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of her reign.[31] On the occasion of the death of Queen Victoria we again find Bengali Hindu and Muslim ladies sending condolence message to

28 *Ibid.*, No. 389, June, 1897, p. 77.
29 *Ibid.*, No. 384, January, 1897, p. 285.
30 *Ibid.*, No. 386, March, 1897, p. 271.
31 *Ibid.*, No. 389, June, 1897, p. 74 ; No. 390, July, 1897, p. 81.

the ruler of England under the leadership of the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad.[32] From other sources we know that she was also associated with the activities of the Calcutta Muhammedan Literary Society of Nawab Abdul Latif[33] and was a patron of the Calcutta Muhammedan Union.[34]

In December 1884 the popular Viceroy of India, Lord Ripon (1880—1884) left for England. To show gratitude to him, Muslim women of Bengal also took some steps. Badarul Nessa, daughter of one Muslim *Zaminder* of Bankara, declared one gold medal as a prize commemorating the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon. According to the *Bamabodhini Patrika* the writer of the best essay on the condition of the Bengali Muslim would be awarded the prize.[35]

The *Bamabodhini Patrika* is one of the earliest periodicals devoted to the cause of women. It has the unique distinction of being the first of its kind in which Bengali women published their own writings. We do not find a single journal of the Muslims advocating the cause of the women during the whole nineteenth century. The pictures of the condition of the Bengali Muslim women depicted in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* are fragmentary. Still their value is immense as they throw interesting light on the women of the 19th century Bengali Muslim community about whom so little is known from other sources.

32 *Ibid.*, No. 436-437, May & June 1901. p. 418.

33 The *Muslim Chronicle* of 11 March 1899 reports that among the exhibits in the annual conversazione of the Muhammedan Literary Society which took place in March, 1899, there were three copies of a very old manuscript belonging to the library of H. R. H. the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad., see Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal*, pp. 168-169.

34 Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Bamlar Samayika Patra*, Bangla Academy, 1969, p. 49, Foot Note 1.

35 *The Bamabodhini Patrika*, No. 240, January, 1885, p. 270. For details about the farewell receptions of Lord Ripon by the people of Calcutta, see *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270. Lord Ripon was a liberal of the Gladstonian era who strongly believed in the virtues of peace, *laissez-faire*, and self-government. In persuance of the liberal creed he took some steps in the direction of liberalising the Indian government. In 1883 when the Ilbert bill touched the delicate and difficult question of race distinction a storm arose and Lord Ripon had to forfeit popularity among his countrymen. His attempt to abolish judicial disqualification based on race distinctions failed but in the hearts of millions of Indians he became the great champion of their cause on the Viceregal throne. See P. E. Roberts, *History of British India*, Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 1947, pp. 463-470.

Joint Electorates Versus Separate Electorates : A Dilemma for the Bengali Politicians in the 1920's and the 1930's

Bazlur R. Khan

I

The electorate issue, i. e. whether elections to various representative institutions introduced in India by the British should be on the basis of joint electorates[1] or that of separate electorates[2], featured prominantly in Indian politics ever since separate electorates were conceded to the Indian Muslims under the Indian Councils Act, 1909.[3] The demand for separate electorates with reservation of seats, as is well-known to all serious students of British Indian history, came from the Muslim leaders. The first formal demand for it came in the form of a memorandum presented in October, 1906 to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, by a thirty-five-member delegation[4] of prominent Muslim leaders. In this memorandum the Muslim leaders placed their political grievances with suggestions for their remedies. Led by the Aga Khan, the Simla Deputation[5] complained to the Viceroy about the inadequacy of their representation on the councils and of the unrepresentative character of the Muslim members on various public bodies and the legislative councils. Many of these members, the deputation argued, were there as government nominees, rather than as elected representatives, who scarcely enjoyed the confidence of the Muslim community. It, therefore, suggested to the Viceroy that

1 Common electoral rolls for both Hindu and Muslim voters in territorial rather than communal constituencies.

2 Unmixed electoral rolls—Hindu and Muslim electors forming separate electoral registers and electing members from within their respective communities.

3 Commonly known as the Morley-Minto reforms after the names of their co-authors, John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Minto, the Viceroy. For details of these reforms, see P.P. (Parliamentary Papers, Great Britain), 1910, vol. LXVII, Cmd. 4987.

4 Popularly known as the Simla Deputation, it waited upon the Viceroy following the announcement by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons in July, 1906 of an impending extension of the elective element in the Viceroy's Legislative Council.

5 For the memorendum of the Simla Deputation and the reply to it by the Viceroy, Lord Minto, see Matiur Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation : A Study of Muslim League in British Indian Politics, 1906-12*, appendices.

in future the Muslim members to the representative institutions should be elected by their co-religionists through separate electorates. It reasoned that this safeguard was necessary for their community because of its relative backwardness in education and in wealth to the Hindu community, the members of which were also more numerous than the Muslims in India. The deputation further impressed upon the Viceroy that in the allocation of seats to various groups in the legislative councils and other public bodies and also in appointment to government posts due regard must be paid to the past historical role, political importance and to the services of the Indian Muslim community to the British Empire,[6] the Indian Muslims should, therefore, be given representation in these spheres somewhat in excess of their numerical strength, otherwise they would be swamped by the educationally and economically advanced majority community, argued the Muslim leaders.

II

The reforms under the Indian Councils Act, 1909,[7] however, met the Muslim demands only partly : the reforms conceded[8] separate electorates to them but they side-tracked the Muslim demand for representation in excess of their numerical strength by asking them to make good for their loss by simultaneously contesting the general constituency seats which were also kept open to them for contest. It, however, became evident later from the election results that the Muslims could never derive any benefit from this arrangement. In Bengal, where, for instance, the Muslims were given five communal seats under

6 In political vocabulary this came to be known as the claim of 'weightage'.

7 Introducing the elective system for the first time, the 1909 Act enlarged the Imperial and the Provincial Legislative Councils : the number of additional members of the Imperial Council was raised from 16 to a maximum of 60, and those of Bengal, Madras and Bombay councils to a maximum of 50. The seats in the Bengal Council was, however, later fixed at 53 before the annulment of the partition of the province ; after the annulment of the partition one more seat was added to raise the number to 54.

8 John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, however, insisted that India's parliamentary development must follow the British pattern ; he at first opposed the introduction of communal electorates, although finally giving in to the pressure of the Viceroy and his subordinates in the India Government who argued successfully that without such safeguards the Indian Muslims and great landholders would be swamped by the caste Hindu dominated westernised urban intelligentsia. J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth-Century Bengal*, pp. 36-37 ; Lord Minto to Governor of Madras, 15 June, 1908, Government of India, Home Public, A116-146, October, 1908.

the Act they did not win any seat in general constituencies except in 1916, and that too by a fluke. Thus the highest number of elected seats that the Bengali Muslims ever held under the Act was six as against seventeen Hindu and five European elected seats[9].

The Indian Muslim leaders had, nevertheless, accepted the reforms without much murmur, for, the recognition of the system of separate electorates as a principle itself had, for the first time, given the Indian Muslims a distinct political status. It had also raised the standing of their newly-formed political organization, the Muslim League,[10] in the Indian political arena. The low key strategy of the Muslim leaders was not long to bring them political dividends: the Indian National Congress reversed in December, 1916 its hitherto uncompromising attitude to the newly-introduced system of separate electorates in Indian politics to give its blessing to it[11] under the terms of the League-Congress concordat for political cooperation reached at a joint session of the two parties held at Lucknow in December, 1916. Popularly known as the Lucknow Pact,[12] this concordat was in fact the first joint political venture of the Indian Hindus and Muslims during the British rule.

9 Composition of Bengal Legislative Council u der Revised Regulations of 1912 :

Ex officio : Governor—1 ; Executive Councillors—3.
Nominated : Officials, maximum—16 ; Indian commerce—1 ; European commerce (mofussil)—1 ; Experts—2 ; Others—2.
Elected : Calcutta Corporation—2 ; Calcutta University—1 ; Bengal Chamber of Commerce—2 ; Calcutta Trades Association—1 ; Chittagong Port Commission—1 ; Tea Planters—1 ; Municipalities—5 ; District & Local Boards—5 ; Landholders—5 ; Muhammadans—5.
Total : 54 ; Ex officio & Nominated : 26 ; Elected : 28, See P. P., 1913, Vol XLVII, Cmd. 6714, p. 199.

10 The Muslim League was founded at Dacca on 30 December, 1906 as a loyalist political organisation of the Indian Muslims just as the Indian National Congress had come into being in 1885 under official patronage. One of the aims of the Muslim League at birth, as Khawaja (later Sir) Salimullah had put it, was 'to controvert the growing influence of the so-called Indian National Congress,. Like the Congress at its early stage, the League was too an association of titled nobles, pensioned off princes, big landlords and aristocrats with grandiloquent titles.

11 Separate electorate, recognised by the Congress under the Lucknow Pact, were now also to apply in the Punjab and in the Central Provinces where separate electorates were not introduced under the Morley-Minto reforms. This concession was not without condition. The provincial distribution of communal representation was to come into force on the attainment of self-government for the realisation of which the League-Congress concordat was reached. This aspect of the Lucknow Pact has hitherto been sadly overlooked.

12 Based on a memorial of 19 non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council to the Viceroy in October. 1916 calling for representative government and Dominion Status, the Lucknow Pact had also incorporated separate electorates to placate Muslim support.

The Lucknow Pact revealed a deep split in the Muslim leadership in Bengal on the question of allocation of communal seats;[13] the socially and politically conservative Muslim aristocracy, who were then steadily losing their grip on the Muslim League in Bengal and also at the national level to the politically radical young Muslim elite, rejected the pact out of hand as a sell out of the Bengali Muslims' interests for the sake of reaching a compromise with the Hindus for the protection and promotion of interests of Muslims elsewhere in India.[14] As a result, the old-guard Muslims, such as Sayyid Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, a Bogra *zamindar* and the reigning President of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League, defected[15] from the League. Some of these defectors, e. g., Chaudhuri, revived the moribund Central National Mahommedan Association, a Calcutta-based organization of long standing, while others started a new party, the Indian Moslem Association, through the agency of which the anti-pactists had kept up their fight against the League-Congress joint reform scheme, especially against the allocation of seats between the Hindus and the Muslims proposed in the scheme. It must, however, be noted here that the safeguard of Muslim interests was the prime concern of the Muslim leaders of all shades and opinions ; separate electorates were espoused by all of them.

The debate on the Lucknow Pact, particularly on the question of the distribution of seats between the two major communities, gained

13 The allocation of seats in provincial legislatures under the Lucknow Pact was based upon the principle of weightage for the minority community. Thus in return for over representation for Muslims in the provinces where they were a minority the Muslims of Bengal and the Punjab, the provinces where they formed a majority were to have fewer seats than their numerical strength had warranted. In Bengal where Muslims formed 52.6% of the population, they were to have 40% of the seats in the Legislative Council., while in the Punjab the Muslims forming 54 8% of the population were to have 50% of the seats.

14 See B. R. Khan, 'Some aspects of Society and Politics in Bengal, 1927 to 1936' (London University Ph. D. thesis, 1979), p. 30.

15 The real reason for the split in the Muslim leadership was fundamental differences in political thinking and strategies between the traditional and modern radical politicians. The traditional Muslim aristocratic leadership, committed to a loyalist stance, still stuck to the old method of discreet persuation of the bureaucracy for the redress of their political and economic grievances. The young and radical Muslim leadership, on the other hand, was unimpressed by the weak and timid strategy of the old leadership ; it had decided upon a vigorous policy of assertion and agitation, if need be, in conjunction with the Congress on the basis of a communal *rapprochement*. The old-guard Muslims, on the other hand, were not yet ready for agitational politics on the Congress line, nor did they see the value of communal partnership in politics for which they had their own logic justifying their point of view. See *Ibid.* pp. 26-27.

further momentum following the British Government's announcement[16] in August, 1917 of their policy of giving India a further instalment of constitutional concessions in not too distant a future. The visit to India by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montague, late in November, 1917[17] for a first hand knowledge of the Indian constitutional problem, and the subsequent appointment of the Franchise[18] and the Function[19] committees for drawing up new constitutional schemes, had activated these conservative Muslim organizations as they, indeed, did other political organizations of various communal affiliations.

The end product of the governmental exercises on further constitutional concession was the Government of India Act, 1919. This new constitutional instrument had introduced the new elements of devolution[20] and dyarchy,[21] besides providing for extended franchise and

16 The British policy on India, was defined by Montague, the Secretary of State for India, in his speech in the House of Commons on 20 August, 1917. The key note of Montague's announcement was that both the British and the India Governments were in accord with the policy of 'increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration' and that of 'gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire.'

17 Montague's tour of India during this visit extended over five months.

18 The Franchise Committee prepared a scheme for a new franchise prescribing a low property qualification which had largely extended the electorate. The electoral register for the first election to the Bengal Legislative Council under the 1919 Act had enrolled over a million voters in place of just over nine thousand under the 1909 Act. See *Report of the Indian Franchise Committee* (Calcutta, 1919), p. 38 ; Government of Bengal, Appointment, 18L—I (II—12), B272-273, November, 1917, and *Return Showing the Results of Elections in India*, 1920, 1921, Cmd. 1261, pp. 10-13.

19 This committee considered a scheme for the division of functions between the supreme and the provincial governments and between the two branches of the government, the Reserved and the Transferred, in the provinces.

20 Devolution of certain administrative, financial and legislative powers upon the provinces. Matters pertaining to the whole of India, e. g., defence, foreign affairs, communications, commerce, customs, the all-India services and subjects not specifically assigned to the provinces remained under the central jurisdiction. Revenue from land tax, irrigation, excise and stamps, which now formed provincial subjects, was to go the coffers of the provincial governments, which they were free to spend as they wished.

21 The division of the provincial administration into two halves—Reserved and Transferred. The former consisting of such subjects as land revenue and laws, justice, police, irrigation, appointments and labour, were to be administered by executive councillors responsible only to the governor and ultimately to the Secretary of State. The latter comprising such departments as local self-government, education, public health, public works, agriculture and co-operative societies, which were now called 'nation-building' departments were administered by government ministers appointed from amongst the elected council members.

enlarged councils both in the provinces and at the centre. The 1919 Act had also retained separate communal electorates. The constituencies for council elections were now divided into two catagories—'general' and 'special'. The general constituencies were again classified at Muhammadan and Non-Muhammadan. The special constituencies, as under the 1909 Act, were earmarked for special interests such as big landholders, universities, industry and commerce.

The provision of separate communal electorates for the Muslim and the allocation of thirty-nine[22] seats (33 rural and 6 urban) to them in a House of 139 in Bengal under the 1919 Act were made on the basis of the Lucknow Pact of 1916. But the Lucknow Pact, as already noted, was not acceptable to a group of Bengali Muslim leaders represented by such conservative organizations as the Central National Mahommedan Association and the Indian Moslem Association with regard to the allocation of seats,[23] although they were satisfied with the agreement in so far as it had recognised the principle of separate electorates. So the discontent of the articulate section of the Bengali Muslims on the question of proportion of representation continued. The caste Hindu politicians were, on the other hand, dissatisfied that separate electorates still were retained under the 1919 Act.[24]

22 The Hindus were given 46 seats (35 rural and 11 urban). In the whole House of 139 the Muslims got 28.5% and Hindus 33.9% seats. The percentages of Muslim and Hindu seats in the elective constituencies were 34.5 and 40.7 respectively. Considering the general constituency seats, i. e. those shared by Muslims and Hindus, the Muslims got 45.8% and the Hindus 54% of these seats totalling 85. For Muslims this proportion of seats was definitely an improvement over the quota of 40% fixed under the Lucknow Pact for the Bengali Muslims. Even then it fell much short of the proportion of their numerical strength in Bengal where they formed nearly 53% of the population. When taken the whole House of 139 into consideration, the proportion of their seats had fallen still further short of their demand.

23 See *Evidence taken before the Reforms Committee (Franchised)*, (Calcutta, 1919), vol. II, 393.

24 *Ibid.* vol. IV. pp. 70-71.

III

The *bhadralok*[25] opposition to separate electorates and reservation of seats had stiffened by the increasing threat of demand for similar concessions by the low caste Hindus. The Namasudras,[26] who were concentrated more in the districts of eastern Bengal, had meanwhile grown impatient of what their leaders called the 'unsympathetic oligarchy,[27] of the three high castemen—the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and the Baidyas. Mukunda Behari Mallick, the President of the Bengal Namasudra Association, a Calcutta based caste organisation established in 1912, expressed the dissatisfaction of his castemen over the Montague-Chelmsford reform proposal, which, he said tended to increase the well-trenched power and domination of 'a vociferous and small band of organised [high] castes pretending to represent the interests of the masses'.[28] In 1920 the Namasudra leaders asked for the reservation of one-third of all the Non-Muhammedan seats in the Bengal Legislature for their own caste.[29] The *bhadralok* had been up and doing to counteract such moves by strongly opposing any special representation for the lower caste Hindus and claiming themselves to be 'the natural protectors of the masses' in their deposition to the Joint Select Committee which was appointed to examine the Montague Chelmsford proposals.[30]

25 A term, first coined probably in 1799 by a British civilian of the Bengal administration to denote an English language educated and westernised Hindus social group which had distinguished itself by a caste and class proscription. The term gained wide currency only in the beginning of the 20th century when the Bengali caste Hindu elite demonstrated their growing political muscle in the anti-partition agitation of 1905-11. The term assumed a sociological significance after it had found its way into the *Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917*, the *Cambridge History of India*, the *Bengal District Administration Committee, 1913-1914 Report* and in the *Census of India* of 1901 & 1911. For details see S. N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-1838' in E. R. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee (Eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge, 1970); S. N. Mukherjee. 'Bhadralok in Bengali Language and Literature: An essay on the language of Class and Status' in *Bengal Past and Present*, XCV, II. July-Dec., 1976, pp. 225-35; *Bengal District Administration 1913-1914, Report* (Superintendent, Govt. Press, Calcutta, 1915); *Calcutta University Commission* (Sadlar Commission) *1917, Report*, 1919. Cmd., 386-390.

26 With a population of 2.5 million in 1918, the *Namasudras* formed the largest Hindu agricultural caste in Bengal. By the beginning of the 20th century a few of their castemen had become sufficiently enough educated to enter government services and profession and to raise audible voices for statutory safeguards for their adequate representation in councils and other elective bodies as also in government service.

27 Govt. of Bengal, Appointment, 6R-36 (IB), B376-625, April, 1919. See Mukunda Behari Mallick's letter to Governor's Secretary, 17 December, 1918.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Govt. of India. Reforms Office, Bundle 1920, August. A (6), A54-II9.

30 See Surendranath Banerjea's deposition before the Joint Select Committee. P.P., 1919 (203), vol. IV, Evidence, p. 68.

The traditional Muslim leaders again succesfully fought their case for separate electorates in Calcutta Municipal elections when the Calcutta Municipal Bill was presented to the House late in 1921. When first introducing the Bill, Surendranath Banerjea, a moderate Congress leader and the Minister in charge of the Local Self-Government Department had proposed reservation of 13 seats for Muslims in general electorates.[31] But on the insistence of such conservative Muslim leaders as Sir Abdur Rahim,[32] a Member of Governor's Executive Council, and Sayyid Nawab Chaudhuri,[33] a government minister, some *bhadralok* M. L. C.'s (Member of the Legislative Council) found it prudent to concede to the Muslim demand in the interests of 'communal harmony'.[34] It is important to note here that on this occasion the Muslims had also got the valuable support of the Marwari and the European M. L. C.'s who, too, now joined the chorus for the recognition of the principle of separate communal electorates.[35]

31 *Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council* (hreinafter B. L. C. P.) 22 Nov., 1921., vol. V, p. 125 and pp. 127-28.

32 Sir Abdur Rahim (1867-1952), born in an aristocratic family in Midnapur district, passed the M. A. examination in English from elite Calcutta Presidency College, standing first among the successful candidates. In 1890 he was called to the Bar from the Middle Temple ; he practised at the Calcutta High Court for some time. He held the post of Deputy Legal Remembrancer before becoming a Calcutta Presidency Magistrate in 1900, a post he held till 1903. In 1906 he was included in the Muslim leaders, Simla Deputation waiting upon the Viceroy to demand special safeguards for their community. After holding the chair of Tagore Professor of Law at Calcutta University for a year, he became a judge of the Madras High Court in 1908, later to be elevated to the position of Chief Justice of that province. He held the latter position till 1920 when he resigned from the Bench to become an Executive Councillor of the Bengal Government. From 1926 he was an M. L. C. in Bengal, and from 1930 to 1945 he held a seat in the Indian Legislative Assembly. He became the President of the Assembly in 1935 and he held that office till 1945. He also held the office of the President of the *Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti* from the inception of the party in 1929 till 1936. Knighted in 1919, he was decorated with a K. C. S I. in 1925.

33 Sayyid Nawab Ali Chaudhuri (1863-1929), came of a Zamindar family from Dhanbari in Mymensingh (now in Tangail) district. A right hand man of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, he was included in the historic Simla Deputation of 1906. From 1906 to 1925 he held a seat either in the Eastern Bengal & Assam Legislative Council, or in the Bengal Legislative Council or in the Imperial Legislative Council. He became a government minister in 1921, then again briefly in 1925 when he was appointed a Member of Governor's Executive Council ; he held the latter office till his death. He was conferred upon a C. I. E. in 1918 and a Nawab Bahadurship in 1924. He was the grandfather of Mohammad Ali of Bogra, once a Prime Minister of Pakistan.

34 *East India (Constitutional Reform). Reform Enquiry Committees. Views of Local Governments on the Working of the Reforms*, 1925, Cmd. 2361, pp. 346-47.

35 *B. L. C. P.*, 22 Nov., 1921, vol. V, pp. 133-34.

One encouraging aspect of the debate on the Calcutta Municipal Bill inside the legislature was the spirit of understanding and accomodation displayed by some Hindu and Muslim leaders. These leaders, though only a few in number on either side, seemed to have a growing sense of realization that politics was essentially an art of compromise and accommodation of view points of dominant political groups. Surendranath Banerjea, in his rounding up speech of the debate on the Bill in the Bengal legislature, said that sometimes it was prudent and necessary to sacrifice 'the ideal for the real and the practical';[36] this was exactly what, Banerjea argued, was done in accepting the principle of separate electorates for the Calcutta Municipal elections for the sake of communal harmony and good will.

From the Muslim side the same spirit of accommodation was reciprocated by Abdullah al-Mamun Suhrawardy,[37] an M. L. C. from Calcutta. It will be of interest to note here what Suhrawardy had to say on this occasion about separate electorates for the Calcutta Muslims in municipal elections. He asked the House 'not to take seriously the unconsidered judgement, the wild utterances of those whose first aquaintance with public life is only through the door of communal representation'[38]. Referring to the reservation of thirteen seats proposed in the Calcutta Municipal Bill, 1921 'where we had none' before, and to the right of Muslim candidates to contest additional seats in any general constituency together with the proposal of increased Muslim voting strength 'considerably in excess of that of the Hindus',

36 Quoted in Abdullah al-Mamun Suhrawardy, *Supplementary Note*, 1930, Cmd. 3525, p 44.

37 Abdullah al-Mamun Suhrawardy (1887-1935), son of Obeidullah Al-Obeidi, a small zamindar and Dacca Government Madrassah teacher, claimed persian descent, After his early education at the Dacca Madrassah and at the Dacca College, Abdullah Suhrawardy went to the University College and the King's College, London and earned his Ph. D. degree. He was simultaneously called to the Bar from Gray's Inn. While in London, he started in 1905 a Pan Islamic Society and also a mosque movement. Back in Calcutta, he played a leading role in the formation of the Indian Crescent Society in 1911 for raising funds for Turkey in her war against Italy and for the relief of her war victims. In recognition of his Pan Islamic activities the Ottoman Khalifa had awarded him an 'Order' of honour and the title of 'Iftikhar-ul-Miliat. He held a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1910 to 1926 when he switched over to the Indian Legislative Assembly where he continuously held a seat till 1935. He was a member of the Indian Central Committee appointed by the Viceroy to help the Simon Commission in the latter's task of investigation into India's eligibility to further constitutional concession.

38 For Abdullah Suhrawardy's speech see B. L. C. P., 1 December, 1921, vol. V., pp. 530-34.

Suhrawardy said that 'I am satisfied that the balance of advantage is in the favour of the Muhammadans'.[39] He made himself bold even to repudiate the conservative Muslim leaders claim that 'a mixed electorate debars 'real' Muslims and paves the way for success of 'renegades'. He then continued, 'I strongly oppose and emphatically repudiate and denounce the innovation and heresy of elevating and exalting the principle of communal representation into the shibboleth of my faith and the creed of my religion ... ..'.[40] Hitting at the older and conservative Muslim leaders as 'fossils' Suhrawardy warned that 'Communities, like individual and nations, which do not move with time and adapt themselves to the changing circumstances of the day, are doomed to destruction .... Let communal interests and not communal representation be our watch word'.[41] He appealed to his co-religionist colleagues in the council : 'Let us not cling for ever to the door of communal representation by which we have entered the Council, unaware of the fact that there is a wider and broader gate beyond, leading to the Hall of Freedom and Fraternity'[42].

But there were very few among the articulated Muslims elite who subscribed to Suhrawrdy's thoughts and veiws ; Suhrawardy's speech had made little or no impact on other Muslim M.L. C.'s, and the Calcutta Municipal Bill, as already told, was passed as law only after separate electorates were conceded to the Muslims. It will be of interest to know here that Suhrawardy himself had later become not only a convert to to the principle of separate electorates but also to one of their staunchest protagonists from the late 1920's, gallantly defending the cause of separate electorates and proportionate representation for the Indian Muslims in all the provinces.[43]

39 *Ibid.*
40 *Ibid.*
41 *Ibid*
42 *Ibid.*
43 See Abdullah Suhrawardy's *Supplementary Note*, written in dissent to the *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928-29* (1930 Cmd. 3451) of which Suhrawardy was also a member. Also see Suhrawardy's evidence before the Simon Commission in *Selection from Memoranda & Oral Evidence by non-officials, Part II, pp.* 52-56 *passim* (Indian Statutory Commission, vol. XVII).

Suhrawardy's inconsistent roles at two different points of time with regard to the electorate question point to several things. Firstly, the socially conservative and traditional Muslim leadership, which was recognised by the government as truely representative of Muslim political thought and aspirations in Bengal, steadfastly stuck to the demand of separate electorates since 1906. Secondly, it was only a small group of incipient radical Muslim elite in Calcutta, with very little hold on the rural Muslim masses and favouring the idea of communal *rapprochement* as well as emulation of the Congress-style agitational politics, who were willing to modify the demand for separate electorate and accept mixed electorates with reservation of seats. This group was led by men like Abul Kasem[44] and Mujibur Rahman[45] who had founded in 1907 the Bengal Mahommedan Association[46] as a rival organization to the Muslim League. Prominent amongst others who had a hand in the organization of the Association were Maulana Akram Khan[47] and A. H. Ghuznavi, two active members of the Congress party. Endeavouring from its very inception for a close rapport with the Congress, it represented a new current of thought of Muslim politics in Bengal. Aiming at a supra-communal approach it regularly sent delegates to the annual

44. Abul Kasem (1872 – 1936), coming of an aristocratic family from Burdwan district and a University graduate, entered public life as a Congress agitator against the partition of Bengal in 1905. Prior to this he had worked as a private secretary to his uncle Nawab Abdul Jabber, the Prime Minister of Bhopal from 1897 to 1902. Till 1921 he was active in the Congress politics simultaneously taking part in the Muslim League politics and the Khilafat movement. He was a member of the Bengal legislature both under the 1909 and 1919 Acts. He was the founder-editor of the weekly *The Mussalman*.

45. Mujibur Rahman, a cousin of Abul Kasem, was the manager of *The Mussalman* when it was first launched in 1906. Later he had taken over the editorial responsibililties of the paper. He was a Congressite although simultaneously holding the League membership.

46. *Bengali*, 9 January, 1907.

47. Maulana Akram Khan (1868-1968), began his political career as a Congress activist during the anti-partition agitation. He became a member of the Muslim League at its inception. As a Pan Islamist, he had also played a prominent role in the Khilafat-cum-Non-Cooperation movement. He left the Congress party in 1929 in dissent to the Nehru Report, a Congress blue-print of a Dominion constitution for India, which had denounced and discarded separate electorates. From 1941 to 1951 he was the President of the Bengal Muslim League. Closely connected with journalism, he was the founder and editor of the Bengali-language *Mohammadi* (weekly and monthly), the daily Bengali-Language *Sebak* and the weekly Urdu-language *Zamana*. In 1936 he brought out the daily Bengali-language *Azad*.

Congress sessions till the outbreak of World War I.[48] Meanwhile greatly mortified by the government action annulling the partition of Bengal, Abdullah Suhrawardy and Fazlul Huq[49] advocated the emulation of the pattern of the successful Hindu agitation against the partition of Bengal and even a communal *rapprochement* against the British. They had now become more closely associated with the members of the Bengal Presidency Mahommedan Association.

To this must also be added a personal sore point of Suhrawardy : he had to suffer along with two friends[50] the indignity of being fired in 1913 from lectureship of the University Law College, Calcutta on the ground that being actively engaged in politics they had the proclivity to

48. Bengali, 10 October, 1910; A. Hayat, *The Mussalmans of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1966), 19-20; M. Ahmed, *Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920-29* (Calcutta, 1970), 8.

49. A. K. Fazlul Huq (1873-1962), son of a Barisal lawyer, was born in a prosperous landowning and a minor *ashraf* family of Bakerganj district. A first class graduate with triple honours and a first class M. A. and with a law degree to his credit, Fazlul Huq remained an important political figure in Bengal politics, bringing a new style and direction to Muslim politics in Bengal. Beginning with municipal and district board politics, Huq entered provincial politics as a protege of Nawab Salimullah, the doyen of the Muslim aristocracy in Bengal. He joined the Congress party in 1904 and played a vital role in the formation of the Muslim League as an emissary of Nawab Salimullah to various Northern Indian Muslim leaders prior to the formation of Muslim League. A staunch supporter of communal cooperation in politics, he was a signatory to the Lucknow Pact of 1916 of which he was one of the principal architects. He held the Secretaryship of the Bengal Muslim League from 1915 to 1921. In 1918 he held simultaneously the Presidency of the All-India Muslim League and the General Secretaryship of the Indian National Congress. Entering the council politics in 1913, having elected unopposed to the Bengal legislature from Dacca, Huq became a government minister in 1924, although for a brief period. Then after a brief political ecclipse he made a come back to Bengal politics through the Krishak-Proja movement, having become the first Prime Minister of Bengal under the 1935 Act. Although the prime mover of the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore in 1940, a personality clash with M. A. Jinnah, the League President, soon brought him banishment from the League and a temporary exile from the political scene. In 1954 he had his revange for it when the United Front, an electoral compact between Huq's Krishak Sramik Party and the Awami League, had completely routed the Muslim League in East Pakistan in the first ever held provincial general elections in Pakistan. After the election Huq had first become a central government minister and then the Governor of East Pakistan from which post he was ignominously dismissed by Iskander Mirza, the first President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

50. They were Abdool Rasul and K. P. Jayaswal.

anti-British pronouncements[51] which had a bad impact on the campus. This action was then most vigorously criticised by the *bhadralok* who had been entrenched, since the beginning of the twentieth century, in a fight against bureaucratic authoritarianism and intransigence. This could well have influenced Suhrawardy to take a more reasoned and liberal attitude to the electorate question.

Lastly, the timing of the presentation of the Calcutta Municipal Bill was also a factor in influencing some Hindu and Muslim M. L. C.'s to underplay the communal issue. It came at a time when a communal *rapprochement*,[52] though very fragile, was at work. The Bengali Hindu and the Muslim leaders, as were endeavouring for an enduring political agreement between them, were discreet in their utterances on the question of electorates. The question of timing was also important from another aspect. It was the first council under the 1919 Act that was considering the Bill ; the composition of the House was different from what it had been under the 1909 Act. In the enlarged House, the Muslim members, though not satisfied with the proportion of their representation, was now a force to be reckoned with in the House. On the other hand there was an ongoing fight between the Hindu moderates and radicals for power and position in the Congress Party. The radicals were not there in the House in 1921, but they were there in municipalities and district and local boards. Both the moderate and the radical Hindus now needed Muslim votes whether in the legislature or in municipalities or in district boards in their contest for influence and power. So, although both were theoretically against the principle of communal representation they were pragmatic enough to take note of the changed time and to realise the direction of Muslim sentiments in general, and to acquiesce in the provision of separate electorates in the Corporation constitution.

The importance of time on the issue of electorates, for that matter on any political issue, was clear from the uncompromising attitude of both Hindu and Muslim leaders when the question of further constitutional issues was reopened late in 1927 by the appointment of a Statutory Commission by the British Parliament for enquiry into India's

51. Government of India. Education, AI-AII, June, 1913 ; Kenneth McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm : Calcutta, 1918-1935* (Franz Steiner Verlag, Weisbaden, 1974), 29.

52. Reached through the Lucknow Pact and the combined Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement, 1921-22.

fitness for further concessions. In Bengal, as elsewhere in India, Hindu and Muslim politicians aligned themselves on communal lines in 1927. In their memoranda to and their evidence before the Indian Statutory Commission and later in their discussion in the Indian Round Table Conferences, the leaders of the two communities firmly stuck to their guns- the Muslim leaders steadfastly clinging to their demand for separate electorates with proportional representation, and the Hindu leaders opposing it with all their might. The members of the Bengal Government, both on the 'reserved' and the 'transferred' sides were too up and doing presenting their case on strictly communal lines on this question[53].

At the all-India level the Indian National Congress had unceremoniously rejected the Muslim demand for separate electorates in the Nehru Report of 1928, an official Congress exercise drawing up a model of Dominion constitution for India.[54] The all-India Muslim League had then split into two rival factions- one under the leadership of M. A. Jinnah and the other under that of Sir Muhammad Shafi- on the question of cooperation with Simon Commission[55] as the Indian Statutory as it was called after the name of its chairman, Sir John Simon. The Shafi-Muslim League strongly upheld the cause of separate electorates and proportional representation for Muslims all over India.[56] The Jinnah Muslim League had, till the publication of the Nehru Report, offered to accept joint electorates in return for certain concessions to the Muslims by the Hindus in general and the Congress in particular. Jinnah was much maligned by the pro-Shafi Leaguers although, in fact, he had given away nothing. The rider clauses to the resolution in which the

53. See the note of Sir P. C. Mitter, an Executive Councillor, and that of Raja Bhupendra Narayan Sinha, a Minister, representing the caste Hindu case on the issue of electorate and representation ; see the note of Sayyid Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, an Executive Councillor, and that of Nawab Musharruf Hosain a Minister, representing the Muslim view on it in *Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bengal to the Statutory Commission* (Statutory Commission, vol. VIII, London, 1930).

54. For the text of the Nehru Report see *Report of the Constitution Committee appointed by the (All Parties) Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution for india* (Allahabad, 1928).

55. The Shafi League was for cooperation with the Simon Commission while Jinnah League joined the Congress chorus of boycott of the Commission. The Bengal League, which was then a stronghold of the Congressite Muslims, went with the Jinnah League.

56. See the resolution passed on the subject at the Lahore session of the All-India Muslim League (Shafi faction) in December, 1927. See *Statesman*, I January, 1928.

Jinnah Muslim League had indicated its preparedness to drop the claim for the retention of separate electorates had more than neutralised the offer. Summing up the offer a resolution read partly as follows : "in the present circumstances the representation of Muslims in the legislatures by separate electorates is inevitable, and Muslims will not accept any scheme involving the surrender of this valuable right unless and until Sind is actually constituted a separated autonomous province and reforms are actually introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. When their requirements are fully satisfied Muslims will be prepared to abandon a separate in favour of a joint electorate with reservation of seats fixed on the basis of the population of the different communities, subject to certain stipulations contained in the resolution".[56a]

The Nehru Report, which had dealt with the electorate question rather summarily, had changed the mood of the moderate Muslim leaders. As a result no Muslim with some hold on his community would any longer speak publicly of an agreement with the Congress on the basis of joint electorate. Thus in March, 1929 Jinnah came out with his famous 'Fourteen Points'[57] presenting them as the 'irreducible' Muslim demands on which alone they would accept a new Indian constitution. These demands, *inter alia*, included[58] the retention of separate electorates with proportional represention and weightage in the

56a. This resolution was passed at the Calcutta session of the Muslim League Jinnah faction) on I January, 1928. The shafi faction had simultaneously held a rival session of the League in Lahore. For the resolution referred to here see *Statesman*, 2 January, 1928. It is important to note that Mujibur Rahman, well-known for his pro-Congress sympathies, said in his speech as the Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Calcutta session of the Jinnah League that he looked upon 'separate representation through separate electorates as the corner stone of Muslim politics' in India. *Statesman*, 2 January, 1928 ; N. N. Mitra, *Indian Annual Register, 1927*, II., 330.

57. Based on an amendment to the Nehru Report moved by Jinnah at the All Parties, Convention held at Calcutta in December, 1928, the All-India Muslim League passed a 14-point resolution defining a constitution which would be acceptable to the Indian Muslims ; this came to be known as Jinnah's Fourteen Points. For the text of Fourteen Points see M. Gwyer and A. Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-47*, 44-47.

58. Among other demands it included federation at the centre, complete provincial autonomy with residuary powers vested in the provinces, separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency and giving her, N. W. F. P. and Baluchistan provincial status etc.

Hindu majority provinces without disturbing their majority representation in the provinces where they were numerically superior, including Bengal and the Punjab. Similar demands were also made at the All-India Muslim Conference held at Delhi in December-January, 1928-29 under the Agha Khan's chairmanship.[59] This conference, which was convened principally by the right-wing Muslim Leaguers to express their dissent to the Nehru Report, soon turned into a semi-permanent organization which was accepted by the Government to be representative of the Muslim opinion.

V

A new dimension was added to the already intractable electorate problem as the low Caste Hindus or the Depressed Classes under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, came to claim at the Indian Round Table Conferences that they too be given separate representation independent of the Caste Hindus. So when the Round Table Conference dispersed in subcommittees to consider specific constitutional problems for an agreed solution, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, himself occupied the chair of the Minorities Subcommittee dealing with the electorate and the representation issues. The Round Table Conferences, however, failed to find a solution of these problems as the Indian leaders would not budge from their stand on these issues.[60] The British Government, therefore, came out with their pronouncement as the British Prime Minister announced in August, 1932 a scheme for communal representation, afterwards called the 'Communal Award'.[61] Based on the Lucknow Pact the 'Award' retained separate representation for the Muslims and to the further dismay of the Caste Hindus recognised the Depressed Classes as a separate community giving them their own electorates. It gave the Muslims 119 seats and the Hindus eighty seats, a portion of which was set aside for the depressed Class Hindus.[62] Naturally the Caste Hindus were disappointed with this distribution of

59. *Statesman*, 2 January, 1929 ; *Report of the All-India Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31 December, 1928 and Ist January, 1929.*

60. *Indian Round Table Conference, 12th November, 1930-19th January, 1931 (Sub Committees Report : Conference Resolutions and Prime Mimister's Statement), 1391*, Cmd. 3772. See Report of the Subcommittee No. III. See also 'Report presented at meetings of the (Minorities Sub) committee of the whole conference held on 16th and 19th January, 1931 in *ibid*, 155-58.

61. For the text of the 'Communal Award' see *East India (Constututional Reforms) Communal Decision, 1932*, Cmd. 4147.

62. This allocation of seats was with regard to the Lower House of 250.

seats and they bewailed the 'Award' as a 'sentence of banishment'[63] of them from the Bengal legislature passed in 'gross injustice to Bengal and its Hindu population'.[64] They further condemned the 'Award' as a denial of 'real autonomy to the children of the soil,[65] and as a threat to the 'cultural, economic and political life of the province'.[66]

The Bengali Muslim leaders, on the other hand, complained that although the 'Award' had retained separate electorates and given them the majority of the elected seats it still fell far short of their demand for proportional representation and did not give them working majority in the House. Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, an M. L. A. who had represnted the Bengali Muslims in the Round Table Conferences and on the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1932-34, argued that the Hindus got more seats than they would have got had the allocation of seats been made strictly on the basis of population.[67] The government, however, did not take the Muslim criticism seriously which, they said confidently, was directed more as an 'offset to Hindu demands than as a demand in itself sustainable'.[68]

VI

The 'Communal Award', as it was amended by the Poona Pact[69] reached between the Caste Hindu and Hindu depressed classes leaders at the national level, was incorporated in the Indian constitution under the Government of India Act, 1935. The *bhadralok*, who had denied the existence of any depressed classes problem in Bengal, refused to take part in the deliberations leading to the conclusion of the Poona

63, See N. K. Basu's (M. L. C.) speech moving an adjournment motion to discuss the 'Communal Award' in Bengal Legislature. *B. L. C. P., 23* August, 1932, XXXIX. 4., 117-147

64. *Advance*, 17 and 18 August, 1932. The 'Award' was announced on 16 August, 1932.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Liberty*, 17 August, 1932.

67. A. H. Ghuznavi in *Statesman*, 12 September, 1932.

68. Govt. of Bengal to Govt. of India. Telegram R. 64 of 25 August, 1932, Govt. of India Confidential Political Proceedings, vol. 81, year 1932, Home Deptt. File No. 31/113/32-Poll.

69. Under this agreement the low Caste Hindus in Bengal (later called Scheduled castes) 20 additional seats from the quota of 'general' seats to 10 seats originally allocated to them under the 'Award' in return for their surrendering the right to separate electorates given to them by the 'Award'. This had raised the Low castes, seats to 30 bringing down the Caste Hindus' to 50. For details see R. Coupland, *India: A Restatement*, (London, 1945), 141; S. C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942* (London, 1964), 221-22.

Pact. But once the pact was signed, the *bhadralok*, realising that they were outmanoeuvred by the Gandhiites, made concerted efforts through the press, public meetings, representations and memorials to the Joint Committee on Indian constitutional reforms and finally to the British Cabinet for the rescission of both the 'Award' and the Poona Pact, the latter having curtailed the *bhadralok* representation still more drastically than the former had.[70] But all their efforts were to no avail. Although the local and the supreme governments were critical of separate electorates as bad in principle at the end they recommended separate electorates for the Muslims who they argued, would otherwise be swamped by the Caste Hindus under the peculiar socio economic conditions of India. So did various reform enquiry committees and commissions, including the Simon Commission. Even some Hindu leaders, such as Provas Chandra Mitter, a big landlord from West Bengal admitted in 1924 that in the circumstances then prevailing in the country 'it is not practical politics' to abolish communal electorates, although he personally thought that 'it will be a good thing for India to get rid of it', quickly adding that he had, however, no right 'to force his views on the other community',[71] It will be of interest to know here that while Gandhi was firm on his demand for joint electorate at the second Round Table Conference in 1931, which he had attended as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress, he also demanded separate representation for the pro-Congress Muslims at the Conference. Obviously, Gandhi wanted to bring to the notice of the British Government and the British public of the existence of dissentient voices against the system of separate representation even within the Muslim community in furtherance of the Congress demand for joint electorate. But the claim for separate representation of pro-Congress Muslims was both contradictory and self-defeating.

In fact, there was a re-thinking amongst the Hindu leaders of Bengal if separate electorates were not also a blessing in disguise in some areas of the province. Differing regional interests had divided the

70. For the *bhadralok* reaction to the Poona Pact see the memorandum of Jitendralal Banerjee on behalf of the Bengal branch of the Varnashram Swarajya Sangha in Minutes of Evidence given before the *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform* (London, 1934), vol. 11, 1565-66 ; B. C. Chatterjee's memorandum in *ibid*, 1401 ; also see Jitendralal Banerjee's evidence, *ibid*, 1416.

71. P. C. Mitter's evidence before the Muddiman Committee. *East India (Constitutional Reform). Report of the Reform Enquiry Committee, 1924 appointed by the Government of India*, 1925, Cmd. 2360, 151

East and West Bengal Hindus on this issue : while those from the Hindu-majority West Bengal had nothing to fear from joint electorates and were 'favourably disposed to it,'[72] those in the Hindu-minority East Bengal were 'simply frightened of it'.[73] The 1919 Act had given the *bhadralok* forty-six Non-Muhammadan seats as against thirty-nine Muslim seats in a House of 140 ; besides these they were sure to capture II Special Constituency seats (e. g. University, Landholders and Indian Commerce). Thus separate electorates, which the *bhadralok* had deplored, paradoxically granted them an elective majority in the Bengal legislature. The weight of separate electorates on *bhadralok* success in conciliar elections was well-demonstrated by their simultaneous failure to hold their majority on district and local boards, particularly in the Muslim majority areas, elections to which were held on the basis of joint electorates, a system which they were pressing hard to be accepted for all elections.

It will be worthwhile to take a cursory glance at the local bodies election results in the 1920's and the 1930's to see how did the Hindus fare in these elections. Their local board majority in six of the fifteen districts of Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong divisions in 1023-24 had reduced to three districts in 1926-27 and to two in 1934-35.[74] The greatest electoral swing against Hindus and in favour of Muslims had occured in the Jessore district in the Presidency division where the latter forming about sixty six percent of the population had increased their share of local board seats from just over thirty-three percent in 1920-21 to sixty-four percent in 1928-29, and to about sixty-six percent, twice as much, in 1934-35.[75] The district board elections too repeated same pattern. Here the Hindu majority in 1923-24 in nine of the fifteen districts mentioned above had dwindled to five only in 1934-35.[76]

72. G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma. A Personal Memoir* (Bombay, 1958), 150.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Resolutions reviewing the Reports on Working of the District Boards in Bengal*, 1920-21 to 1934-35, Appendix G

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.* See also statistical tables in John Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline : Bengal, 1930-39', John Gallagher and others (eds.) *Locality, Province and Nation* (Cambridge, 1973), 282-83, 286

Evidently, joint electorates the principle of which the Congress Party had so passionately espoused, back-fired on the Hindus of Bengal. Many of them, particularly those from Eastern Bengal, where they formed only thirty-four percent of the population with no prospect of reversing these results in the future, even wondered aloud if their dogmatic adherence to joint electorate as a matter of principle was worth the high price they were paying in return. For instance, the results of the Chittagong Sadar Local Board election in 1927, in which Muslims had won all the elective seats with the same pattern recurring in many other districts of the Chittagong and the Dacca divisions,[77] had led the writer of the 'Political Notes' column of the *Statesman*, a Bengali Hindu, to question the wisdom of continuing with joint electorates in view of these alarmingly disappointing election results in local bodies. He had also warned the protagonists of joint electorates to heed these disastrous results before they pressed any further their demands for its introduction in conciliar elections.[78] There was, however, one consolation for the *bhadralok* that despite such debacles in the local bodies election they still held the control of many of these boards as internal dissensions of the Muslims and personality clash of their leaders prevented the Muslim members to take any real advantage of their majority. For instance, the Muslim members, holding twenty-two[79] of the thirty-three seats in

77. 'Political Notes', *Satesman*, 2 July, 1927. The results of local board elections in Bakerganj district in 1931 also showed the same trend of *bhadralok* electoral losses, *Statesman*, 11 September, 1931

Local Board	Total no. of seats	Elected members		Nominated members		Total Hindu members	% of Hindu members
		Hindu	Muslims	Hindu	Muslims		
Bakerganj Sadar	30	7	13	3	7	10	33.3
Perojepur	31	3	11	3	4	6	19.3
Patuakhali	18	1	11	3	3	4	22.2
Bhola	10	0	6	1	3	1	10.0

78. *Statesman*, 2 July, 1927.

79. This, in fact, was the total number of elective seats in the Mymensingh District Board ; the *bhadralok* had thus failed to capture a single elected seat. They were, however, compensated for as all the eleven nominted members were selected from the Hindu community. *Statesman*, 10 April, 1927 ; Gallagher, 284-85.

Mymensingh District Board in 1927, miserably failed to assert themselves in the administration of the board.[80] Again in 1930 the elected Muslim Chairman of the Mymensingh District Board, Khan Bahadur Mahammad Ismail, was replaced by an appointed Chairman, Khan Bahadur Sharfuddin, another Muslim, due to faction fights amongst the Muslim members of the Board, who held seventy-five percent of the seats. Between 1921 and 1935, the *bhadralok* had also kept the control of the Dacca District Board, although their majority of seventy-three percent on the board in 1922-23 had reduced to fifty-four percent in 1934-35[81].

The *bhadralok* had thus, no enchantment for the abstract theory of joint electorates if they did not provide them an adequate number of seats in the council as were necessary to hold their control. The claim of joint electorate was, in fact, a claim in defence of the political preponderance of the Hindu elite which was being increasingly challenged by the incipient Muslim middle class. The *bhadralok* opposition to the 'Communal Award' and the Poona Pact was inspired more by this Consideration than anything else. The rallying of a big section of the *bhadralok* behind the nationalist Congress Party, which was formed in 1934 with Hindu Mahasavaite preponderance primarily to fight the 'Communal Award, and the British Government White Paper giving an outline of the future constitution for India, was the result of faction fight in the Bengal Congress between the ramnants of the J. M. Sengupta faction and the Subhas Bose-faction, now led respectively by Dr. B. C. Roy and Sarat Chandra Bose, deputising for his younger brother, Subhas. In 1934 the candidates of the Nationalist Congress Party had routed all the official Congress Party candidates in Bengal in the elections to the Central legislature, the Congress Nationalists having made the 'Award' and the White Paper the only issue in the election. It was precisely the Subhas Bose-faction, then reknowned for anti-Gandhi and anti-Congress High Command pronouncements, who had rallied behind the Congress Nationalist Party in protest against the 'neither accept nor reject'[82] policy of the Indian National Congress with regard to the

80. Fortnightly Report on the internal political situation in India of the British Indian Provinces to the Government of India. Bengal Government's Report for the second half of March, 1927.

81. *Reports on the working of the District Boards in Bengal, 1920-21 to 1934-35*, Appendix G.

82. See *The Indian National Congress Resolutions 1934-5*, 19-20. This decision was made by the Congress in deference to the pro-Congress Muslims who badly needed a political elbow-room.

'Communal Award' and the White Paper. The other group in the Bengal Congress,[83] who had a definite pro-Gandhi leaning and the Bengal Gandhians themselves, however, followed the Congress mandate on these issues, although not happily.

The *bhadralok* in general, alarmed by the results of the district and local board election results in the 1920's and the 1930's when Eastern Bengal Muslims had greatly improved their position, started to ponder seriously as to what would have come about if the joint electorate scheme, as demanded by them, were to come into force. Their last hope of maintaining their precarious position now seemed to have rested in the retention of separate electorates ; the Caste Hindus from East Bengal now seemed to have lost their interest in joint electorates. Thus when in 1934 Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, and M. A. Jinnah, the Muslim League President, had reached a working formula[84] for the replacement of separate electorates by joint electorates by allowing the Muslims of Bengal and the Punjab to retain the franchise and the qouta of seats given to them under the 'Award', it was wrecked by the East Bengal Hindus[85]. The West Bengal Hindus, on the other hand, supported the consensus so reached between the Congress and the Muslim League chiefs.

VII

There was also a re-thinking about advantages and disadvantages of separate electorates in the articulate Muslim middle class. We have already noted the views of the pro Congress Muslims who discarded separate electorates as having turned the Muslims statutorily into a permanent minority. In fact neither the traditional nor the radical Muslims considered that separate electorates were the last and unalterable answer to the constitutional tangle in India. For instance, Abdullah Mamun Suhrawardy, who had become one of the staunch defenders of separate electorates, wrote in his *Supplementary Note* that "All thoughtful Muslims realise that the system of separate electorates is a means to an end, not an end in itself."

83. The anti-Award group, which was then in control of the Congress apparatus in Bengal had rejected the 'Award' by a large majority at the annual conference of the Provincial Congress at Dinajpur in April, 1935. See *Statesman*, 25 April, 1935; *Bengal Administration Report, 1934-35* (Govt. Press, Calcutta, 1936), XII

84. Gallagher, 312-13.

85. *Ibid*, 312-13.

Elsewhere in the same *Supplementary Note* he said, "Personally I was prepared to give up separate electorates after the life of three Councils provided that in order to create a sense of dependence of the majority community on Muslim votes and to develop a spirit of nationalism, Muslims were allowed to vote, but not to contest seats, in general electorates during the life of three reformed councils, at the end of which they would contest seats in the joint electorates, with reservation of seats in the following manner : "that the candidates shall be selected by a college of electorates consisting of past and present Muslim Members of the local legislature, and no candidate shall be declared duly elected unelss he secures a reasonable percentage of Muslim votes."[86]

Suhrawardy had also put forward an alternative proposal : Muslim seats were to be filled in a joint electorate but no candidate should be deemed elected unless he secured a majority of the Muslim votes polled, and not less than one-tenth of the total votes polled for him were recorded by Hindu voters.[87] Similarly no Hindu candidate should be declared to have been duly elected unless at least ten percent of the votes polled for him were recorded by Muslim voters.[88] This proposal was mooted at a meeting of the Indian Central Committee, which was to assist the Simon Commission in the latter's task in assessing the constitutional needs of India, but was turned down[89] by the Hindu members of the Committee. Even the conservative Shafi-League, while rejecting joint electorates as 'unacceptable to Indian Muslims'[90], did not close its door altogether. It resolved that 'the representation of Indian Muslims shall continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present, provided that it shall be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorates in favour of joint electorates'.[91] Khan Bahadur M. Azizul Huque, who had been a vocal Member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly in the 1920's and the 1930's and who had held important posts as a government minister, Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and as the Speaker of the Bengal Legislature, described controversy

86. Abdullah Mamun Suhrawardy, *Supplementary Note*, 40.
87. *Ibid.* 50-51.
88. *Ibid.*, 51.
89. *Ibid.*, 50.
90. Resolution passed at the Lahore session of the All-India Muslim League (Shafi-faction) in December, 1927. *Statesman*, I and 2 January, 1928
91. *Ibid.*

on electorates as 'only a passing phase of history'. He also added to it that 'every Mussalman fervently wishes for the day when it (separate electorates) could be abolished whilst leaving a sufficient margin of safety and security for all communities in Indian polity'[92]. He further told that "Let it not also be forgotten that even with differences of views about details of the future Indian constitution, every Mussalman realises that India is his Motherland, and he takes equal pride in the superb edifice of Indian history and culture, built as much with his own life blood as by sacrifice of any one else in this country."[93]

Azizul Huque had said all these in a 'forward' to his booklet, *A plea for Separate Electorates in Bengal.* These words were probably meant for his Hindu readers. He wanted to reassure Hindus that separate electorates were essential as a temporary measure for the safeguard of Muslim interests which in the event of their abolition would be in jeopardy. This point was presented better by Sir Abdul Kerim Ghuznabi in his memorandum to Simon Commission.[94] In it he described the Nehru report of 1928 as 'idealistic fantasy' and as 'an ill-organised attempt to perpetuate the domination of the major community (Hindus) over all other minor communities in India'[95]. Elaborating further, Ghuznavi said that 'the Hindu electors possesses an innate collective sense, and whatever may be his own individual opinion he follows the lead of the majority of the Hindu intelligentsia who are responsible for forcing majority Hindu opinion.'[96] On the other hand, the Muslims, educationally and economically backward, had no well-organised party ; nor was there a 'homogenous Muslim intelligentsia to control the masses of Muslim electors'.[97] So, Ghuznavi claimed not only the retention of separate electorates but also higher franchise qualifications and managable electorates.[98] Similar demands were also made by the Central National Mahommedan

92. M. Azizul Huque, *A Plea for Separate Electorates in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1931). See Forward to this work.
93. *Ibid*, iii.
94. See Memorandum by A. K. Ghuznavi, *Indian Statutory Commission, vol. XVI, Part II. Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-officials* (H. M. S. O., London, 1930).
95. *Ibid.*, 181.
96. *Ibid.*, 187.
97. *Ibid.*, 187.
98. *Ibid.*, 188.

Associatiation,[99] Calcutta, and by its branches and the Mofussil Anjuman-i-Islam, Eastern Bengal.[100]

Ghuznavi's memorandum is an unique example to show how communal and classs interests cut across each other : while the demand for the retention for separate electorates was in accord with the wishes of the Bengali Muslims in general, the claim for restricted franchise was not, the latter rather echoed the *bhadralok* cry for higher property qualification for franchise, urban weightage and responsible and managable electorates. The controversy on the electorate question, to a large extent, represented a struggle for influence and power between interest groups divided along communal lines ; it was a struggle between the incumbent Hindu elite, which was not prepared to part with any of its power and influence, and the new Muslim elite that was struggling hard to secure as many constitutional safeguards as possible to acquire power and influence. Azizul Huq, as we have noted above, said that there was nothing anti-national in asking for security and safeguards that were justly due to them. Fazlul Huq expressed similar sentiments at the Round Table Conference when answering to the Hindu allegation that separarate electorates ran counter to nationalism Huq said that 'if it was a sincere cry for nationalism alone' then the Muslims would be the very last persons to ask for any protection.[101] Huq then explained ; 'we know that once you have lured us into your parlour, all sense of nationalism will be gone'.[102] The suggestion that separate electorate were anti-national was, of course, a political gimmic. The Muslim desire for self-government was 'as passionate as that of the Hindu'[103]. Where the two differed was the Muslims wanted that their freedom must be 'freedom as much from the Hindus as from the British'[104] whereas the Congress, which in consequence of a see-saw of attraction and repulsion had become predomi-

99. *Ibid.*, 50-52.

100. *Ibid.*, 54-56.

101. *Indian Round Table Conference 12th November, 1930-19th January, 1931 (Sub-Committees Report, Conference Resolutions and Prime Minister's Statement)*, 1931, Cmd. 3772, 117.

102. Fazlul Huq at the first Round Table Conference. See *Indian Round Table Conference. Sub-Committees Reports, Conference Resolutions and Prime Minister's Statement*, 1931, Cmd. 3772, 117.

103. Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1947* (Oxford, 1965), 374.

104. *Ibid.*, 374.

nantly a Hindu organisation, insisted that the British should hand over power to it and that communal differences would diminish once India won her independence. But experiences under the 1919 Act convinced the competing Muslim leadership that the British must provide for enough safeguards for the Indian Muslims before they transferred any more power to the Indian hands. The Muslims thus insisted that for an orderly transition of Power from the British to the Indian hand, it was essential that they were given separate electorates and that the future constitutional concessions were directed towords creating an Indian federation with a weak centre and fully autonomous provinces [105].

There were, however, some amongst the Muslim leaders in Bengal, who, assured by the local and district Board results in the 1920's and the 1930's as noted above, were not much reluctant to come to an understanding with reasonable Hindu leaders on the question of electorate, if need be, even by abandoning separate electorates and by accepting joint electorates with reservation of seats. There were, on the other hand, other Muslim leaders like Khan Bahadur Azizul Huque who would not accept these results as a fair index of security and strength of the Muslim community under a joint electorate system [106]. Huque was, However, contesting this conclusion in another context, namely against the Nehru Report which had summarily rejected the Muslim claim for separate electorates pointing out to these very election results, and concluding on the basis of these evidences that the Bengali Muslim 'need no protection from all the Non-Muslims put together', for, they 'certainly have nothing to fear'[107] from the Hindu community in these elections. Huque argued the results of these elections were largely influenced by the bitter communal dissensions that preceded the local bodies in 1926 and by

105. See Sir Abdur Rahim's election manifesto, *Statesman*, 7 September, 1926 ; *Indian Quarterly Report*, 1926, 1., 65-67 ; *ibid*, 1926, 11., 95-98 ; Resolutions passed at Bengal Muslim Conference, Calcutta, *Satesman*, 10 August, 1931 ; *Report of the All-India Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31 December, 1928 and Ist January, 1929* ; Jinnah's Fourteen Points in Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-47*, 244-47 ; Memorandum submitted by the All-India Muslim League to the Simon Commission, *Indian Statutory Commission, vol. XVI, part* I. *Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non Officials* (London, 1930) ; Muslim Leagues's memorandum to the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1932-34.

106. M. Azizul Huque, *A Plea for Separate Electorates* in *Bengal*, 10-11.

107. *Report of the Constititional Committee.*

the state of communal excitement followed by communal riots in 1926, and by continued communal bickerings on the issue of constitutional concessions in the late 1920's and the early 1930's. On the other hand only issues of local interests dominated these elections, provincial political organizations taking little or no interest in them; big political leaders and the *Bhadralok* did not evince as much interest in these eltions as they did in the council elections. So the local bodies' electionsec, Huque argued cogently, were not comparable with council elections in respect of strength of communal parties in legislative politics which had a direct relevance to national politics affecting communal interests. In the conciliar elections party machineries and the press played an important role, and the results of these elections in many cases were dependent on the length of the purse and rent roll in none of which the Muslim candidates could compete with the Hindu.[108]

Huque further argued that the recommendation for joint electorates in the Nehru Report was contingent upon the introduction of adult franchise which was not within the range of the practical politics in India, and even if it was obtainable no franchise qualification could produce an electoral roll proportion to their population in Bengal. Even under the franchise qualifications under the 1919 Act, which was fixed at payment of municipal taxes of not less than one rupee and a half, or, Road and Public Works cess of not less than one rupee, or, Chawkidari tax or Union rate of not less than two rupees or one rupee in cess, there were 591 thousand Hindu voters in a Hindu population of twenty million (i.e. roughly 3% of the population in the province) whereas Muslim voters in a population of twenty-five million numbered only 522 thousand (i.e, 2%)[109]

Another criticism made by M. Azizul Huque against the Nehru Report on its recommendation that Muslims needed no electoral protection against Non-Muslims in Bengal was that this conclusion was made on the basis of district board election results in three districts only, viz that in Mymensingh where Muslims forming 75.7% of the population secured 75% of the seats in the district board in 1927-28, in Chittagong where they, forming about 67% of the population captured about 73% of the district board seats in the

108. *A plea for Separate Electorates in Bengal,* 10-14.

109. Under the 1935 Act there were 3.8 million Hindu voters and 3.45 million Muslim voters.

same year, and in Jessore where Muslims forming about 62% of the population won 38.2% of the seats. But contrasted to these results in three isolated samples, Nadia district with over 60.2% of Muslim population could claim only 25% of the district board seats in 1927-28 ; Dacca district with over 65% of Muslim population obtained only 27% of seats in the same year, and on the Tippera District Board Muslims had a share of 31.6% seats in 1927-28, although they had then formed 74% of the population of the district. Huque complained that the Nehru Report had purposely over simplified and misrepresented these results only to score the point that the Bengali Muslims did not need any constitutional protection by means of communal representation ; this assertion, he said, became untenable if the results of all the district board elections were taken together.[110] These were, doubtless, cogent arguments in the defence of communal interests but considering these results stretched over a period of over ten years, say from 1921-22 to 1934-35, there was certainly the trend of an electoral swing in favour of the Muslims, particularly in the districts where they were a majority.

VIII

So, another small group of Muslim leaders, as already mentioned, made overtures to amenable Hindu leaders for a settlement of the controversial electorate question. Thus Abdul Halim Ghuznavi,[111]

110. *A Plea for Separate Elcetorates in Bengal*, 6-11.

111. Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, younger brother of Abdul Kerim Ghuznavi, unlike his brother was a Congressite in his early life, and he had added his voice to the Congress-led *bhadralok* agitation against the partition of Bengal, 1905-1911. Later on the eve of Indian independence in 1947 he again dissented the scheme of partition of Bengal and joined the Greater Bengal movement of which Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, an elder brother of Subhas Bose and a renowned Calcutta lawyer, also took a prominent part. With his large business interest in Calcutta, he was naturally opposed to the partition of Bengal which, with Calcutta falling in the other part of Bengal, would have cut him off from his ancestral zamindari in Tangail in East Bengal. He was an M. L. A. for a good number of years. He had represented the Bengali Muslims on the Round Table Conferences and was a member of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform in which capacity he had given a gallant defence for constitutional safeguards for the Indian Muslims, including the retention of separate electorates.

young Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy[112] and few other Bengali Muslim leaders had worked out a plan with B. C. Chatterjee, a Hindu leader, to try out an experiment with joint electorates in Bengal. The Ghuznavi-Chatterjee Pact, as it came to be called, had provided for an uninterrupted continuance of the 'Communal Award' with the allotment of seats under it remaining unaltered for a period of ten years after which the two communities would share equally the council seats earmarked for Indians under a joint electorates system.[113] This principle of 'fifty-fifty', it was further agreed, would also apply to the appointment of government ministers

112. H. S. Suhrawardy (1893-1963) came of an enlightened Muslim family of Midnapur district, which claimed Persian origin. His father, Sir Z. R. Suhrawardy was an England-educated lawyer of distinction at the Calcutta High Court Bar; in 1921 he was elevated to the High Court Bench later to become the Chief Justice of Bengal. (Two of Sir Zahid's cousins, Mamun Suhrawardy and Hassan Suhrawardy, were also educated in England, the former having settle, on return to Calcutta as a lawyer, and the latter as an officer in the Army Medical Corps, who later became the first Muslim Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. The two brothers, like their Cousin, Zahid, were eventually knighted. In 1921 all the four Suhrawardies became M. L. C. 's).

An Oxford graduate in Economics and in Civil Law, H. S. Suhrawardy was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn. On his return from England in 1921, he started law practice at the Calcutta High Court, in the same year he made his political *debut* as a member of the Bengal legislature, holding his seat in the council without a break till 1947. From 1937 to 1943 he was a government minister, taking over the office of Prime Minister of Bengal in 1945. From 1937 to 1945 he had also held the office of the secretary of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League. He, however, fell foul with the party when on the eve of Indian independence he quarrelled with the League High Command over the future of Bengal -both the Congress and the League consented to a scheme of partition of Bengal, which ultimately prevail, but Suhrawardy along with some other Muslim and Hindu leaders opposed in unsuccessfully in favour of an independent Bengal province. Consequently, the League made him a *persona non grata* in Pakistan. Suhrawardy later took a revange on the League by organising the first opposition party, the Awami Muslim League (later re-christened as Awami League), and by completely routing the Muslim League in East Pakistan in the first ever held election in Pakistan in 1954 by an Awami League-Krishak Shramik party electoral alliance under the name of the United Front. The same year he was made a central government minister in charge of Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department; in 1956 he became the Prime Minister of Pakistan under the first constitution of the country declaring Pakistan to be an Islamic Republic. His tenure of office of the Prime Minister was, however very brief, lasting just over a year.

113. See A. H. Ghuznavi's long press statement in *Star of India*, 19 December 1933.

as also in the field of employment.[114] This exercise, however, proved futile, like other agreements on communal *rapprochement* in the past, as Chatterjee, under pressure from militant and reactionary Hindu leaders had backed out of it, although some very important leaders of both communities had earlier vetted the agreement. These leaders included Sir K. G. M. Faroqui[115] and Khan Bahadur Azizul Huque,[116] the two Muslim ministers of the Bengal Government, Khan Bahadur Abdul Momin,[117] Fazlul Huq, H. S. Suhrawardy, Abul Kasem and Abdullah Mamun Suhrawardy, all of whom at one time or the other defended separate electorates as 'a sheet anchor of their (the Muslims') political security'[118], of them Faroqui, Azizul Huque and Momin may be said to have represented the

114. *Ibid.*

115. Kazi Golam Mohiuddin Faroqui (1891) came from a zamindar family of the Tippera district. He married the eldest daughter of Sir A. K. Ghuznavi who was also a maternal uncle to Faroqui. Faroqui was a minister in the same government in which A. K. Ghuznavi was a an Executive Councillor ; another of Ghuznavi's sons-in-law, Rezaur Rahman Khan was at the same time the Vice-President of the Bengal Legislative Council. Faroqui first entered the provincial legislature in 1921 ; he was returned to the council by his constituency again in 1926 and 1929. In 1936 he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly as an independent candidate ; after that he became more interested in commerce and industry and gradually left politics. After independence he stayed back in Calcutta, He received the title of Nawab in 1932 and knighthood in 1939.

116. Khan Bahadur Azizul Huque (1890-1947) came of a middle range mercantile family of shawl-makers of the Nadia district. A Presidency College graduate with an additional Law degree to his credit, he began his life as a lawyer at the subdivisional law court of Krishnanagar soon to become a Government pleader. He entered the Bengal Legislative Council as a member in 1926, retaining his seat in the legislature for the rest of the lie of the 1919 Act and becoming a government minister in 1934. On his election to the Bengal Legislative Assembly as an independent candidate under the 1935 Act, he joined the Muslim League to become the speaker of the House. From 1938 to 1942 he was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. He was knighted in 1937 and awarded a C. I. E. in 1942.

117. Khan Bahadur Abdul Momin. C. I. E. came from Burdwan and was the son of Nawab Abdul Jabbar who had served as the Prime Minister of Bhopal from 1897 to 1902. The Nawab was also actively connected with the establishment of the Muhammedan Literary Society in Calcutta in 1863 and was elected to the first committee of the Society, the oldest provincial organization in Bengal. Momin began his career as a member of the Provincial Executive Service, and after holding several high post in service such as that of Director of Land Revenue and Under Secretary, Revenue Department, he finally retired from service as a Divisional Commissioner in 1931 when he joined politics.

118. *A plea for Separate Electorates in Bengal*, 8.

socially conservative segment of the Bengali Muslim polity. Judged from this point their willingness to accept joint electorates signified a remarkable change of their heart in politics. Important among the Hindu leaders who were a party to this political settlement, besides B. C. Chatterjee, were Sir B. P. Singh-Roy, a government minister from West Bengal, and Dr. Naresh Chandra Sengupta, an M. L. C. The negotiations leading to the 'Ghuznavi-Chatterjee' agreement, which were carried on behind the scene, and the agreement, itself took place in London where they had gone either to sit on the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms as members or to give evidence before it. It is still more significant to note that "the terms (of the agreement) were placed before a meeting of the Muslim delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee in London at which Mr. Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sir Abdur Rahim were Present. After some discussion His Highness the Right Honourable The Aga Khan advised me and Mr. (Shaheed) Suhrawardy to accept the terms and thus put an end to the communal trouble. This advice was accepted by us. Unfortunately, however, the Hindu leaders later backed out of the agreement. So the proposal fell through."[119]

This is what A.H. Ghuznavi had written in December, 1936 to Sir Bejoy Chand Mahtab, the Maharaja of Burdwan still hopeful of reaching an agreement with the Hindu leaders on the lines of the abortive 1933 agreement. Meanwhile Ghuznavi and Burdwan had already broken the deadlock by opening fresh talks on the subject ; the two had also consulted other leaders of the respective community for a consensus on the subject, Ghuznavi had thus received the green signal from 'most of the All-India Muslim leaders' including the Aga Khan to go ahead with the mission, although many of the

119. A. H. Ghuznavi to the Maharaja of Burdwan, 17 December, 1936 in Private Office Papers (L/PO/40), India Office Records, London. These talks began in August, 1936. The ice was probably broken by Burdwan when all the efforts of the Bengali Caste Hindus to get the 'Communal Award' rescinded proved fruitless. The Maharaja himself had spearheaded the movement against the Award as the President of the Bengal Anti-Communal Award Committee. The Caste Hindu hope of getting the 'Award' revoked had vanished when a memorandum to Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, who was openly in sympathy with the Caste Hindus of Bengal on this issue as a last resort for their redress was rejected in July, 1936. See Zetland to Burdwan, 17 June, 1936 ; Zetland to Linlithgow (private), 22 June, 1936 ; Zetland to Anderson (Governor of Bengal), 22 June, 1936. Ibid.

Muslim politicians then contesting elections to the Bengal Legislative Assembly would not commit themselves openly 'however sympathetic they may be in this connection'. Without waiting for the provincial elections to be over, Ghuznavi wrote to Burdwan on 17 December, 1936 informing the latter that he had been authorised by the Aga Khan and other all-India Muslim leaders to go ahead with talks for a communal settlement, particularly on the question of 'Communal Award.'[120] Ghuznavi had also mentioned in his letter a slightly modified version of the futile Ghuznavi-Chatterjee agreement, as demanded by the Hindu leaders, for a new Hindu-Muslim agreement in Bengal. This modified draft added a new clause to the provision governing the time scale of ten years for the abolition of separate electorates and the 'Communal Award' under the Ghuznavi-Chatterjee agreement to the effect that the 'Award' could go even earlier than that, in the event of a mutual agreement between the two communities on the subject.[121] Ghuznavi, however, made it clear in his letter to Burdwan that the final ratification of a settlement by the Muslim leaders on the lines suggested in the letter was contingent upon cession of all anti-Communal Award agitations by the Hindus immediately after reaching a communal accord'.[122]

The Caste Hindus of Bengal, having meanwhile exhausted all avenues unsuccessfully for redress, readily stretched their hands to the olive branch held out once again to them by the Bengali Muslim leaders. Burdwan, as President of the Bengal Anti-Communal Award Committee, summoned his committee to session to consider Ghuznavi's proposals the same evening the letter was written.[123] The Committee had 'unanimously accepted the proposals as the basis of a complete Hindu-Muslim settlement in Bengal in near future.[124] Burdwan hastened to send a reply to Ghuznavi's letter the very next day[125] with the good news of the Hindu acquiescence in the latter's proposals for a communal accord, particularly on the issues concerning electorates and representation. But a few Hindu leaders like

120. Ghuznavi to Burdwan, 17 December, 1936 in L/PO/40.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*

123. i. e. on 17 December, 1936.

124. Burdwan to Ghuznavi, 18 December, 1936, L/PO/40.

125. *Ibid.*

Bidhan Chandra Roy[126] and Sarat Chandra Bose,[127] after the recent hecklings they had suffered in the hands of the Congress Nationalist party supporters during the Indian Legislative Assembly elections in Bengal in 1934 for their ambivalent attitude to the 'Communal Award', were now twice[128] shy to associate themselves publicly with a new move of communal settlement in which there was no immediate hope of getting the 'Award' revoked ; these two leaders were, however, hopeful that Ghuznavi proposals when presented to the public would greatly ease the communal tension while they would sit on the wings to see which way the wind blew before they had committed themselves either way.

Neither the Bengal Government nor the India Government nor even British Government was favourably disposed to the Ghuznavi-Burdwan Pact. The Governor of Bengal, John Anderson, telegraphed the Secretary of State for India that the reaction to the pact was as a whole unfavourable in Bengal : many Hindus looked at it

126. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882-1962), Brahmo, an M. R. C. P. and F. R. C. S. from Great Britain, joined politics while still teaching at the Carmichael Medical College by defeating Surendranath Banerjea in the provincial council elections in 1923. A big name in Calcutta politics since the death of C. R. Das, he held various important posts in the Congress hierarchy both in the provincial and all-India levels. He held the office of the Mayor of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation in 1931 and 1932. In 1934 he became the President of the Bengal Congress ; from 1942 to 1944 he was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. Early in 1948 he became the Chief Minister of West Bengal replacing P. C. Ghose ; he held this office till his death in 1962.

127. Sarat Chandra Bose (1889-1950), a renowned Calcutta lawyer, joined active politics under the leadership of C. R. Das. He represented the Calcutta University constituency in the provincial legislature from 1926 to 1929 when the Congress members withdrew from the council in pursuance of an A. I. C. C. directive. He became the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in Bengal under the 1935 Act. He was a member of the interim Indian Government formed in 1946, although he soon resigned office.

128. Burdwan to Ghuznavi, 18 December, 1936, L/PO/40.

'as mere distribution of offices and ministership'[129] while many Muslims were offended that the Pact would mean 'surrender of better opportunities' by the Muslims to the Hindus. Zetland had, on the other hand, said that "Ghuznavi and Burdwan were taking a good deal for granted since the appointment of Ministers is a prerogative of the Governor who may object to having his hands tied by an agreement to which, so far as I know, he is not a party."[130] This explains the British attitude. So bitter was Anderson, the Governor of Bengal, about the exclusion of British element from the talks leading to a communal understanding affecting the constitutional arrangements under the 1935 Act that he advised the Viceroy strongly against seeing Ghuznavi when the latter had sought an interview with the Viceroy to explain personally to him the understanding that took Place between Ghuznavi and Burdwan ; the Viceroy heeded to the advice of the Governor.

The Bengali Hindus had missed another opportunity for communal cooperation in politics when Sarat Chandra Bose, leader of the Congress Parliamentary party had, in pursuance of an A. I. C. C. mandate, refused to join Fazlul Huq to form a Proja-Congress parties coalition ministry in Bengal in 1937. A communal settlement on controversial political issues having remained unaccomplished in the 1930's when the chances for it was bright, it became a far cry in the 1940's when communal separatism thrived more vigorously than ever before and became patent.

129. Governor of Bengal to Secretary of State for India. Telegram (Private and Personal), dated 17 January, 1937. *Ibid.*

130. Zetland (Secretary of State for India) to Linlithgow (Viceroy), dated 18 January, 1937, *ibid.*

It needs to be told before we conclude that it is wrong to generalise that the Muslim community as a whole had always in favour of separate electorates, and that the Hindu community had consistently without any exception demanded joint electorates. There is nothing to doubt about the patriotism and nationalism of the proponents and supporters of separate electorates in as much as there was nothing special about patriotism and nationalism in the support for joint electorates. The Muslim demand for separate electorates was born of suspicion and distrust of the Congress' demand to be the sole representative political organisation of India and that the British should hand over power to it alone. The controversies on the electorate issue, for that matter all other political and constitutional issues, were largely fed up by the peculiar socio-economic conditions of India affecting the two major communities differently and by the differing demographical patterns in different provinces. For instance, at the all-India level the Muslims were a minority and their claim to special safeguards were acceptable on the principle of protection of minorities. But in Bengal, the Muslims were a majority, although just slightly, so, it was argued, were not entitled to special protection. It, in turn, led to local and regional settlement, creating further anomalies.

The attempts to reach an agreement on the question of electorate between the two communities and other attempts directed towards reaching a communal understanding failed mainly because they were mooted only at the highest elitist political levels ; such thoughts and attempts scarcely filtered down to the ordinary social levels. A communal *rapproachement*, when one was actually reached, was always based on a narrow and fragile urban political base and often it failed to sustain itself by other than external political stimuli. Starting from the Lucknow Pact of 1916 to Fazlul Huq's offer for a Proja and Congress party coalition ministry in Bengal in 1937, including the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation movement and C. R. Das' Bengal Pact,—all were short term political alliances amongst big wing

of the two communities, and they served more the class and group interests both within and across the two communities than interests of the two communities at large. In plain words, attempts at reaching an enduring communal concordat failed because of its purely political direction without any societal orientation.

Cultural Identity of Former East Pakistan and Conflicting State Policies

Golam Morshed

Pakistan was created on the basis of the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims of India. Mr. Jinnah's famous two-nation theory which justified the distinct and separate identity of the Muslims of India and Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947. But Pakistan lost the Eastern wing even before her twenty-fifth year of existence was completed. This raises the question—what was so significant that the Muslims of India who once had opted for a separate homeland comprising the areas where they were in the majority could not live together ?[1]

Richard Weekes described Pakistan as a 'double country'.[2] The peculiar geographical situation of Pakistan would leave no room for doubt of such statement. Pakistan was a unique country comprised of two wings—East and West Pakistan—separated by more than a thousand miles of foreign territory (India). Mr. Jinnah

1. "Unlike in the fifties, Pakistan's external policy in the sixties evoked popular support and the government found the policy useful as a rallying point to promote national consensus or integration. Then why did the country fall apart ? How could a majority (i. e., the Bengalis) try to 'secede' from a minority (i. e., the West Pakistanis) ? The answer would be found mainly in the nature and organisation of the State, the structure of the government and the policies the ruling elites pursued since independence. The break-up of Pakistan was the culmination of a political process that had begun to unroll since 1947". Azizul Haque, *Pakistan's Ideology and Defence Policy —Rise of Bengali Nationalism*, an unpublished article read at the Annual Conference of Bangladesh Political Science Association, 20-22 December, 1974.

2. Richard V. Weekes, *Pakistan : Birth and Growth of a Muslim Nation* (Princeton : Van Nostrand Co., 1964), P. 3.

wanted to dispel doubt as to the notion of peculiar geographical existence of Pakistan by saying :

> West Pakistan is separated from East Pakistan by about a thousand miles of the territory of India. The first question a student from abroad should ask himself is—how can this be ? How can there be unity of government between areas so widely separated ? I can answer this question in one word. It is faith; faith in Almighty god, in ourselves and in our destiny.[3]

Religion was then supposed to be the integrating force among different regions of the country. But the fact was that inspite of 80·4% and 97·2% of the total population being Muslims in East and West Pakistan, respectively, religion alone could not maintain the unity. The other factors—political, economic, linguistic and cultural—failed to achieve the desired goal in the relations of the West and East Pakistan. Even the top most persons of the governmental machinery in East Pakistan did not hesitate to make statements, such as, "it would be unfair to expect that our spiritual bond through Islam will be so strong . . . .that we shall forget all our economic disparities and will still remain united and unified as a nation".[4]

In fact, the policies pursued by the ruling elites in Pakistan were highly counter-productive in East Pakistan.

> The result is that East Pakistan accuses that the centre is treating it as a colony of the western wing and the centre counter-charges that the East Pakistani demands are calculated to lead to disruption and secession. This is the great malaise of the Pakistani political system. Faced with such a situation, one naturally asks : what about the future ? Basically, East Pakistan's strength stems from its distinct identity, seen in the history of its land, people, culture, and its psyche.[5]

This distinct identity of the East Pakistanis was significantly due to her language and culture. East Pakistan having the majority of the population (56·1%) of united Pakistan (1947-71) inhabitated by the Bengalis was virtually unilingual (98·42% speak in Bengali). This linguistic homogeneity of the Eastern wing as against diverse groups—Punjabis, Pathans, Sindhis, Baluchis and migrants from the various parts of India—of West Pakistan had placed her to a

3. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor General* (Karachi : Pakistan Publications, 1963), P. 58.

4. Finance Minister, East Pakistan, *Morning News*, July 1, 1965. Also quoted in K. B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), P. 188.

5. D. N. Baneriee, *East Pakistan—A Case-Study in Muslim Politics* (Delhi: Vikas Publication, 1969), P. 174.

position of distinct identity and definite advantage. But the linguistic differences in West Pakistan was not considered a problem for national identity as Urdu, which became one of the national languages in Pakistan, was to link these various groups. Urdu has the similarity of script with other West Pakistani languages. Moreover, Urdu was considered as the language of the freedom movement of the Pakistanis. Soon after independence Urdu was decided to be the lingua franca and also to serve as the state language along with English.[6] "From the point of view of the elite the decision was a natural and logical one. Urdu, a language which has borrowed heavily from Persian, was used by the Mughal court during the last years of power. For a revival of that tradition, Urdu seemed the ideal instrument. Consultation with Bengali leaders, representing the infinitely small elite of East Pakistan who had managed somehow to continue the use of Urdu or at least a respect for it, resulted in agreement and the basis for what appeared to be a truly national policy".[7] But this had been resented by the East Pakistanis right from 1948 when the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan passed its Rules of Procedures and included Urdu besides English as the languages meant for Assembly proceedings and deliberations. Although this movement was initially confined to a small group of politicians this was soon taken up by the student community and gained support of others. This was considered by the West Pakistani rulers as an act of subversion and Mr. Jinnah in a speech at the Dacca University Convocation of March 24, 1948 said:

> Is it not significant that the very persons who in the past have betrayed the Musalmans or fought against Pakistan, which is after all merely the embodiment of your fundamental right of self-determination, should now suddenly pose as the saviours of your 'just rights' and incite you to defy the government on the question of language ? I must warn you to beware of these fifth Columnists. Let me restate my views on the question of a State language for Pakistan .... There can, however, be only one lingua franca, that is, the language for inter-communication between the various provinces of the State, and that language should be Urdu and cannot be any other. The State language, therefore, must obviously be Urdu, a language that has been nurtured by a hundred million Muslim of this sub-continent, a language understood throughout the length and breadth of Pakistan and above all, a language which, more than

6. Liaquat Ali Khan, The prime Minister of Pakistan, *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, February 25, 1948.

7. Stanley Maron, ed., *Pakistan : Society and Culture* (New Haven, Conn. : Human Relations Area Files, 1957), pp. 6-7

any other provincial language, embodies the best that is in Islamic culture and Muslim tradition and is nearest to the language used in other Islamic countries.[8]

Mr. Jinnah's stand on the language issue was the characteristic view-point of the ruling authorities in Pakistan and was to continue such. The situation further deteriorated in East Pakistan when the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin, publicly declared in January, 1952 that Urdu was to be the only state language of Pakistan. East Pakistani protests resulting in deaths of a few persons including students stirred up the first Bengali feeling against the rulers of Pakistan. In fact, centering this language issue the movement of East Bengal's demand for Provincial Autonomy grew and gained momentum. However, the demand for due recognition of Bengali along with Urdu as one of the state languages was accepted in May, 1954 by way of an amendment to the Basic Principles Committee Report by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and finally in the two Constitutions of 1956 and 1962. But the language issue which had roused and united the Bengalis now consolidated the Bengali counter-elite (also known as the Vernacular elite) and soon dislodged the national elite (the Muslim League) in 1954 East Bengal Provincial Election. In fact, during the first year of Pakistan's existence Mr. Jinnah quite apprehensive of the danger had said in his farewell message to East Pakistan on March 28, 1948 :-- "This language controversy is really one aspect of a bigger problem —that of provincialism. I am sure you must realize that in a newly-formed State like Pakistan consisting moreover as it does of two widely separated parts, cohesion and solidarity amongst all its citizens, from whatever part they may come, is essential for its progress, nay for its very survival. Pakisitan is the embodiment of the unity of the Muslim nation and so it must remain. That unity we, as true muslims, must jealously guard and preserve. If we begin to think of ourselves as Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, etc., first and Muslims and Pakistanis only incidentally, then Pakistan is bound to disintegrate. Do not think that this is some abstruse proposition : our enemies are fully alive to its possibilities which I must warn you they are already busy exploiting."[9] This so-called Indian subversion and sensing of Hindu influence in East Pakistan continued to plague the Pakistani political system.

8. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor-General*, P. 90.

9. *Ibid.*, P. 104.

The rise of Bengali nationalism on the basis of the language issue was perhaps a very significant turning-point in the political development of Pakistan. The Bengali language and literature were considered by the Pakistani rulers to be heavily indebted to Hindu influences. Not only it was more Sanskrit in origin but also the product of Hindu thinking. "Many persons in West Pakistan considered literary Bengali as a residue of Hindu culture, forgetting that some Muslim rulers, like Nushrat Shah who reigned during 1519-32, were great patrons of the Bengali language even though the persian was then the court language."[10] The Muslim contributions to its development could not be ignored by any. During the nineteenth century contributions of the Hindu writers and the influence of European liberal thinking were remarkable. And the trend in Bengali literature during the present century was more secular and humanistic in nature. The Government policy in respect of Bengali language and literature was time and again reflected in speeches by the Governor of East Pakistan, and central and provincial Ministers. Mr. Abdul Monem Khan, East Pakistan Governor, said at the Bengali Academy on Sunday, December 5, 1965 that "the Indian invasion of Pakistan has proved that we can no longer tolerate any infiltration of alien culture either in text books or in works of literature. If need be we shall have to revise the syllabi of our universities to free ourselves from alien influence."[11] The reference was to eliminate the writers in Bengali literature including those of the nineteenth century. In another occasion in August, 1967 the Governor "referred to a section of young writers who, he said, were avoiding the use of words based on our tradition and culture and are Sanskritised."[12] Another Central Minister, Mr. Khan A. Sabur also strongly criticised the role of the intellectuals in East Pakistan as 'evil design' in propagation of alien culture under 'foreign encouragement' 'detrimental to Pakistani nationalism.' His invective against them was —'handful of fifth-columnists'.[13] On another occasion Mr. Sabur said--"these people are out to observe Rabindra Nath Tagore's birth and death anniversary who contributed nothing for creation of Muslim Nationalism." He said that some people "were preaching the gospel of sovereign Bengal or greater Bengal and Bengali nationalism

10. D. N. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, P. 175
11. Abdul Monem khan, Governor of East Pakistan, *The Pakistan Observer*, Dacca, December 6, 1965.
12. *The Pakistan Observer*, Dacca, August 21, 1967.
13. *The Pakistan Observer*, Dacca, August 14, 1967.

having encouragement of India behind them."[14] while the Government policy was to Islamise Bengali language and literature and arbitrary ban on literature from the neighbouring West Bengal (Indian province) and denunciation of the Hindu writers including Rabindra Nath Tagore—the famous Noble-Laureate from Bengal, the intelligentsia became aggrieved, vocal, organised and alienated. In fact, the government vainly had tried to justify the ban on Tagore's songs on the plea that they were against "the tradition and culture of Pakistan."[15] The observance of the birth and death anniversaries of Tagore in elaborate fashion in defiance of the avowed government policy was a show of this feeling throughout East Pakistan. The government founded Bengali Academy Director, Syed Ali Ahsan said on the one hundred fifth birth anniversary of Tagore in 1966—"that a poet should not be judged by any consideration of religion or nationality. Bengali language without Tagore was virtually a misnomer and the poet would be remembered as long as the Bengali language survived. Tagore's poetry by virtue of his love of humanity would be read through ages."[16] In fact, a series of protests echoed by the intelligentsia against the move to eliminate Tagore from Bengali language and literature in East Pakistan did not only erode the Pakistani identity but also further consolidated the Bengali nationalism. The Bengalis love of their language and literature was so deep that in 1967 condemning the ban on Tagore intellectuals did not hesitate to express the ideas—"we the people of East Pakistan have our own culture and we must preserve its identity"[17] The Pakistan Observer, an East Pakistan Eaglish daily in its editorial attacking the ban on Tagore and justifying secular trend in his writings wrote that "Tagore expressed his devotion to universality and humanity. He wrote in Bengal ; he drew his inspiration from the soil more of East Pakistan than of West Bengal."[18] But this secular trend was considered against the ideology of Pakistan. Pakistan was to be an ideological state based on Islamic purity and the imposition of Urdu would serve both the purposes of the lingua franca and Muslim unity in Pakistan. Even in late sixties the move was again made to reopen the language issue in favour of Urdu as the only official language in Pakistan.

14. Khan A. Sabur, *The Pakistan Observer*, August 19, 1967.
15. Khwaja Shabuddin, *Dawn*, July 5, 1967.
16. Syed Ali Ahsan, *The Pakistan Observevr*, May 17, 1966.
17. M. A. Bary, Retired Chairman of East Pakistan Public Service Commission, *The Pakistan Observer*, July, 3, 1967.
18. *The Pakistan Observer*, editorial, June 29, 1967.

And the move came from President Muhammad Ayub Khan in October, 1968.[19] There was also suggestion from Mr. Justice Hamoodur Rahman, Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, for the adoption of Arabic script for both the national languages of Pakistan in strengthening the national integration.[20] This was highly resented throughout East Pakistan by the intellectual community. The leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, Mr. Nurul Amin had opposed the concept of lingua franca—as "an attempt to create a new language in the name of lingua franca in Urdu or Arabic script would only help the separatist move and will amount to separate the people of East Pakistan."[21] He also decried the statement of the President of Pakistan on the issue of regional cultures—"it was distortion of truth that there was no existence of regional culture in the country. On the other hand, he continued, regional culture was very much in existence and it was not against the Islamic principles and one nationality."[22] The resentment was so high that a section of the Intelligentsia suggested to accept Bengali as the sole state language as it was the language of the majority of the population of Pakistan.[23] The effect of the government policy on the cultural front was thus totally counter-productive in East Pakistan.

While the Bengalis' love for their culture and language was high and was also the basis of the Hindu-Muslim relation in the post-partition years in East Bengal, this was not favourably looked upon by the West Pakistanis and they thought that there was always an undue Hindu cultural domination in East Pakistan. It was true that the presence of the Hindus (18.4%) in East Pakistan in sizeable proportion could not be forgotten by the Pakistani rulers. East Pakistani Hindus' support for the system of joint electorate as the mode of election was demonstrative of a secular trend in them, while the attitude of the West Pakistani rulers was in favour of the separate electorate which was true to the Islamic spirit. The fact that the Hindu-Muslim relation in East Pakistan in the post-partition years was responsible not only for Bengali cultural and linguistic unity yet another factor should be taken into consideration. Before partition the caste Hindus

19. Mohammad Ayub Khan, A Broadcast to the Nation, *The Pakistan Observer*, October 2, 1968.
20. Hamoodur Rahman, *The Pakistan Observer*, August 13, 1967.
21. Nurul Amin, *The Pakistan Observer*, October 4, 1968.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *The Pakistan Observer*, October 4, 1968.

were in a dominating economic position. Professor A. K. Nazmul Karim observed :

> The vast masses of the Muslims in Bengal are poor and heavily indebted. The vast masses of the Hindus are so too. But in general, the insignificant minority of the creditor class is recruited from the Hindus and the landlord class is also primarily Hindu. The religious-political propaganda convinced the Muslim peasants in Bengal that Pakistan would mean his emancipation from the clutches of the Hindu money-lenders and landlords . . . But with Pakistan once established, it seems that political parties based primarily on economic programmes would again come to prominence.[24]

In fact, the exodus of the Hindu zemindars, business interests and other interest groups in large numbers created new economic opportunities for the Muslims and opened a new basis of economic and communal relations among the Muslims and Hindus of East Pakistan.

Pakistani rulers wanted to maintain the national identity on the basis of Islamic unity. But this did not appeal to the middle class in East Bengal. In fact, the over-emphasizing of Islamic unity had an adverse effect on the East Pakistanis in the absence of their economic and political interests being fulfilled by the ruling elites of Pakistan. Instead the cultural unity of the East Pakistanis helped them to maintain a distinct identity of their own and which generated political consciousness to assert their demands for due share in economic and political interests finally resulting in the separation of East Pakistan.

24. A. K. Karim, *A Study in Social Change and Social Stratification* (Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. viii—ix.

The 1962 Constitution of Pakistan and the Reaction of the People of Bangladesh

S. A. Akanda

On 7 October 1958, at 10. 30 p. m. Major-General Iskander Mirza, first President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, holding office under the 1956 constitution, overthrew the parliamentary government headed by Prime Minister Malik Feroz Khan Noon with the support of the army and issued a proclamation imposing Martial Law throughout Pakistan. General Mohammed Ayub Khan was appointed the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Pakistan and Chief Martial Law Administrator. The 1956 constitution was abrogated ; the Central and Provincial Governments were dismissed ; National and Provincial Assemblies were dissolved ; political parties were abolished ; fundamental rights including freedom of speech and expression were suspended and a military dictatorship was clamped over the nation.[1] On 27 October General Ayub Khan forced President Mirza to go into exile and assumed the reins of government. Next day General Ayub Khan promulgated a Government (Presidential Cabinet) Order, abolished the post of Prime Minister and assumed the powers of the President of Pakistan. The general elections scheduled for February 1959 was again postponed.[2] Thus the system

1. The full text of the proclamation was printed in newspapers, such as *the Dawn, The Pakistan Observer, The Morning News* (8 October 1958).

2. The general elections under the 1956 constitution at first promised for November 1957 were postponed to 1958 and were finally scheduled for February 1959.

of parliamentary form of government was forced out even before it was given a fair trial.[3]

Pakistan was governed under Martial Law for forty-four months. On 1 March 1962, in a Presidential broadcast to the nation, a new constitution was promulgated by President Field Marshal Mohammed Ayub Khan. In it he gave a concrete shape to his political and constitutional ideas which he considered fundamental for political stability in Pakistan. The reasons which led President Ayub and his military advisers to abrogate the 1956 Constitution will be apparent if one takes pain to examine President Ayub's own constitutional ideas.[4] As he himself recounted in his autobiography, he claimed to have drafted an exhaustive outline of a programme of political reconstruction of Pakistan entitled : "A Short Appreciation of Present and Future Problems of Pakistan" as early as 4 October 1954 when he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and was staying in a

3. The appointment of the Constitution Commission by the President in February 1960 reopened the dialogue between the President and his centralist supporters and the East Pakistani leaders and the regionalists over the form of democracy or government Pakistan should have. It was contended before the Constitution Commission by a number of East Pakistani individuals and political leaders including Nurul Amin, Ataur Rahman Khan, Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmed, and S. M. A. Majid that the parliamentary system of government did not fail : in fact, it was not given a fair trial. This view was shared also by others : the Editors of five daily newspapers—Abdus Salam of *The Pakistan Observer*, Tafazzal Hussain of *The Daily Ittefaq* ; Zahur Husain Choudhury of *The Sangbad*, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin of *The Azad*, and Mustafa Hasan of *The Pasban* ; and thirteen Bar Associations —Bar Association of Dacca, Dacca High Court Bar Association, East Pakistan Lawyers' Association, Mymensingh Bar Association, Chittagong District Bar Association, Rangpur Bar Association, Kushtia Bar Association, Manikganj Bar Association, Tangail Pleaders' Bar Association, Executive Council of the East Pakistan Mukhteers' (Attorneys) Association, Faridpur Mukhteer Bar Association, East Pakistan Income Tax Bar Association and Executive Committee of the Pakistan Medical Association (East Zone). It was contended that the parliamentary system "was shattered" by Ghulam Mohammad, "a despot", when he began to make and unmake the cabinets, and his successor Iskander Mirza "who was even more dictatorial" following the same pattern, using "political intrique to remain in power." For details see *The Pakistan Observer*, (June 5, 10, 13, 15, 18-21, 25-27, 29-30, July 1-2, 1960).

4. One of the important reasons was also the incorporation of the Basic Democracies Scheme in the future Constitution of Pakistan. For details on the 'Basic Democracies' see Khalid B. Syeed, *The Political System of Pakistan* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967) pp. 244-260 ; Also see Sayeed, "Pakistan's Basic Democracy," *Middle East Journal* (Summer 1961), pp. 249-263.

London hotel en route to the United States.[5] In order to achieve political stability through national integration, General Ayub considered (i) integration of West Pakistan ; (ii) principle of equal partnership between East and West Pakistan ; and (iii) a system of indirect elections (Basic Democracies), among other things, as the essential preconditions.[6] It was his firm belief that 'political stability', 'national integration', and 'development of the country' could never be achieved within the framework of parliamentary democracy which had been operating in Pakistan before he himself seized power in 1958. He thought it was only within the framework of Presidential system with a strong executive and a powerful centre that these objectives could be realised.[7]

In pursuance of his beliefs, President Ayub Khan directed his scathing criticism against the parliamentary system which he characterised as an "unholy wedlock of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial functions of the state in which the ultimate power for good government remained illusive, undefined, and therefore, inoperative."[8] He denounced the 1956 constitution as "a bundle of unworkable compromises,"[9] "a document of despair . . . a hotch-potch of alien

5. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 186-191. General Ayub took much interest in the internal politics of the country. This was evident from his own admission : as early as 1954 he conceived of the one-unit scheme for West Pakistan and a strong centre. The Constituent Assembly (1947-54) was dissolved on 24 October barely seventy-two hours before it was scheduled to meet for adopting the final draft of the constitution bill. The Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad simultaneously dismissed the Cabinet and asked the Prime Minister, Mahammad Ali of Bogra to form a non-party 'Cabinet of talents'. The new cabinet included General Ayub Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and Major-General Iskander Mirza, Governor of East Pakistan. That in taking such a drastic action, the Governor-General had the obvious backing of the Army as well, was revealed by a pro-government newspaper, *The Dawn*, three years after the episode : "There have indeed been times—such as that October night in 1954—when, with a General to the right of him and a General to the left of him, a half-mad Governor-General imposed upon a captured Prime Minister the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the virtual setting up of a semi-dictatorial Executive." Editorial "Revolution" *The Dawn* (11 August 1957). Since October 1958 after he came to power, he began to express himself on the nature of the constitution to be framed.

6. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-191.

7. *Ibid*, pp. 186-226.

8. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Speeches and Statements*, Vol. 1 (Karachi : Pakistan Publications, n. d.), p. 96.

9. *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 22.

concepts."[10] He made no secret of his contempt for lawyer-politicians and the intelligentsia whose preference for parliamentary system of government and direct elections was dismissed by him as irrational. He expressed it in unequivocal terms that the people of this country, being poor and illiterate, could not afford to have the luxury of making experiments with an alien system like western democracy merely "for the sake of satisfying some requirements for foreign theoreticians."[11] Therefore, according to him the presidential system of government was the only alternative which suited the requirements of Pakistan.[12] In order to strengthen his arguments in favour of presidential system he sought support from traditional Islamic theory and the historical precedents of the classical Muslim State. Islamic type of constitution, the President argued, envisages a Presidential system, and "without centralisation, unity and solidarity no system can claim to be Islamic . . ."[13] The inauguration of the 1962 constitution was thus an attempt at translating his ideas into reality.[14]

The main prop of the constitution was the President in whom the actual power was vested. He combined in himself the multifarious roles of the Head of the state, Chief of the Executive and Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces. Under, the constitution there was provided a 'rump' Parliament with limited legislative role and little control over the executive. The majesty of the Presidential powers enjoyed by President Ayub under the 1962 constitution can very well be realised by examining the constitutional provisions.

The Constitution armed the President with extensive executive,[15] emergency and legislative powers. In case of emergency—threat of war, external aggression, internal disturbances and economic insecurity

10. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, p. 54.
11. Ayub Khan, *Speeches and Statements*, Vol. III, p. 30.
12. Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, pp. 206-208.
13. Ayub Khan, *Speeches and Statements*, Vol. II, pp. 144-45; For further information see Manzooruddin Ahmed, *Pakistan: The Emerging Islamic State* (Karachi: Allies Book Corporation, 1966), pp. 238-39).
14. *The Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan* (Karachi: Government of Pakistan Press, 1962).
15. As the Chief of the Executive, the President appointed and removed the Ministers of the Presidential Cabinet and the Governors of the Provinces. He also appointed the Commander-in-Chiefs of the Defence Forces, Principal Military Officers, Judges of the Supreme and the High Courts, members of the Federal and Provincial Public Service Commissions, Ambassadors and many other Civil, Judicial, military and diplomatic officials.

—the President could proclaim emergency when he was satisfied that the situation warranted it, and could legislate by Ordinance even if the National Assembly was in session. The validity or the desirability of the proclamation could not be challenged in the court of law, and the National Assembly had no power to disapprove of the Ordinance (Article 30).[16]

The President had the sole authority to summon, prorogue or dissolve the National Assembly at any time for any reason subject to the condition that in case of the dissolution there will be fresh election of both the President and the National Assembly. He was provided with the power to veto the bills passed by the National Assembly. If the Assembly again passed the vetoed bill, the President even then could refuse to give his assent and refer the bill to a referendum (Article 24). Even if it is assumed that, in case of a referendum, the members of the electoral college (Basic Democrats) might venture to vote against his wishes, he could still continue as the President. When the Assembly was not in session, the President could promulgate Ordinances for a period of six months having 'the same force of law as an act of the Central Legislature" (Article 29). With respect to a bill relating to preventive detention, the National Assembly could not accept any bill without the previous consent of the President. Any citizen could be arrested and detained if the President or his Governor deemd it necessary in the interest of the security of Pakistan or public order, the definition of which was entirely at the discretion of the President (Article 26).

With regard to money bills, the National Assembly was rendered ineffective and the government which presented the budget exercised extraordinary control over the national finance. The Annual Budget Statement comprised three parts : (i) revenue expenditure ; (ii) old expenditure ; and (iii) new expenditure. The revenue expenditure (recurring) which was charged upon the consolidated fund might be discussed but "shall not be submitted to the vote of the National Assembly" (Article 41). The old expenditure, approved in the previous financial year, could be discussed but no item of this could be

16. For example, during India-Pakistan war in September 1965, 'State of Emergency' was declared and it continued till 22 February 1969. This enabled the regime to misuse the Defence of Pakistan Rules (DPR) in suppressing the opposition parties. Under the DPR more than 400 opposition leaders and workers in East Pakistan were held in detention without trial for more than two years. *The Pakistan Times* (28 August 1967).

put to vote or amended except with the consent of the President provided, in case of revision, the total increase did not exceed more than ten percent. Only such additional increase in recurring expenditures and all other nonrecurring expenditures were treated as new expenditures. It was only with respect to those clearly marked as 'new expenditures, that the Assembly could vote.[17] In brief, the National Assembly under the 1962 constitntion had practically little or no power.

Besides, the removal of the President by impeachment was made impossible. It required a notice to the speaker signed by at least one-third of the total members of the National Assembly in order to initiate impeachment procedure. The resolution of impeachment could not be moved earlier than fourteen days of the notice. Impeachment motion could be carried out only if passed by no less than three-quarters of the total number of members of the Assembly. But if the motion failed and less than one-half of the total number of members voted in its favour, "the members who gave the notice of the motion, shall cease to be members of the Assembly forthwith" (Article 13). Consequently the constitution provided a self-enforcing psychological deterrent against any eventuality of impeachment. The likelihood of impeachment was further reduced in view of the fact that the composition of the National Assembly, based on the principle of parity of representation, maintained a precarious regional balance.

In addition, a system of indirect elections was introduced under which an electoral college of 80,000 'Basic Democrats' (40,000 from each region of Pakistan) constituted the electoral college for the election of the President and the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies.[18] This body of Basic Democrats, in fact, constituted a new caste committed for its own self-preservation, and a safety-valve for the preservation of the Presidential system. Naturally, the whole edifice of 'Basic Democracies' operated against the opposi-

17. The new expenditure constituted only a small portion of the whole budget. In 1962-63, for example, the total amounted slightly more than one percent of the demands for grants and appropriations. Karl Von Vorys, *Political Development in Pakistan* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 224.

18. By the Eighth Amendment Bill in 1967, the number of Basic Democrats was raised to 120,000 (taking 60,000 from each region), and number of National and Provincial Assembly seats increased from 156 and 155 to 216 and 215 respectively. *The Pakistan observer* (9 and 12 December 1967)

tion which wanted to divest the Basic Democrats of their monopolistic political functions.[19]

From the foregoing discussion it is not difficult to infer that the 'Ayub' constitution was neither Presidential nor Federal. A Presidential system is based on the theory of separation of powers and checks and balances. The Chief Executive, once in office, is free to carry on the administration during his tenure; the Legislature with the powers to make laws and sanction bills of appropriations exercises effective restraint upon the executive without seriously interfering with the administration. But for the sake of establishing an apparent rather than real 'Stability' in Pakistan, the basic equilibrium between the power and authority of the different organs under the Presidential system had been thrown to the winds and the President was virtually made an autocrat. The Assembly was neither free in initiating legislations, nor could exercise any restraint upon the President. Indeed, the National Assembly had been reduced to the position of a mere rubber-stamp or, a 'tea shop', for gossiping and discussion.

The powers of the Judiciary had been greatly curtailed. The courts were denied the power of issuing writs of *Habeas Corpus, Maudamus, et Cetera* against the government. They had no authority to enforce the fundamental rights, and they did not enjoy the usual powers of judicial review, a characteristic feature of federalism.

The federal structure under the 1962 coustitution was also merely symbolic. The essence of federalism lies in the distribution of powers between the federal and the state (provincial) governments. The Constitution of Pakistan provided only one list of central subjects and the remaining powers had been left with the Provinces. There

19, It was often argued that the 'Basic Democrats' were popularly elected, and as such, in electing the President and the members of the Assemblies they only acted as the people's representatives. But this argument lost its force in view of the fact that, once elected, they were no longer under any electoral control and there was no way to guarantee that they would fulfil their mandate. Moreover, immediately after the elections, they were integrated with the administration, and consequently came under the official control, who supervised the activities of the Basic Democracies, and therefore, were in a position to influence the Basic Democrats in respect of their electoral preferences. The electoral college of 80,000 Basic Democrats for the election of the President, about 550 Basic Democrat voters in the National Asseembly constituencies, and about 275 in Provincial constituencies provided a 'manageable' universe for all kinds of political corruption. Therefore, corruption, if not rigging, was inherent in the system of Basic Democracies.

were, however, very few subjects over which the Provinces had any exclusive jurisdiction. The central government, in fact, had the power to legislate on any issue in respect of a provincial subject on the plea of the security of Pakistan. In cases of inconsistency between the central and provincial laws, the provincial law would become void. The provinces under the constitution were merely administrative agencies very similar to local governments in a unitary state. The Governor of a province was 'his master's voice' as he was appointed directly by the President. The Governors could not even appoint Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries without the prior approval of the President. With the Provincial Governors and the Cabinets having been no longer responsible to even the indirectly elected Provincial Legislatures, the federal principle had, in fact, been substituted for by a unitary form of government. Besides, the architects of the constitution carefully avoided the use of the term 'federation' in the text of the constitution.[20] A glance at the 1962 constitution, abrogated in 1969, will make it clear that 'Federation' was changed to 'Centre', the 'Federal Government' to the 'Central Government', and the 'Federal Legislature' to the 'Central legislature'. Indeed, the Presidential system under the Ayub Constitution could be compared with the Viceregal system of the colonial period.[21] In brief, Ayub became the reincarnation of the Moghul autocrat of the medieval times.

There is a striking similarity between the Presidential powers in 1962 Pakistan constitution and those in the Bangladesh constitution, 1972, with subsequent amendments particularly the Fourth and the Fifth Amendments in 1975 and 1979 respectively which were intended to make the President an all-powerful executive.[22]

The constitution President Ayub promulgated had very little in common with the important recommendations of the Constitution

20. The term 'Federation' occurs only once in the Preamble in the following form : "Pakistan should be a form of Federation . . ." *The Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan, 1962* (Dacca, 1962), p. 1.

21. By far the best analysis of the system introduced by President Ayub is available in Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System in Pakistan* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Co, 1967), pp. 101-102.

22. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, *The Constitutions of the people's Republic of Bangladesh*, (as modified up to 28th February 1979). Dacca : The Manager, Government Printing Press, 1979, the Fourth Amendment, pp. 112-126, Proclamations from September 1975 to December 1978, pp. 127-198, Act No. 1 of 1979 published in the Bangladesh Gazette, Extra ordinary dated 6 April, 1979.)

Commission set up in 1960. The Commission incorporated in their recommendation President's idea of a strong executive in a Presidential system, [23] but did not fully endorse all his constitutional views. The Commission, recommending a federal type, not only took into consideration the opinions expressed in response to the questionnaire[24] but also referred to the present state of feeling in East Pakistan 'of being treated as a colony'. The Commission concluded: "It is our considered opinion that if we impose unitary form, ignoring the state of feeling in East [Pakistan] . . . . we would be driving the average Muslims of East Pakistan into the arms of extremists and disruptive elements."[25] The Commission strongly felt the need for an independant legislature which should "be in a sufficiently strong position to act as a check on the exercise by the executive of its extensive power without, at the same time, affecting the firmness of the administration."[26] Therefore, the Commission recommended that the legisla-

23. It may be pointed out that 21.3 per cent the opinions expressed in response to the Commission's questionnairs favoured the 'pure parliamentary pattern, 29.3 per cent preferred some form of parliamentary system, 47.4 per cent wanted a Presidential system and 2 per cent dictatorship. *Report of the Constitution Commission, Pakistan 1961.* (Karachi : Government of Pakistan Press, 1962), p. 19.

The overwhelming majority of East Pakistani respondents were for a parliamentary system of government in which the Prime Minister was to be responsible to the National Assembly. Edgar and Kathryn Schubr, *Public Opinion and Constitution Making in Pakistan,* 1958-62. (East Lansing : Michigan State University Press, 1966), p. 203.

24. It may be stated that 65.5 per cent of the replies and interviews, were in favour of a federal government with a centre as strong as that of the abrogated 1956 constitution, 41.1 per cent of the replies were of the view that the provinces should be autonomous and the powers of the centre should be limited to defence, foreign affairs and currency only. Out of 1,357 replies from East Pakistan in favour of a federal type of 1956 constitution, 765 replies, that is, 56.3% favoured a weak centre with only three subjects ; while out of 794 replies from West Pakistan favouring a federal government only 194, that is, 24.4% wanted a weak centre. Of the 29 witnesses advocating for a federal government, 23 were in favour of a weak centre. Of these 23, 18 (78.2%) were from East Pakistan, and only 5 witnesses (21.8%) favouring weak centre were from West Pakistan. RCC 1961 (*Report of the Constitution Commission, 1961*), pp. 33-40.

Of the East Pakistani respondents, only Abul Kashem and Syed Qamrul Ahsan differed from others. Abul Kashem favoured a Parliamentary system with a Unitary Constitution while Syed Qamrul Ahsan advocated a Presidential system. *Ibid.* and Schuler, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

25. *RCC 1961*, pp. 34-37.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

ture should have the power to override the President, and the control over the national budget and the senior appointments. The Commission further recommended that the President, the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be directly elected by the people under a restricted franchise based on education and property-qualifications.[27] The Commission considered the system of indirect election by the Basic Democrats as 'unsuitable', and recommended the revival of political parties as a necessity.[28] For these obvious deviations from the political notions of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the recommendations of the Constitution Commission were not accepted.[29] The Consideration of the Report of the Constitution Commission was referred to a Cabinet Sub-Committee which drafted the final text of the constitution not on the basis of 'what the people want' but 'what is best for the people'.[30] It is interesting to point out that the Cabinet Sub-Committee was sharply divided into 4:3 on issues, such as Presidential versus parliamentary system, unitary versus federal form of government, political parties, fundamental rights and the electoral question. The views of Manzur Qadir, Z. A Bhutto, M. Shoaib and Akhter Husain from West Pakistan often ran counter to those of Law Minister Mohammad Ibrahim, Abul Kashem Khan and Habibur Rahman from East Pakistan.[31] Mr. M. Ibrahim, Law member did not attend any meeting as he was not the Chairman and he did not sign the constitution. The East Pakistani members of the Constitution Commission is also reported to have "unanimously refused to sign the Report that included the unitary form as a recommendation."[32]

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 76-80.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Although President Ayub Khan had expressed his special thanks to the Chairman of the Constitution Commission in his broadcast on 1 March, 1962, it was remoured that the late Justice Mr. M. Shahabuddin disapproved of the new Constitution and had actually sent a statement to the press to the effect that the Constitution was not in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission. It was also rumoured that the publication of the statement was not permitted, and years later, Justice Mr. Shahabuddin affirmed the truth of all this. *The Pakistan Observer*, 10 December 1968. Views supporting Justice Shahabuddin's statement were also published by a former High Court Judge and one-time Secretary to the Government of Pakistan in the Law Ministry, Mr. Hamid Ali. *Dawn*, 15 December 1968.

30. Karl Von Vorys, *Political Development in Pakistan* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 217-18.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Schubr, op. cit , p. 203

From a perusal of the details of the Constitution, it appears that, despite the elaborate machinery, i. e. the Constitution Commission and the numerous Committees employed in the framing of the constitution, the constitution that finally emerged was exactly identical to the views expressed some eight years ago in Ayub Khan's memorandum entitled "A Short Appreciation of Present and Future Problems of Pakistan" in London on 4 October, 1954 and submitted to the Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad, just three weeks before he joined the Cabinet as a Defence Minister.[33] It, therefore, becomes evident from Ayub Khan's own admission that he was deeply involved in the internal politics of the country as early as 1954 and it was he who conceived the one-unit scheme for West Pakistan and a strong centre. Therefore, the appointment of the Commission to formulate the principles of the constitution, and deliberations by so many committees were all calculated to popularize the narrow, self defeating views of a military dictator and to show to the people that he valued democratic process. The constitution which later came to be known as 'Ayub Constitution' embodied very little democratic ideas. It aimed at giving merely legal sanction to the personal hegemony of the President and the Martial Law Administrator. Thus it was clear that the constitution was made to make him dictator under a democratic facade. The President made no secret of the fact that his intention was to convert the Martial Law "into a document which will form the basis of running the country."[34] This was apparent in President Ayub Khan's broadcast to the nation on 1 March, 1962, when, in introducing the constitution, he referred to it as "my system" and philosophy of the new constitution as "blending of democracy with discipline."[35] The Preamble of the constitution also closes with the words: "Now, therefore, I, Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan . . . . do hereby exact this constitution."[36] This unhesitatingly left the stamp of a military dictator on the promulgated constitution. The *Weekly Time* termed it as "an essentially undemocratic system."[37] The

33. Colonel Mohammad Ahmed, *My Chief* (Lahore : Longmans, Green and Co., 1960), pp. 87-93. Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 186-191.

34. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Speeches and Statements*, Vol. I, (Karachi : Pakistan Publications, n. d.) p. 58.

35. *The Dawn* (2 March, 1962).

36. *The Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan.* (Karachi : Government of Pakistan Press, 1962), p. 2.

37. *The Time*, (9 March, 1962).

ex-Prime Minister Chaudhri Mohammad Ali's comment was more precise. As he put it: it was "one man Government, a government of the President, by the President and for the President."[39]

Before the promulgation of the constitution, some preparations were made and precautionary measures taken to set the stage for it. The first step was to prepare the public receptivity for the constitution. In his address to the Karachi Bar Association in September 1961, the President declared that the outline of the constitution would be published in November in order to enable the public to express their views and only after a public discussion the final draft would be promulgated in the spring of 1962.[39] This proposal was discussed with the provincial Governors at a conference in Pindi and it was decided against publishing the broad features of the constitution for public comment. Instead, the constitution was promised to be promulgated in its entirety on 1 March, 1962.[40] He thus deviated from the assurance given to the nation in respect of the publication of the proposed constitution and discussion by the public. Obviously the President and the Governors were apprehensive of possible opposition by the public which might have led to this decision. Secondly, a number of arrests of different political leaders, including H. S. Suhrawardy, was made to prevent him from acting in a manner "prejudicial to the Security and Defence of Pakistan."[41] Thirdly, Martial Law Ordinance was promulgated forbidding the High Courts to issue writs of *Habeas Corpus* in respect of persons detained under Preventive Detention Act, when the High Court had already admitted a writ on behalf of Suhrawardy and several others were pending before the High Courts. In addition, many politicians of the parliamentary era, some 3,978 political leaders in East Pakistan and some 3,000 politicians in West Pakistan were disqualified under the Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO) issued on 6 August 1959.[42] There were two objectives, viz. to prevent them from taking part in politics, and from contesting the elections in the National and Provincial Assemblies

38. *The Dawn*, (2 April, 1963).
39. *The Dawn*, (23 September 1961), *the Morning News* (29 Sept. 1961).
40. *Ibid.* (25 October, 1961).
41. *The Pakistan Observer* (31 January, 1962).
42. Von Vorys, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

to be held some time after the promulgation of the constitution.[43] With these pre-cautionary measures, the stage was set for the promulgation of the new constitution on 1 March 1962.

The strength of a state is largely dependent upon the sense of sanctity attached to the constitution, which in turn, is wholly dependent upon the popular acceptance of it. Now the question is how the East Pakistanis and West Pakistanis accepted the 'Ayub' constitution. An impartial observer might have seen that even with the continuance of Martial Law for more then three months (until 8 June) and starting of a well-planned publicity campaign in favour of the constitution by the Government's newly-created Department of the Bureau of National Reconstruction, the approval of the constitution was not universal. The newspapers reported the news of the announcement of the constitution in banner headlines. But one might have noticed that all the newspapers in West Pakistan except one or two, hailed the constitution in the editorials as "the important thing for all patriotic people to realise" . . , "a sincere fulfilment of the pledge given by the architect of the Revolution when he took power in October"[44] and "this is an occasion of rejoicing and thanks-giving."[45] The East Pakistani newspapers, excepting *Morning News*, however, refrained form commenting editorially. While the two most important West Pakistan newspapers - The *Dawn* and the *Pakistan Times* devoted 1,950 and 1,170 columns respectively in their issues of March 4-7, 1962 to reports of favourable comments by prominent citizens,[46] the East Pakistan newspapers - *The Pakistan Observer*, *The Daily Ittefaq*, *The Sangbad*, *The Dacca Times*, *The Azad*, *The Pasban* - were conspicuous by not devoting any space to "the reporting of the accolades."[47] *The Pakistan observer* was eloquent by its silence. The 2 March 1962 issue gave the brief headline "Constitution Announced" and other stories scattered over the pages. What distinguished *The Pakistan Observer* from the other newspapers

43. The Political parties Act, 1962 passed immediately after the meeting of the National Assembly on 7 June 1962 extended their disqualification until 31 December 1966. This means that the old politicians also could not take part in 1965 elections. Besides, as mentioned, hundreds of Politicians were held in detention without trial.

44. *The Dawn* (2 March, 1962).

45. *The Pakistan Times* (2 March, 1962).

46. Cited in Karl von Vorys, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

47. *Ibid*-

in the treatment of this major event was that not a single headline gave any clue as to the nature of the constitution, even with regard to the most controversial items, though it contained essentially the same total news content the other newspapers published. It did not contain an editorial acknowledgement of the announcement of the constitution as other newspapers did, and no editorial opinion was expressed until 23 March, 1962 and even then it devoted to the importance of the Lahore Resolution, and concluded with a renewed pledge : "to maintain the integrity, solidarity and sovereignty of Pakistan and rededicate ourselves to the cause of freedom, truth and democracy . . . .".[48] *The Pakistan Observer* also published a write-up on the provisions of the constitution which is worth quoting:

> In distributing executive powers between the centre and the provinces the federal principle seems to have yielded to that on which a unitary state is based. Thus, though separation of powers (with some modifications) has been recognised more powers and wider responsibilities appear to have been concentrated in the Central Executive. ... The President does not resemble a constitutional monarch, like that of England ; but shall wield greater power than the President of the United States of America is seen to posses and enjoy. The President shall not only reign but govern.[49]

Merely to refrain from making comments was not euongh to remain in the good graces of the officials and the government. The Director, Bureau of National Reconstruction, issued a Warning to the editor of *The Pakistan Observer* officially to the effect that silence amounts to offence of propaganda against the government and the constitution. The editor is reported to have replied that "if I cannot report unfavourable reaction, I shall not report any thing."[50]

One could also notice in the newspapers which were then reduced to 'a pale reflection of government opinion' that the Basic Democrats in Union and District Councils passed resolutions congratulating the President and often competed with one another for taking the opportunity of presenting their felicitations. It also did not escape the notice of the impartial observers that such meetings were arranged and resolutions adopted at the directions of the Bureau of National Reconstruction and the behest of the officers who dutifully guided the the Basic Democrats for offering their adulations to the President. Of the members of the President's inner council from East Pakistan,

48. *The Pakistan Observer* (23 March, 1962).
49. *The Pakistan Observer* (23 March, 1962).
50. Karl von Vorys, *op. cit.*, p. 232

only Zakir Husain, at first Governor of East Pakistan and then Minister of Interior, was profuse in his praise for the constitution and hailed "the brilliance of the document".[51]

In general, however, there was sullen silence in East Pakistan.[52] Even the Governor General Azam Khan, one of the leaders of the Revolution and supposedly a right-hand man of the President was conspicuous by his silence on the constitution. When he visited Lahore the week following the announcement of the constitution, he answered to the reporters' questions by saying, "generally speaking, the reaction was favourable" in East Pakistan, but he did not fail to add that the constitution was a wide subject and there was always a section which did not like certain things.[53] Such was the immediate but carefully uncritical reaction of the individuals and the Press in East Pakistan to the provisions of the constitution. One source even went to the extent of claiming that the negative reaction of *The Pakistan Observer* to the new constitution well reflected the attitude prevalent among East Pakistani intellectuals.[54]

Frank Edmead, a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, in his despatch about the reaction of the English-speaking Pakistanis outside the Government circles on the announcement of the constitution reported:

> . . . disapprove of the dominating power retained by the President. These critics . . . also dislike the indirect system of voting that President Ayub favours ; moreover, they believe that democratic elections cannot be conducted without political parties and parties are forbidden.
>
> Above all, the lawyers among them are perturbed because the courts have not been empowered to enforce fundamental rights. However, under Martial Law there are no fundamental rights, and for that reason even most embattled liberals in West Pakistan are prepared to give the constitution a grudging acceptance as a step forward. Not so in East Pakistan.
>
> The constitution's reception in Bengal has been far more hostile than in the West. Students have been demonstrating in their thousands, and being arrested

51. See *The Morning News* (March-April, 1962).

52. Karl von Vorys was a Visiting Professor at the Dacca University and he travelled widely at the time of the promulgation of the constitution and the elections held immediately afterwards.

53. *The Morning News* (10 March, 1962).

54. Schuler, *op. cit.*, p. 203

The Pakistan Observer—founded in 1949 and the oldest English language

> in their hundreds . . . . , but the unrest seems to have spread beyond those who traditionally demonstrate, and to have penetrated deep in the countryside. The latest fires of Bengali local patriotism have burst into flame again, they may endanger Pakistan's very unity.[55]

In this despatch a marked difference is visible in the reactions of the people from East and West Pakistan towards the Ayub Constitution and this explains the attitude of the East Pakistanis towards the constitution.

The constitution, promulgated on 1 March, came into force on 3 June 1962 with the inauguration of the National Assembly and the withdrawal of Martial Law. A constitution based on the distrust of the pepole and in the teeth of strong opposition from the very moment it came into operation was not destined to survive beyond tenure of the Office of the architect of the Constitution. It would, therefore, be interesting to study the working of the constitution and the East Pakistanis' response to it. As this will require an exhaustive treatment, I propose to deal with it in a separate paper (to be published in the next issue of the IBS Journal).

daily in East Pakistan —had the largest circulation in East Pakistan and represented the point of view of the educated East Pakistanis and intellectuals. It may be worthwhile to quote the observation of a political scientist : "*The Pakistan Observer* is a well-edited paper, whose quality of analytical reporting is often superior to that of other papers. It is an important source for scholars because it reflects the point of view of East Pakistan and is more critical of government policies. Ralph Braibanti, *Research on the Bureaucracy of Pakistan.* Durham : Duke University Press, 1966), p. 82. This was true until 1971. But since the emergence of Bangladesh and particularly after the demise of its founder-editor and well-known journalist Abdus Salam, *The Bangladesh Observer*, has became a pale reflection of government gazette.

55. *The Guardian* (17 April, 1962).

Contemporary Politics and the Radical Left in Bangladesh

Abul Fazl Huq

Bangladesh that came into being on 16 December, 1971 through an armed struggle appeared to have achieved some stability with the adoption of the Constitution in November, 1972 and the holding of general elections in March, 1973. But the political changes of 1975 and subsequent developments have reopened some of the settled issues. Not only the legitimacy of the Constitution is challenged, the question of national basis and identity has also been a matter of public controversy.

In January, 1975 the ruling Awami League that led the freedom struggle and fathered the Constitution transformed a fairly liberal parliamentary democracy into a presidential authoritarianism through the fourth constitutional amendment which it termed "our second revolution." All the parties were prohibited and a single "National Party", named Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) was formed with President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the supreme leader. But the politics of "second revolution" came to an abrupt end when Sheikh Mujib was killed by a group of junior army officers installing Khandker Mostaque Ahmed (Foreign Trade Minister of Sheikh Mujib) as President. Two army coups followed in quick succession on 3 and 7 November, 1975 ; and since 7 November the Army Chief of Staff Major-General Ziaur Rahman has been the virtual wielder of state power assuming the office of Chief Martial Law Administrator on 30 November, 1976 and also Presidentship on 21 April, 1977. Though President Zia announced that the representative government would be restored through general elections to be held in December, 1978 a nationwide referendum was held on 30 May,

1977, to ascertain people's confidence in him and his 19-point socio-economic programme.[1]

A Presidential Proclamation of 22 April, 1977 also effected certain significant changes in the Constitution, which include : (1) Insertion of the words "Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim" (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) in the beginning of the Preamble ; (2) Omission of Secularism and its substitution by "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" as a Fundamental Principle ; (3) A new interpretation of Socialism as "economic and social justice", and the guarantee of compensation for acquisition and nationalisation of private property.

The constitutional changes thus gave a definite capitalist bias and Islamic colour to the Constitution. Earlier, the military government raised the ceiling of private investment from Taka 3 crore to 10 crore and decided to give compensation to the former owners of nationalised industries and to disinvest gradually from selected industrial units.[2] The proviso of Article 38 of the Constitution prohibiting the formation and operation of communal political parties based on religion was dropped, and the word "Bangalee" was substituted by "Bangladeshi" through the amendment of Article 6 defining citizenship.

Apparently, the post-1975 developments brought the questions of socialism and secularism to the fore-front and generated a chain of reactions involving the national symbols, culture, tradition, and economy, and even the national liberation struggle of 1971. What are the positions of various political parties on these national political issues ? Where do they stand in their relations to the regime and to each other ? Do the left parties have any common stand or strategy ? What are the main points of difference among them ? What are the causes of such differences ? Answer to these questions would throw some light on the dynamics of radical politics in Bangladesh.

Though the constitutional provision for a single National Party was dropped in November, 1975 political activities remained totally suspended till 28 July, 1976 when the political Parties Regulation (PPR) was promulgated permitting the organisation and operation of

1. According to official reports, President Zia secured 98·88% "Yes" votes, percentage of polls being 87. It is widely believed that the huge percentage of polling was a concoction of the overenthusiastic bureaucracy and polling officials.

2. More than 80% of the industry and foreign trade was nationalised by the AL government in March, 1972, without compensation.

political parties subject to Government's approval of their manifesto and programme. By November, 1976, the Government permitted 21 political parties out of 60 such groups that applied for permission under the PPR, but they were kept confined to indoor politics till April, 1978. These parties may be classified roughly into 5 groups:[3]

In the first group, the Islamic Democratic League (IDL), the Convention Muslim League (CML)[4] and the Muslim League (ML) are religion-based rightist parties committed to 'Islamic' polity and dogmatically opposed to secularism and socialism. They all supported the idea of unified Pakistan and, in opposition to Bangladesh liberation war, actively collaborated with the Pakistan forces during 1971. These parties were banned by the AL regime, but revived under the amended Article 38 of the Constitution. They welcomed the constitutional changes and played a major role in campaigning for President Zia in the referendum. According to the IDL, the referendum was not confined to the simple question of Zia's remaining in power ; it was an opportunity for deciding the all-important issue of national (Islamic) ideology and identity as reflected in the constitutional amendments made by him.[5] It is the IDL that opened the debate on the 1971 liberation struggle by dismising it as the outcome of "foreign instigation."[6] These elements also occasionally raise demands for changing the national flag, the national anthem and the name of the State to suit the 'Islamic' spirit.[7]

In the second group may be included the moderate right parties such as the Democratic League, Jatio League, Jatio Dal, Krishak-Sramik Party, Labour Party, Gano-Azadi League and the Gano-Mukti Dal. These parties lay much stress on "Islamic Ideals" as basic factors of social, political and national life, although their membership is open to non-Muslims as well. They prefer parliamentary democracy

3. Of the 21 political parties, the Democratic League, CPB and JSD were banned on 14 October, 1977 for their "activities prejudicial to the State." The JSD was revalidated on 24 April and a new party named JAGODAL was formed in February, 1978. Account of the JAGODAL is given separately.

4. The CML led by Abdul Matin merged with the Muslim League in April, 1978. A faction of the CML now works with Shamsul Huda as leader.

5. See *Jahan-e-Nau* (a weekly paper of the IDL), 22 May, 1977.

6. See IDL chief Maulana Siddique Ahmed's press conference in *Ittefaq* (Dacca daily), 18 October, 1976.

7. *Holiday* (Dacca Weekly) 14 March, 1976 ; *Sangbad* (Dacca daily), 28 January, 1978.

and favour free economy, demanding transfer of nationalised industries to private ownership. They did not actively oppose the 1971 struggle and, a few of them participated in that struggle. The constitutional amendments were generally welcome to these parties. They expressed themselves in favour of the referendum and most of them worked for President Zia, the Democratic League being the only exception.[8]

The Awami League (AL), Jatio Janata Party (JJP), National Awami Party— Muzaffar (NAP—M), National Awami Party— Bhashani (NAP-B), and the People's League may be placed in the third group. These parties fought the 1971 war of independence; they are committed to secular parliamentary politics and, with the exception of NAP—B, profess socialist economy.

The AL is of opinion that the omission of secularism and the "perversion" of socialism were undemocratic and anti-people, and that the basis and back-grounds of the great national liberation struggle had been disregarded thereby. The party challenged the authority of the military regime to change the Constitution "adopted in 1972 by an elected Constituent Assembly". It described the holding of referendum, in the absence of open politics and democratic freedoms, as meaningless. Opposing the policy of disinvestment and giving compensation for the nationalised industries, the AL asserted that an "interim government" had no right to take decision on these vital matters. The party accused the military regime of giving opportunity to the "traitors-opponents of the independence war" (ML, CML, IDL) for conspiring against the nation. It strongly repudiated the official acceptance and use of the terms "Zindabad", "Bangladeshi", and "Radio Bangladesh" respectively in place of "Joi Bangla", "Bangalee" and "Bangladesh Betar" that "symbolize the Bengali national liberation struggle", as an "insult" to that struggle and an "undeclared war" against the freedom fighters.[9]

8. The Democratic League was organised by ex-President Khondker Mostaque and the majority of its central leaders were drawn from the Awami Leaguers. Khandker Mostaque, arrested in December, 1976, is now serving jail terms on charges of corruption and misuse of powers.

9. See the "Resolutions of the AL Central Organising Committee", 4 and 5 May, 1977, published by Sayeda Johra Tajuddin, then Convenor of the party.

The Jatio Janata Party led by General (retired) M. A. G. Osmany recognises only the Constitution of 1972 as valid and said that the recent amendments were *uitra vires* in as much as they had been effected in a manner contrary to the process prescribed in the Constitution. The party termed the assumption of the office of President by an army officer as illegal, and said that the holding of the referendum in the absence of freedom of expression was meaningless. It also expressed its determination to face the "local and international conspiracy" against the public sector.[10]

The NAP-B, though declares as its ideals only nationalism and democracy, recognises secularism as an essential element of democracy and said that the outright omission of secularism might create a sense of insecurity among the minorities and hinder national unity. According to the party chief Mashiur Rahman, there is no justification of retaining such word as "socialism" in the constitution, and he demands the return of nationalised industries to their former Bengalee owners. On the basis of similar arguments as put forward by the AL and *Jatio Janata Party*, the NAP-B chief described the referendum as "farce, unjustified and illegal." He also pleaded for the replacement of the "BAKSAL Constitution" by a new one to be approved by an elected sovereign assembly.[11]

The NAP-M had its origin as a mass political front of the pro-Moscow Communist party and joined the BAKSAL formed in 1975. It professes nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism but did not speak out on the constitutional amendments. It called upon the people to "participate" in the referendum in order to impliment the 19-point programme of President Zia and, at the same time, expressed its determination to resist the "conspiracy" against the nationalised sector.[12]

The People's League headed by Dr. Alim-ar Razee, formerly the Vice-President of NAP-B, professes parliamentary democracy and the "socialist way of life", but maintained silence about the

10. Press conference of General Osmany, 15 May, 1977, published partly in *Ittehad* (Dacca Weekly), 20 May, 1977 ; also see *Sangbad*, 8 May, 1977.

11. See *Sangbad*, 16 April, 1977 ; also the press conference of Mashiur Rahman, 25 April, 1977, not published in news-papers.

12. *What NAP (M) Stands For*, published by Kamal Haider, n. d. : also see *Sangbad*, 3 May and *Ittefaq*, 23 May, 1977.

amendments made by President Ziaur Rahman. It termed the Constitution as a 'dead document' and demanded an elected assembly for framing a new one.[13]

The Tafsil Jati Federation, a class by itself, is a scheduled Caste Hindu minority group, primarily concerned with the interests of its members. It felt that the constitutional amendments were not necessary but called upon the people to massively support President Zia in the referendum.[14]

The fifth group comprising the *Bangladesher Sammobadi Dal* (Marxist-Leninist), the Communist Party of Bangladesh, the United People's Party, the Jatio Gono-Mukti Union and the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal may be called the radical Left.

Bangladesher Sammobadi Dal (Marxist-Leninist or M-L)

The Sino-Soviet ideological conflict of early 1960's brought about a split in the Communist Party of East Pakistan (EPCP) in 1966. The pro-Moscow group led by Moni Singh retained the original name and the pro-Peking group of Sukhendu Dastider named itself EPCP (M-L). Though the EPCP (M-L) was opposed to the separation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) as such, the major faction of the party led by Mohammad Toaha accepted the reality of Bangladesh as a "separate entity", and surfaced from underground politics in the wake of 1975 changes. Under the PPR this faction received government permission with the name Bangladesher Sammobadi Dal (M-L). According to the party, the war of independence was the outcome of an "imperialist conspiracy"—— the Indo-Soviet clique established Bangladesh by force of arms and imposed a "puppet government" here.[15]

The party's ultimate objective is said to be a communist society and, as the first step, the establishment of a "people's democratic state" under the leadership of the working class which, it assets, can be accomplished only through armed struggle. However, it renounces

13. Dr. Razee's prese conference, *Ittefaq*, 10 October, and *Sangbad* 6 August, 1977.

14. *Bangladesh Times* (Dacca daily), 24 May, 1977.

15. See Mohammad Toaha : *Bangladesh Utthaner Nepathya Kahini* (Behind-the-Scene Story of the Emergence of Bangladesh) in *Ganosakti* (weekly paper of the *Sammobadi Dal*), 26 December, 1976, and 9 January, 1977.

the tactics of "lequidating class enemies" (killing land-owners, money-lenders etc) pursued by it since 1970, and wants to bring about "people's revolution" by awakening the masses and sharpening class consciousness.[16]

According to the *Sammobadi Dal* (M-L), Bangladesh is a semi-feudal and neo-colonial country and there are two basic contradictions : (1) the contradiction between the Soviet social imperialism, Indian expansionism and U. S. imperialism, and the nation ; (2) the contradiction between feudalism and the peasantry. Of these two, the former is the "principal contradiction" and, once it is resolved, "the other contradictions will automatically be resolved."[17]

The party Secretary declared General Ziaur Rahman a patriot and "our ally" and expressed his support to the President in the referendum.[18]

The *Sammobadi Dal* (M-L) maintained complete silence about the constitutional amendments made by President Zia, but demanded abrogation of "the anti-people Constitution" and holding of a national convention representing the "patriotic" parties and forces "to draw up a clear policy regarding national politics, economy and culture."[19]

Pointing out the corruptions, plunders, inefficiency and loss in the public sector, the party asserts that nationalisation without the dictatorship of the proletariat is bound to fail, and demands the transfer of all nationalised enterprises valued upto Taka 25 crore to private ownership. It maintains that the prime need of the hour is to free the national economy from foreign control and for this the development of a "national bourgeoise" is essential.[20]

Bangladesher Communist Party (CPB)

The pro-Moscow EPCP of Moni Singh, renamed *Bangladesher Communist Party*, participated in the liberation struggle under the leadership of the AL exile government. It maintains that the struggle

16. *Holiday* and *Ittefaq*, 11 July, and *Ganosakti*, 25 July, 1976.
17. "An Interview with Toaha", *Holiday*, 17 October, 1976.
18. *Dainik Bangla* (Dacca daily), 20 May, 1977 ; also *Holiday*, *ibid.*
19. *Holiday*, 21 December, 1975.
20. Mohammad Toaha's press conference of 6 April, 1977, and Mahfuz Bhuiyan : *Pangladesher Sramik Srenir Party O' Bekti Malikanadhin Punji* (Working Class Party and Private Capital), in *Ganosakti*, 10 April, 1977.

brought "political independence", but not the "people's real emancipation."

As an ardent follower of the CPSU's 20th Congress political line, the CPB believes in the "non-capitalist path" of development and the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. It pursued the policy of cooperation with the AL Government and formed an alliance (*Gono Oikya Jote*) with the AL and NAP-M in 1973. The party carried on vigorous campaign for replacing the "bourgeois democracy" by a "genuine people's democracy under the leadership of *Bangobandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", and joined the BAKSAL formed after the 'constitutional coup' of January, 1975.[21]

The CPB demands the restoration of secularism as a Fundamental Principle of State policy. It regards nationalisation as a progressive step and strongly opposes the move for denationalisation by various quarters. The party appreciates President Zia as a freedom-fighter but did "neither support nor oppose" him in the referendum. It deplores the demand for changing the national flag and the national anthem, and the tendency of perverting the spirit of the national Struggle by certain quarters.[22]

Jatio Gano-Mukti Union (JAGMU)

In 1968, a section of the communists under the leadership of Deben Sikdar and Abul Bashar breaking away from the EPCP (M-L) formed a separate party, named the Communist Party of East Bengal (EBCP). It held that East Bengal was the colony of Pakistan, and participated in the liberation struggle during 1971. The EBCP which also practised underground politics came to surface in 1972, and renamed itself as *Banglar Communist Party*. Then it opened the JAGMU as its mass front organisation in December, 1973, itself virtually going underground.

The JAGMU claims socialism as its ultimate goal and the establishment of "people's democratic state" as the immediate task. This

21. *Ghoshanapatra O' Karmasuchi* (Manifesto and Programme) of the CPB, October, 1976. For CPB's political line and tactics, see *Ekata* (weekly paper of CPB, now out of publication), 13 December, 1974 and 31 January, 1975.

22. Resolutions of the CPB Central Committee, 7 and 8 May, 1977, published in a "News Bulletin", 18 May, 1977 ; also CPB's press conference, *Sangbad*, 14 June, 1977.

can be fulfilled, it asserts, by eliminating foreign domination and comprador bourgeois-feudal exploitations through a "people's revolution" on the basis of peasant workers' alliance.[23]

The JAGMU stresses the need for "national-emancipation" from foreign control. According to it, the AL government was a "national betrayer" and a "puppet" in the hands of the Indo-Soviet axis. President Ziaur Rahman is a patriot but his administration is 'not immune from foreign influence", it maintains. The party does not accept the legitimacy of the Constitution framed by the AL. It considers the omission of secularism and qualification of socialism as retrogressive measures but did not publicly condemn the amendments made by President Zia. The party President described the May referendum as unnecessary but thought that the people would participate with the expectation that democratic rights would be restored to them.[24]

United People's Party (UPP)

Three groups of Communists, namely the East Bengal Coordination Committee of the Communist Revolutionaries, Communist *Sanghati Kendra* (Solidarity Centre), and the *Hatiar* group merged to form the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Leninist) or CPB-L in May, 1972 with Amal Sen as the General Secretary.[25] The United People's party was founded in November, 1974 as the mass political front of the CPB-L. According to the UPP, the armed struggle of 1971 was a "just national war", and to depict it as a "conspiracy" is a crime.[26]

The UPP's proclaimed goal is to establish socialism through "people's democratic revolution" by eliminating imperialism and feudalism totally from the economic, political and cultural spheres,

23. *Ghoshanapatra*, JAGMU, December, 1973, and *Karmasuchi*, JAGMU, June, 1974.

24. Based on an interview with Sirajul Hossain Khan, General Secretary, JAGMU, 25 May, 1977 ; also statement of Haji Mohammad Danesh in *Ittefaq*, 25 May, 1977.

25. The first group led by Kazi Zafar Ahmed and the second group led by Amal Sen split from the EPCP (ML) respectively in 1969 and 1971 ; and the third one led by Nasim Ali splintered from the pro-Moscow EPCP in 1970.

26. See Haider Akbar Khan Rono (UPP Presidium Member and theorist): *Ekattar-er-Sangramer Ekti Mullayan* (An Evaluation of the '71 Struggle) in *Nayajug* (weekly paper of UPP) 7, 14, 21, and 30 November, and 16 December, 1976.

and it stresses on simultaneous struggle for "national emancipation" and democratic transformation.[27]

According to some party leaders, the AL was not a puppet government, but "dependent" on the Indo-Soviet hegemonism as well as on U. S. imperialism and, the "bourgeois military-bureaucratic oligarchy" headed by General Ziaur Rahman neither is "really independent."[28]

The UPP condemned the constitutional changes in unequivocal terms. According to the party, the Constitution is non-existent, and even if one accepts its existence, none has the legal or moral right to change it without the approval of the people's representatives. The omission of secularism that was "achieved through a long democratic struggle" is a "denial of the historical values of freedom of religion" and giving new meaning to socialism is to pervert it. The UPP said that the referendum was unnecessary and might be "an attempt at perpetualing an interim government."[29]

The UPP opposes any scheme of denationalisation. It counter-argues that the Bangladeshi bourgeoise are comprador and commercial in character, having neither the mentality nor the capability to take the risk of building industries on long-term basis. They want quick profit by employing their capital in commerce and black-marketting. Therefore, the development of a "national capitalist bourgeoise" is far from expectation ; and the solution lies not in disinvestment but in the removal of the bourgeoise from state power by the working class.[30]

Jatio Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)

A revolutionary group of the *Bangladesh Chhatra League* (AL student wing) opposing *Mujibbad* (AL line of democratic socialism) founded the JSD in October, 1972. The party was born as "an auxiliary force" of an underground "revolutionary nucleus" to usher

27. *Khasra*, (draft) *Ghoshanaptra O' Karmasuchi*, UPP (1976) ; also *Nayajug*, 23 January, 1977.

28. Based on an interview with Rono, 27 May, 1977. Rono was deputed to talk to me by kazi Zafar Ahmed, General Secretary of the Party.

29. See UPP's resolutions in *Nayajug*, 8 May, 1977.

30. Rono : *Bijatiokaran Kar Sarthe* (Denationalisation in whose interest ?), *Nayajug*, 31 July and 7 August, 1977.

in the "correct social revolution" through class-struggle.[31] The JSD that first gained permission was a small right wing faction led by Abdul Awal, and the main stream of the party being refused government license continued its clandestine existence. The Awal group of JSD was banned on 14 October, 1977, and the radical group was granted permission under the PPR on 24 April, 1978.

The JSD maintains that the struggle of 1971 was a "war for national liberation" and Bangladesh emerged as an independent "nation state." In contrast with other left parties, the JSD radicals described Bangladesh as a capitalist state rather than a semi-feudal or semi-colonial one. They argue that the motive and modes of production and production-relations in agriculture (which contributes 58% of the national income) as well as in trade and industry are "unquestionably" capitalist in character.[32] But, the JSD maintains, the local capital is very backward and the bourgeoise very weak. They are dependent on foreign powers, particularly on "the U.S imperialism, Soviet revisionism and Indian expansionism". But this does not indicate the puppet character of the ruling bourgeoisie. They collaborate with the foreign powers in their own interests of developing capitalism and building for themselves a strong social base. Though Bangladesh has thus become the hunting ground for unrestricted plunder of both local and foreign capital, "the real enemy is the local bourgeoisie, the foreign powers being merely their supporters". Therefore, the main political programme of the party is to overthrow the bourgeoisie from state power and, to that end, build up all forms of struggle···legal or extra-legal, parliamentary or extra-parliamentary.[33]

31. The 'revolutionary nucleus' was guided by Serajul Alam Khan (now in jail). It has not yet been given a public name, though some refer it as Bangladesh Communist League. It works through a "Central Forum" representing the JSD and its student, labour and peasant fronts. For details, see *Sammobad* (underground paper of the party), No. 4, 23 February, 1976.

32. For JSD's analysis of the state of agriculture, see Akhlaqur Rahman (a JSD theorist) : *Bangladesher Krishite Dhanatantrer Bikash, Samikkhan Prokasani.* Dacca, 1974.

33. For details of JSD's political line and tactics, see *Khasra Thesis*, 28 January, 1976, publisher not mentioned, and *Sammobad*, No. 2 and 4.

According to the JSD radicals, the AL government was a bourgeois government and, the changes of 1975 did not change the character of the ruling class. The JSD described the holding of May referendum as a plan to establish "fascist dictatorship." It condemned the constitutional amendments and warned the Government against using religion for political purposes.[34]

In addition to the above-mentioned licensed leftist parties there are at least five small communist factions totally committed to armed revolution, dismissing the line of open organisational activities as revisionism. They are : the *Purba Banglar Sarvahara Party* (led by Lt. Conl. Ziauddin), the *Bangladesher Biplobi Communist Party* (M-L) former EPCP (M-L) led by Abudl Haq), the *Bangladesher Marxbadi-Leninbadi Communist Party* (a splinter of the EPCP (M-L) led by Saradindu Dastidar), and the *Bangladesher Communist Party* (M-L) (led by Badruddin Umar), and the East Bengal Communist Party (led by Abdul Matin).

Of all the left groups the JSD seems to be the strongest. During 1973—74 it grew as a large mass party with secret armed cells. Its underground *Biplobi Gano-Bahini* (Revolutionary People's Army) and *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha* (Revolutionary Soldiers Association) formed in 1974 had a leading role in the uprising of 7 November, 1975. But in a bid to overpower General Zia, top JSD leaders were caught (23 Nov. 75) and convicted by a military court for "conspiracy to wage war against the government". With its top leaders behind the prison bar and the chief of the *Gona-Bahini* hanged to death, its organisational and operational strength has considerably diminished. But the JSD's student wing is still a very strong force, though it is comparatively weak in the labour and peasants fronts.

The CPB had been small but well-knit party with fairly strong organisations in the students, labour and peasant fronts, But for the policy of total collaboration with the AL, the CPB lost its effectiveness as a separate entity.

The UPP, attaching greater importance to mass organisation, has been able to build the party apparatus at important levels. Though its peasant and student wings are still weak, its labour front has acquired strong footholds in some areas, particularly the Textile industries in Tongi

34. A leaflet issued by Mirza Sultan Raja (Acting President) and Harun-ar-Rashid (Acting General Secretary), dated 2 May, 1977.

The *Sammobadi Dal* laying much stress on "armed organisation", formed guerrilla units in several districts, clashing with the government forces in some rural areas (such as Tanore of Rajshahi) during 1973-74. Though the guerrilla actions were easily crushed, the party is still believed to have a sizable armed cadre. However, it has not yet been able to organise branches at all levels, and its student, labour and peasant fronts are similarly in the formative stage. Moreover, it has suffered a setback due to major splits in all its fronts.

The JAGMU is possibly the weakest in organisation. The party's real strength lies in its labour front which controls a good number of workers' union in the Jute industries. Having no offices of its own, the party uses that of its labour wing at Dacca, and is more known by its labour leader Abul Bashar who is now the President of the Jute Mills Workers' Federation.

Congruences and contradictions in the left

Ali the left parties agree that Bangladesh revolution remains incomplete and the emancipation lies in the socialist transformation. But they differ with each other as to the objective conditions obtaining in the country and the revolutionary tactics to be adopted. While the JSD interprets Bangladesh as a bourgeois state, others see it a semi-feudal and neo-colonial one. According to the JSD the next phase of revolution is the "socialist revolution", but others dub the JSD as "Trotskyites" and assert that the 'national democratic revolution' is to be completed first as a step towards socialist revolution. The UPP, JAGMU, JSD and the *Sammobadi Dal* adopt the tactics of combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics in varying degrees and emphasize on "people's revolution" under the leadership of the working class, but the CPB practises 'constitutional communism' and believes in gradualism and collaboration with the middle class. While the other parties work partly through open organisation and partly underground, the CPB alone declares that it shall not form any secret organisation or armed cadre.

Perhaps the most significant difference lies in the matter of identification of "enemy." The CPB regards U. S. "imperialism" as the principal enemy and condemns China for its anti-Bangladesh role in 1971. It claims itself and the AL and NAP(M) to be the only patriotic parties and dubs the rightists and the pro-Peking left

that opposed the Bangladesh liberation war as the enemy of the nation. On the other hand, the *Sammobadi Dal* and JAGMU fix Soviet "social-imperialism" and Indian "expansionism" as the principal and the U. S. "imperialism" as the secondary enemy of the people , and condemn the "BAKSALites" (AL-CPB-NAP (M) and the JSD as Indo-Soviet agents and therefore enemies of national independence. But, while the JAGMU strongly condemns the 'Islami' parties (IDL, ML and CML) as rightist reactionaries and "national enemies of pre-independence period," the *Sammobadi Dal* is much softer to them and merely calls them communal and harmful. Like the CPB, the UPP considers U. S. imperialism as the principal external enemy, but it also condemns the Soviet Union as revisionist and India as hegemonist. In the domestic field, it dubs the "BAKSALites" as national betrayers, and at the same time condemns the 'Islami' parties as born reactionaries and enemies of Bangladesh. The JSD which does not lay as much stress on external relations as on internal contradictions, dubs Soviet leadership as "revisionist" but prefers it to U. S. "imperialism." It terms the AL as bourgeois and fascist but also condemns those using religion for political purposes. Both the JSD and UPP speak of the correct leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in the "prolotarian revolution" but disapprove China's role in the Bangladesh liberation war, and therefore not so friendly to Peking as the *Sammobadi Dal* and JAGMU are.

Causes of differences

Differences among the left parties can hardly be explained by the class-origin of their leaderships. Irrespective of their professions, the bulk of the leaders of all these parties are drawn from the middle class, and include people of various segments of the society, many having interests in land. All these parties claim to represent the working class but they include a very few workers in the higher echelon of leadership.[35] And, even their labour fronts are mostly led by highly educated better off people[36]. Again, the religion of the

35 The CPB had only 1, JAGMU 2, UPP 2 and others none from the workers in their central executives (as in September, 1977).

36. *Bangladesh Shramik* (labour) *Federation* of *Sammobadi Dal* : Leader, Mohammad Toha, M.A., Land-lord ; Trade Union Centre of CPB : leader Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, M.A., business family ; *Bangla Sramik Federation* of UPP : Leader, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, M.A., business family: *Sramik League* of JSD: Leader Mohammad Sahjahan, M.A., peasant family. But the *Jatio Sramik Federation* of JAGMU is led by Abul Basher, who has no formal education and himself was a worker: its Secretary, Safiqur Rahman Majumder is also a worker having no formal education.

leaders bears little relevance to their attitude on the question of secularism. The JAGMU, UPP and JSD comprising more than 90% muslim leaders are more vocal against communal politics and antagonistic to the 'Islami' parties than the *Sammobadi Dal* (M-L) with only 55% muslim leaders. The age and education of the leaders may have certain bearing on their policies and attitudes. The younger section of the leaders, irrespective of party affiliation, are more secular and nationalist in their outlook and opposed to the regime. However, the real causes of contradictions in the Left camp are to be found in the relative positions of the parties in the Sino-Soviet conflict and their attitude towards the national liberation struggle, rather than in the leadership character. The demographic characteristics are given in the table below (P.102) .

The *Sammobadi Dal's* advocacy for denationalisation is not probably due to the internal compulsions of class-interests but to the international linkage. It believes that the public sector was created in the interest and at the behest of India and the "Soviet neo-capitalist class" and, denationalisation is necessary to keep off the Soviet finance capital (which generally supports the public sector as in India). They are more anti India largely because of their alignment with China as opposed to Russia. Similarly, CPB's behaviour is mainly dominated by its ties with the Soviet Union, and that of the UPP and JSD by their policy of non-commitment to any of the Communist blocs The *Sammobadi Dal* is more accommodative to the Islamists not because it is religious or communal but because both sides in common were opposed to the independence war of 1971.

As mentioned above, the CPB and the forces now comprising the JSD, UPP and JAGMU participated in the independence war of 1971. But their relations with the AL were not equally cooperative. The JSD forces then belonged to the AL. The pro-Moscow CPB and NAP-M leaders were taken in the "Consultative Council" formed in September, 1971 to advise the AL 'revolutionary government' in exile at Calcutta. But the communist groups now belonging to the UPP and JAGMU fought separately, their proposal for a united front of all the forces of independence being turned down by the AL. These groups regard this refusal as a part of the Indo-Soviet plan of establishing their hegemeny over Bangladesh through the AL. They allege, when the struggle was going to take the character of a " people's war", Indian ruling bourgeoise intervented with the Russian

Demographic characteristic of members of the central executive committees of the left parties (September, 1977)

	Sammobadi Dal		CPB		JAGMU		UPP		JSD	
Age :	No.	Appr.%	No.	Appr.%	No.	Appr.%	No.	Appr.%	No	Appr%
60 or above	3	27	4	17	2	15	-	-	-	-
50—59	2	18	5	22	3	23	3	13	1	3
40—50	1	9	6	26	4	31	6	26	7	22
30—40	4	37	8	35	2	16	14	61	21	66
25—30	1	9	-	-	2	15	-	-	3	9
Totals	11	100	23	100	13	100	23	100	32	100
Education :										
Master	3	27	7	31	3	23	10	44	20	63
Graduate	-	-	7	31	5	39	8	35	10	31
Secondary or Higher Secondary	5	46	5	21	3	23	4	17	2	6
Below Secondray	3	27	4	17	2	15	1	4	-	-
Totals	11	100	23	100	13	100	23	100	32	100
Religion :										
Muslim	6	55	15	65	12	92	22	95	30	94
Hindu	5	45	8	35	1	8	1	5	2	6
Totals	11	100	23	100	13	100	23	100	32	100
Professional backgrounds :										
Peasant leader	2	18	3	13	1	8	2	9	2	6
Businessman	-	-	-	-	3	23	3	13	2	6
Lawyer	-	-	3	13	1	8	4	17	3	10
Ex Serviceman	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	2	6
Teacher	2	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10
Journalist	-	-	2	8	1	8	1	4	-	-
Trade Union	1	9	4	17	3	23	5	21	2	6
Political worker and others	6	55	11	49	4	30	6	27	18	56
Totals	11	100	23	100	13	100	23	100	32	100

Sources of biodata : Sammobadi Dal---Mahmud Jamal Qaderi, Central Committee Member ; CPB—Shekhar Datta, Member in-charge, Dacca Central Office ; JAGMU—Ayubur Rahman, Member JAGMU Central Committee ; UPP—Kazi Gofran Ahmed, Office Secretary, UPP. Biodata of the JSD Central Forum as existed in July, 1976, have been collected through a student leader associated with the party.

support and inducted the bourgeois AL into power. After independence, the CPB continued its support to the AL but other communist groups including the JSD carried on attack against the AL Government for "bartering away the interests of the nation" to the Indo-Soviet axis and denying to the people their democratic rights. While the CPB, AL and NAP-M described the BAKSAL as a means to establish " democracy of the exploited ", to others it was the final blow to the vestiges of democracy.

Naturally, all the parties excepting the AL, CPB and NAP-M hailed the overthrow of the BAKSAL regime as an important victory in the interest of national independence and democracy; and they found most enthusiastic ally in the pro-American-pro-Pakistan rightist forces that suffered humiliation at the hands of the AL during and after 1971. China promptly recognised the new regime but the Soviet Union and India expressed their indignation over this political change. And, India's unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water through Farakka and providing shelter and arms to the BAKSAL supporters fleeing India and carrying on border raids and subversion in Bangladesh territories, strained Bangladesh's relations with that country to a breaking point. Thus the question of national independence, particularly against Indian designs, and the threat of AL resurrection provided a common ground for the Government, the Right and the Left to work in unison. In November, 1976 the *Sammobadi Dal*, JAGMU and UPP joined hands with some rightist political parties — the *Jatio League*, *Jatio Dal*, *Krishak-Sramik Party*, Labour Party, CML and NAP-B — to form the " National Resistance and Solidarity Committee ", to fight the " Soviet-backed Indian aggression " and the " conspiracy of their local agents". The left parties continued pressure on the Government to call a national convention of the " patriotic forces" (excluding AL, CPB and NAP-M for deciding the questions relating to the constitution and elections and to form a " national government " — a subtle attempt at uniting with the ruling elite and push politics in the left direction, but the regime did not respond. On the other hand, the constitutional amendments and the emphasis on capitalist development met some of the pressing demands of the rightists.

The Left Strategy

Most of the parties belonging to the second groups as well as the *Jatio Janata party* and the people's League are new formations

under the PPR; and none of them has mass-following or effective organisation. The NAP-B is an old organisation but suffered in strength and popularity after the death of Maulana Bhasani in 1976 due to acute factionalism and splits. The 'Islami' parties of the first group having some organisational strength and social base but repeatedly rejected by the electorate during Pakistan period are dismissed by the Left as a "spent force". Thus, the AL, the largest party in the country, remains the real contender of power, and the left forces (excepting the CPB) fix it (AL) as their principal enemy and would be willing to work with almost any one opposed to that party. The leftists speak of the " inherent weakness of the class-character " of the ruling elite and often accuse it of rehabilitating the " rightist reactionaries " and facilitating the " infiltration of U. S. imperialism ", but would not move against the regime as it would benefit the AL.

To eliminate the AL as a political force the left groups chose its " politics of national subjugation " (to Indian hegemonism) as their major plank. But to the masses (85% Muslims) with primordial culture and communal background, anti-Indianism transpired to be anti-Hinduism. And, traditionally anti-Hindu ' Islami ' parties successfully exploited the religious sentiments to stage their come back. On the other hand, the continued denial of democratic rights and economic hardship[37] indirectly helped the AL shaking off much of the allegations levelled against it, and with solid Hindu support, it regained its eminence. Thus in the municipal elections held in August, 1977 the AL and the ML emerged as the two major forces, relegating the Left to the back ground.[38]

37. The cost of living index for Dacca middle class (base year 1969—70 = 100) was 458 in January and 409.7 in June, 1975; it came down to 366 in June, 1976, but rose to 379 in March, 1977, 4 0 in May, 407.45 in June and 440.21 in December, 1977. Source: Bangladesh Planning Commission.

38. The AL claims the Chairmanship of 52 Municipalities out of the total 77. (See *Mukti Bani*, AL weekly, 21 August, 1977). But the ML concedes only 27 to the AL, claiming for itself 24. According to daily *Azad* (ML paper), 16 August, '77, the results are: AL-27, ML-24, NAP(B)-5, NAP(M)-3, UPP-3, Democratic League-2, IDL-1, JSD-1 and independents 11. Since the elections were not contested on party tickets, the party positions are not officially known.

The confrontation between the ML-IDL combine advocating ' Muslim nationalism ' and the AL championing the cause of ' Bengali nationalism' aggravated the crises of integration and identity. The ML and IDL interpreting Bangladesh as the culmination of the Lahore Resolution [39] demanded separate electorate for religious minorities. The ML claimed that the " large majority" of votes cast in its favour (in the municipal elections) signified people's verdict for " Islamic way of life ". They also described many aspects of Bangali art, literature and culture as un-Islamic. In the wake of statements issued by the ML and IDL leaders decrying sculpture as idolatry, a statue (depicting vigor in sports) disappeared from the City centre on 24 August.[40] It was followed by a violent clash between rival groups of students when on 28 August, 1977 the ML-IDL supported students were campaigning for demolishing a statue erected in the Dacca University Campus in commemoration of the martyrs of the liberation war.[41] The AL, CPB, UPP and the JSD along with their student fronts strongly condemned the ML-IDL move as an attempt at denigrating the Bengali culture, history and traditions including the liberation struggle. But the, *Sammobadi Dal* and JAGMU remained silent.

With the fall of the Congress regime in India and the " understanding " reached (18 April, ' 77) on the Farakka and fugitive issues, relations between India and Bangladesh steadily improved (a formal agreement on the sharing of Ganges water being signed on 5 Nov. ' 77). As a result the question of international contradictions lost much of its preponderance in Bangladesh politics and the political parties became more concerned about the existing " political vacuum ", urging for the restoration of democratic rights and open politics. Some of them even threatened to start movement for the restoration of democracy. Seven leaders

39. The resolution adopted by the All-India Muslim League in 1940 envisaged independent "States" in the two Muslim majority zones of India, on the basis of Muslims and Hindus being separate nations.

40. The statue was removed during curfew hours, which could be possible only with the sanction of the authority concerned; but the Government would not expressly accept the responsibility.

41. The 'Islami' group was throughly defeated by the 'progressive, groups of students. At least 24 persons were injured, about a half of them seriously. See *Ittefaq* and *Bangladesh Times*, 29 August, 1977.

representing 5 communist groups — the *Sammobadi Dal* (two factions), JAGMU, EPCP(M–L) and *Bangladesher Marxbadi–Leninbadi Communist Party* — in a joint statement called upon the "patriotic and democratic forces" to build up a "patriotic national front" for a united movement on the basis of a 12-point programme which included achievement of full democratic and economic rights, resisting the antinational forces (AL, CPB, NAP-M, Democratic League, *Jama'at-e-Islami* (an IDL faction) and the JSD) and banning their political activities; repeal of all undemocratic laws including the PPR; the withdrawal of Martial Law, scrapping of the Constitution and the formation of a "national government" opposed to imperialism, Social-imperialism and expansionism.[42]

The above developments created an atmosphere of uncertainty and a civil cold-war situation. But the Government failed to come out with any clear-cut policy objectives or political programme. Emphasizing "Bangladeshi nationalism" as the basis of politics, President Zia called upon the people to eliminate "anti-Bangladesh forces", but would not elaborate his concept of nationalism. He also maintained silence on the questions of democratic politics and national elections. However, following the mutiny that took place at Bogra cantonment on 30 September and the abortive coup in Dacca on 2 October, 1977,[43] the President met the political leaders of the country and on 15 December, 1977 announced his decision to fill up the "prevailing political vacuum though a "democratic process" and to form a "political front" to unite various parties, groups and individuals.[44]

42. See the text of the statement in *Bangladesh Times*, 13 September, 1977.

43. According to official reports, 1 Army officer was killed and 3 others were wounded in Bogra; 13 Air Force and 11 Army officers were killed and 40 wounded in Dacca. For Bogra incident 101 persons were tried: 55 were sentenced to death, 14 to life transportation, and 18 to imprisonment; 14 were acquitted. Official reports on the trial for Dacca coup are not available; number of persons involved is believed to be much larger. See *Sangbad*, 3, 20 and 28 October, 1977.

44. See *Sangbad*, 16 December, 1977.

Though General Zia primarily relied on the military and civil bureaucracy, gradually he built up a popular support base for himself, Beginning from early 1977 he toured the entire country going down to small places inaugurating various projects and canferences. On the eve of the May referendum alone he addressed over 70 public meetings in addition to numerous way-side gatherings. He met cross-sections of the people giving on-the-spot decisions on their immediate problems and making liberal grants to various social and cultural organisations. The President met the Chairmen of all the Union Councils and Municipalities in conferences at Dacca, eulogized them as " real government ", granting widers powers to the Councils. The honorarium of the U. C. Chairmen was raised from Tk. 100 to 300 and the Members were given a new monthly remuneration of Tk. 100; and the rural elite was thus won over.

Eventually, a new political party named *Jatiotabadi Ganotantrik Dal* (JAGODAL) was formed under the guidance of President Zia, which received government approval on 22 February 1978. The JAGODAL professes democracy and " Bangladeshi nationalism " besed on the common language and culture, the common history of national struggle and the common traditions. According to the party, " religious faith and traditions are inseparably intermingled" and the reflection of religious beliefs and ideas of the Muslim majority in the social and national life is only "natural and desirable". [45] It advocates a presidential system of government and mixed economy. The new party has been able to attract people of various political creed and colours and, specially the rightist parties have lost many of their members to it.

As a step towards democartic transition, President Zia announced on 21 April, 1978 that the presidential election would be held on 3 June, 1978 on the basis of direct adult franchise, to be followed by the general elections to Parliament in December. He also announced that the Constitution would be amended to ensure a presidential system with the "sovereignty" of Parliament and "independence" of judiciary, and promised to fully protect all the constitutional amendments previously made by him. Martial Law continued to operate but the ban on public meetings was lifted with effect from 1 May, 1978.

The Presidential election created a fresh wrangle over the Constitution and brought about a new polarisation of the political forces

45. *Ghosanapatra*, JAGODAL, pp., 1-2.

culminating into 3 political fronts. First, the *Jatiotabadi* Front (JF) comprised the JAGODAL, NAP—B,[46] UPP, ML, Labour Party and the *Tafsil Jati Federation* and was led by General Ziaur Rahman who was also its presidential candidate. It declared "independence, democracy and social progress i.e. economic emancipation" as its major plank. The JF identified "hegemonism" and "racialism" (imperialism not mentioned) as the enemies of the Third World and wanted to resist the "conspirators (the AL and its allies) against our independence and national sovereignty". It envisaged a presidential system of government with the President as "Chief Executive" and the Parliamenr exercising legislative, budgetory, impeachment and constituent powers.[47] The second front named *Ganotantrik Oikya Jote* (GOJ) comprising the AL, *Jatio Janata Party*, NAP—M, People's League,[48] Gano-Azadi League[49] and the banned CPB, nominated General (retired) M. A, G. Osmany (the C-in-C, Bangladesh liberation forces in 1971 and AL Minister during 1972-74, who resigned from the AL in protest against the introduction of BAKSAL in January, 1975) of the *Jatio Janata Party* as its presidential candidate. The GOJ stood for "parliamentary democracy" and "exploitation-free society" and promised to hand over power to an elected parliament on the basis of the Constitution of 1972.[50] The third one named *Jatio Jukta Front* (JJF) was led by Ataur Rahman khan of the *Jatio League* and included the *Jatio Dal* (Amena group),[51] IDL (Siddique group),[52] *Krishak Sramik Party*, a section of the banned Democratic League (the other section earlier joined the JAGODAL), and a splinter of the CML led by Shamsul Huda. Describing the presidential election as a bluff, the JJF decided

46. Till recently the NAP (B) chief Mashiur Rahman had been a severe critique of the Zia regime. For his anti-Government stand a section of the party broke away under the leadership of Gazi Sahidullah in June 1977. Again, a group of the Gazi NAP was led away by Alhaj Bazlus Sattar in March, 1978. However, all the 3 groups supported President Ziaur Rahman in the election.

47. See the press conference of the JF, *Bangladesh Times*, 8 May, 1978.

48. A dissident group of the People's League led by Shah Badrul Huq joined the JF.

49. The Chief of the *Gano-Azadi League* Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish is a former Awami Leaguer. A break-away section of the party led by Golam Rabbani joined the JF.

50. See the GOJ manifesto in *Sangbad*, May 15, 1978.

51. A rival group of the *Jatio Dal* is led by Sayed Sirajul Huda who was one of the 10 presidential candidates.

52. The other faction of the IDL led by Maulana Abdur Rahim supported General Ziaur Rahman. Abdus Samad, Joint Secretary of this faction, being refused party nomination, stood as an independent candidate but ultimately extended his support to General Zia.

not to participate in it but to carry on movement for the restoration of "full parliamentary government" and the realisation of democratic rights. But later the JJF leaders asked the people to ensure the defeat of the GOJ.

The JAGMU was the only left party to field presidential candidate of its own. Abul Bashar, the JAGMU nominee branded both the JF and GOJ as "reactionery alliances" and promised *Krishak-Sramik Raj* (rule of peasants and workers). According to the party both the fronts were "anti-national and servitors of foreign interests"—the JF being an Indo-American and the GOJ an Indo-Soviet clique. [53]

The CPB's unity with the GOJ is consistent with its traditional political line. But the UPP's alliance with the JF seems to be contradictory with its avowed policies and, it created a serious rift in the party. The younger section of the UPP led by Rashed Khan Menon (Joint Secretary) strongly condemned the senior leaders and asserted that joining hands with the "reactionery" ruling party and the "communal Muslim League that opposed the independence" was against the basic principles of the UPP and amounted to "stabbing the democratic progressive movement in the back". They also branded the GOJ as fascist reactioneries.[54] But Kazi Zafar Ahmed (UPP General Secretary) asserted that the "BAKSALites", not the ML, were the "principal enemy at the moment"; and to resist the common enemy and restore the democratic rights it was necessary to join the JF led by President Ziaur Rahman. He argued that General Zia, though an individual, was very much important at the moment for the peaceful transition to democracy from Martial Law.[55]

Mohammad Toaha of the *Sammobadi Dal* who had been an eloquent supporter of President Zia turned to be a sharp critique of the regime, condemning it for its failure to resolve the "national economic crisis" and opening the door for "imperialist finance capital". He held the Government responsible for giving opportunity to the "BAKSALites" to stage a comeback and termed the contest between Zia and

53. See the press conference of the JAGMU, *Sangbad*, 5 May, 1978.

54. See the joint statement issued by Menon, Nazrul Islam and Haider Akbar Khan Rono (the UPP Presidium Members), and their press conference, *Sangbad*, 6 and 11 May, 1978.

55. See the UPP's press conference, *Sangbad*, 6 May, 1978.

Osmany as a "mock fight". According to him the political atmosphere obtaining in the country was not favourable for a free and fair election and there was nothing to choose between the 'BAKSAL' backed by "Soviet social-imperialism" and the JAGODAL backed by "U. S. imperialism". [56] A major faction of the *Sammobadi Dal* which left Toaha mainly for his open support to the Zia regime in September, 1977 under the leadership of Nogen Sarker decided to boycot the election, and yet another dissident group led by Moslehuddin Nizam, Mahmud Jamal Qaderi (Central Committee Members) and Mahfuz Bhuyan (General Secretary, *Bangladesh Sramik Federation*) terming the June 3 Presidential election as 'another referendum' (farce and useless) suggested to defer it till November, 1978. [57] The JSD also blasted both the JF and the GOJ but made no specific commitment about their role in the presidential election which, according to it, could hardly ensure democracy or "fundamental and political rights of the people". [58]

Thus most of the left groups remained outside the fronts, describing the JF and the GOJ as the 'two sides of the same coin'. But they made it abanduntly clear in their utterances that the AL-dominated GOJ, "a new version of the former BAKSAL", was the more dangerous enemy than the JF led by General Ziaur Rahman, and some of them privately worked for the latter. They all urged for the formation of a 'third front' of the left democratic forces, but it did not materialise. The JAGMU claimed to have ushered in the desired 'third political stream' by fielding its candidate in the presidential election, but other left groups would not recognise it as such and none of them came out to support the JAGMU candidate.

Since most of the parties prefer parliamentary system of government they were opposed to the presidential election on the basis of direct franchise. They said that the sudden announcement of the election under the Martial Law and barely one month's time allowed to the opposition for the campaign were a "deceitful device" to perpetuate the dictatoral rule of the President. But, as we have seen, the

56. See *Ganosakti*, 30 April and 14 May, 1978.

57. See the joint statement of the leaders, *Sangbad*, 4 May, 1978.

58. See the JSD's press conference, *Sangbad* and *Bangladesh Observer*, 12 May, 1978.

rightist parties ultimately supported General Zia because they thought him to be their nearest candidate pledging to protect the "Islamic amendments" effected by him last year and pursuing a policy of pampering and expanding the private sector. However, two tiny rightist parties — the *Gano-Mukti Dal* and the Huda faction of the *Jatio Dal*—put up their own candidates in the election.

Virtually, the presidential election turned out to be a straight fight between the JF and the GOJ. While the GOJ stressed on the restoration of parliamentary system of government, the JF leaders brought the question of "independence" as the focal point in the election campaign and charged the GOJ components (particularly the AL) for selling out the "national independence" (to India) and killing democracy, and for other misrule and corruptions in the past. The GOJ leaders argued that it was they who led the liberation war and brought independence, while the JF rehabilitated the Muslim Leaguers and other elements that opposed Bangladesh in 1971. However, General Ziaur Rahman bagged a thumping victory with 76·77% of the votes polled. General (retd.) Osmany was the nearest rival with 21·70% and Abul Basher became fourth securing a small fraction of 1% of the polls. Amazingly enough, Maulana Khabiruddin Ahmad, an independent candidate politically quite unknown to the people, secured the third position. The official results of the election are given in the table below (P. 112).

The opposition groups including the GOJ and JAGMU alleged large-scale rigging of the polls, misuse of public money and government machinery, and resort to threats, intimidations and coercion on behalf of the ruling candidate. [59] The allegations may have some basis, but it is also apparent that General Ziaur Rahman was the choice of the majority of those who went to the polls. While the left groups held that the verdict of the people in the presidential election was a negative one against the "Awami-BAKSALites", the ML and IDL leaders claimed that it was a "victory of Islam over secularism". [60] But in

59. See the press conferences of GOJ and JAGMU, *Sangbad*, 7 June, 1978; also the *New Nation* (Dacca *Weekly*), 5 June, 1978.

60. For comments of leaders see *Bangladesh Times*, 5 June, 1978 ; JSD statement, *Bangladesh Observer*, 10 June, 1978. See also ML President Khan A. Sabur's press conference in *Sangbad*, 17 June, 1978, who claimed that the ML and AL were the two parties in the country and that Zia's victory was in essence the victory of the ML and its ideology.

TABLE

THE RESULTS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, 1978.

Candidates	Votes secured	Percentage of votes
Major-General Ziaur Rahman (JF nominee)	1,57,33,807	76·63
General (retd.) M. A. G. Osmany (GOJ nominee)	44,55,200	21·70
Maulana Khabiruddin Ahmad (Independent)	81,425	
Abul Bashar (JAGMU Vice-President)	51,936	
Azizul Islam (Independent)	49,064	1·67
Mohammad Golam Morshed (Independent)	38,193	
Mohammad Abdus Samad (Independent)	37,273	
Sayed Serajul Huda (*Jatio Dal*)	35,618	
S. M. Abu Bakar Siddique (Independent)	25,077	
Principal Abdul Hamid (*Gano-Mukti Dal*)	23,968	
Totals	2,05,31,561	100

Registered electorate	:	3,84,86,247
Invalid votes	:	3,54,010
Percentage of votes cast	:	53·34

Source : Bangladesh Election Commission, "Return of Election", June 10, 1978.

all practical senses it was more a personal victory of General Ziaur Rahman than anything else, and the JF components rather helped themselves than President Zia.

Obviously, General Zia's entry into politics gave it (politics) a new dimension largely upsetting the previous party balances. The ML and other 'Islami' groups lost their grounds to President Ziaur Rahman who under the changed circumstances appeared as the ablest representative of the 'Islam-pachhand' (Islam loving) people. On the other hand, the AL's leading role in the independencee war which could be effectively used against the ML did not cut much ice against General Zia, a renowned freedom fighter of 1971. Thus for his policy of balancing between religiosity and nationalism, reinforced by his position of authority and success in maintaining relatively peaceful and stable conditions, President Ziaur Rahman could build up a popular image for himself and overtook the AL and ML both of which in the meantime suffered a setback due to internal bickerings.

The AL comeback has been halted, but the left groups seem to have gained little politically or ideologically. The Indo-Soviet "hegemonism" appears to have been replaced by U. S. "imperialism"; and the rightist vested interests and communal forces have succeeded to push the regime farther to the right. As a result, the leftists in general turned to be more vocal against the ruling elite. But the fear of AL resurrection prevented them from taking a positive stand in the presidential election. Conspicuously, they failed to present a clearly-defined political programme to the people and most of them played the role of a dummy in the election. The official section of the UPP has joined the Government with only two places in the 30—men new Council of Ministers which include 10 persons from the JAGODAL, 3 from NAP-B, 2 from ML, 1 from the *Tafsil Jati Federation* and 12 nonpolitical technocrats. It is to be seen how long the UPP carries in the Government without compromising its avowed principles of secularism, socialism, and anti-imperialism.

Conclusions

Bangladesh politics is pervaded by excessive factionalism and an endless race of "patriotism". Almost each group claiming itself to be the real patriot dubs the other as the enemy of "national independence." Most left groups identify the "Awami-Baksalites", as do the

rightists, as the "national betrayers" and the principal political enemy. But they are too illorganised to independently counter the AL. Their tactics of uniting with the ruling elite to crush the "enemy" and push the regime in the left direction appear to have failed. Rather, it results in further disintegration and confusion in their rank and file. Repeated calls for Left unity remain fruitless due to leadership conflict and mutual distrust, one group often calling the other revisionist, burgeois, or opportunist. The lack of a clear sense of direction and self-identity leads them to theoretical hair-splitting and ambivalence, and often to compromise and personalistic politics. Overemphasizing the questions of international contradictions and "national enemy", they utterly neglect the task of political socialisation and socialist-democratic awakening of the masses. Socialism seems to have considerable appeal to the advanced sections of the workers, students, and intelligentsia. But for the acute factionalism and frequent shift of emphasis and tactics the left groups have failed to inspire people's confidence in their leadership. And, in the absence of a "central force" with strong leadership and positive political programme to rally around, the prospect of their rising as a viable counter-elite group seems to be remote.

Constitutional Changes Since the Fourth Amendment

Z. I. Choudhury

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, unlike its two predecessors—the Pakistan Constitutions of 1956 [1] and 1962 [2] —was not abrogated following the political change in the country that took place in the early hours of August 15, 1975. It was reported that the armed forces of Bangladesh, in the 'greater national interest' took over power under the leadership of Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, then Commerce and Foreign Trade Minister in the Government of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.[3] The President and a few associates were killed in the process and Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed was sworn in as the head of the state by the acting Chief Justice. After the take-over the chiefs of three services and heads of other armed forces including police, expressed their allegiance to the new regime headed by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed.[4] Martial law was declared and curfew imposed throughout the country. The new President appointed Mr. Mohammadullah as the Vice-President and a ten-member Council of Ministers.

1. The Constitution of Pakistan, 1956, was abrogated by a Presidential Proclamation on October 7, 1958, and Martial Law was declared throughout the country. For the text of the Proclamation, see P. L. D. 1958 Central Statutes, 577.

2. The Constitution of Pakistan, 1962, was abrogated by the army chief, General Yahya Khan, who took over power from President Ayub Khan on March 25, 1969, by a Proclamation. For the text of the Proclamation, see P. L. D. Central Statutes, 42.

3. *The Bangladesh Times*, August 16, 1974.

4. *Ibid.*

The nature of the new legal order that was established after the political change on August 15, 1975, was contained in the Proclamation issued on August 20, 1975. The document [5] narrated the fact that Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed had taken over 'all and full powers of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with effect from the morning of the 15th August, 1975,' and had suspended the provisions of articles 48 and 55, and modified the provisions of article 148 and form I of the Third Schedule of the Constitution.[6] These changes in the provisions of the Constitution were necessitated by the nature of the change which was beyond the contemplation of the constitution. The Proclamation empowered the President to make Martial Law Regulations and Orders, to set up Special Courts or Tribunals for the trial and punishment of any offence under such Regulations or Orders and to empower any Court or Tribunal or bar the jurisdiction of any Court or Tribunal in respect of the trial and punishment under the Regulations or Orders. All laws in force before the change were continued subject to the Martial Law Regulations and Orders made by the President. It was declared in the proclamation that 'the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh shall, subject to this Proclamation and Martial Law Regulations and Orders made by (the President) in pursuance thereof, continue to remain in force.' In explaining the provisions of the proclamation a Government spokesman said that the Constitution had not been abrogated and that the four fundamental principles of state policy remained intact.[7] The President, however, assumed the power of

5. The Proclamation, dated August 20, 1975. For full text, see *Handbook of Proclamations*, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, March 18, 1976.

6. Article 48 relates to the election of the President; Article 55 relates to the mode of succession to the office of President if any vacancy arises; Article 148 provides for taking oath of office before entering upon the office and the Third Schedule required the President to take the oath administered by the Speaker.

7. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August, 21, 1975.

making Martial Law Regulations and Orders on 'any subject or matter specified in, or regulated or provided by, the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.' [8] At any rate, it was presumed that despite the abrupt political change, the Constitution was to remain in force though the Martial Law Regulations and Orders made by the President would prevail over the provisions of the Constitution during the interim period till the revocation of Martial Law. During the two and a half month regime of President Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed the Constitution remained unchanged except the necessary suspension and modifications of some provisions made on August 15 to facilitate, and give validity to his succession to the office of President. The President by an ordinance [9] promulgated on August 30, 1975, prohibited formation of any political party, and banned all political activities. Later, on September 1, 1975, the declaration relating to the formation of the Bangladesh Krishak Awami League (BAKSAL) made by the former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in February, was also annulled by an order of the President made in exercise of the powers under article 117A of the Constitution. [10] Leaving aside the Constitution to remain intact the President concerned himself to things like prescribing a 'national head-gear, an 'official dress' and forbidding 'pomp and grandeur' in receptions of state functionaries [11] to impress upon the people about the change of the regime, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed's last act as the President was the insertion of a new clause [12] in the Proclamation issued by him

8. The proclamation (First Amendment) Order, 1975, issued on September 19, 1975. *Handbook of Proclamations*, dated March 18, 1976, p. 27.

9. The Political Parties (Prohibition) Ordinance, 1975. Ordinance No. XLVI of 1975. 27 D. L. R. (1975) Bangladesh Statutes, 187.

10. *The Bangladesh Observer*, September 2, 1975.

11. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1975.

12. Clause "(aa) if I am unable to discharge the functions of the office of President for any reason or I want to vacate the office of President, I may, by order, nominate any person as President of Bangladesh and hand over office of President to him who shall enter upon that office after making the required oath before the Chief Justice of Bangladesh or any Judge of the Supreme designated by me;" The Proclamation (Second Amendment) Order, 1975, Proclamation Order No. II of 1975. *Handbook of Proclamations* (March 18, 1976).

on August 20, 1975, regarding succession to the office of President necessitated by another military uprising that took place in early November 1975. The new provision entitled the President to nominate any person as the President if the sitting President was unable to discharge his functions or wanted to vacate the office for any reason. Under this provision Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed made over the office of President to the then Chief Justice of Bangladesh, Mr. Justice A. M. Sayem who entered upon the office on November 6, 1975.

It is significant that though President Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed had declared Martial Law throughout the country on August 15, 1975, no administrator of Martial Law was named or appointed. The armed forces were instrumental in bringing about the political change on that date but they seemed to have a limited objective and went into the background as soon as the civilian government of President Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed was organised. There was already an emergency in the country declared by the former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in December, 1974, and Martial Law was declared, apparently, to meet any situation which might arise consequent to the change. But with the exit of Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, by a Proclamation [13] issued on November 8, 1975, the new President, Mr. Justice Sayem, was made the Chief Martial Law Administrator and the three Services' Chiefs were appointed Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators. This was a significant change which brought the military in the fore-front of the administration.[14]

Since the Proclamation of November 8, 1975, significant changes have been made in the form of omissions, modifications and amendments to the provisions of the Constitution. Parliament was dissolved and the persons holding the office as Vice-President, Speaker, Deputy

13. The Proclamation, dated November 8, 1975. (Subsequently known as the Second Proclamation). *Handbook of Proclamations*, pp. 2-5.

14. By the Third Proclamation issued on November 29, 1976, the office of the Chief Martial Law Administrator was made over to the Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ziaur Rahman, with powers to amend the proclamations, to make M. L. R's and M. L. O's, or to do anything or to take any action necessary "in the national interest or for the enforcement of Martial Law." The Third Proclamaiton, *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated November 29, 1976.

Speaker, Ministers and Whips were declared to have ceased to hold office with effect from November 6, 1975.[15] The first change [16] in the Constitution was made by omitting Part VI of the Constitution which dealt with the formation and organisation of 'the National Party.' This omission was not unexpected in as much as the President's order relating to the formation of the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League had already been repealed, and in the context of the regime's declared intention of establishing a multi-party democratic system. Article 99 of the Constitution was then amended to entitle the judges of the Supreme Court to hold, after retirement or removal, any judicial or quasi-judicial office [17] and to allow a judge of the High Court Division, after retirement or removal, to plead or act before the Appellate Division. [18] By the next amendment the disqualification of a person's eligibility to be elected as a member of Parliament for conviction under the Bangladesh Collaborators (special Tribunal) Order, 1972, as specified in clause (e) of article 66 was omitted and the same disqualification rendering him ineligible to be enrolled on the electoral roll for parliamentary elections was removed by omitting clause (e) of article 122 of the Constitution. [19] By the same amendment the Bangladesh Collaborators (special Tribunal) Order, 1972,

15. The Vice-President in Sheikh Mujib's government, Syed Nazrul Islam and other leaders were put under arrest on August 23, 1975. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August 24, 1975. Four of them Syed Nazrul Islam, Mansur Ali, A. H. M. Kamruzzaman and Tajuddin Ahmed died in the Dacca Central Jail killing on November 3, 1975.

16. This change and other subsequent changes in the constitution have been made by proclamations issued by the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator. The creation of the office of Chief Martial Law Administrator probably led the Government legal circle to the assumption that the Chief Martial Law Administrator was competent to amend the constitution which the president holding office under the constitution was not competent to do.

17. The Second proclamation (First Amendment) Order, 1975. Second Proclamation Order. I of 1975, dated December 17, 1975. *Handbook of Proclamations*, p. 28.

18. The Second Proclamation (Second Amendment) Order, 1975. Second Proclamation Order No. II of 1975, dated December 20, 1975. *Handbook of Proclamations*, p. 29.

19. The Second Proclamation (Third Amendment) Order, 1975. Second Proclamation Order No. III of 1975, dated December 31, 1975. *Handbook of Proclamation*, pp. 29-30,

was struck off the list of laws which were given special protection and validity notwithstanding any contrary provisions in the Constitution and enumerated in the First Schedule.

Article 6 relating to citizenship was amended to delete the words 'citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees' from the original article. [20] This article was again amended to substitute the deleted words by 'the citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshis. [21] The citizens' right to move the High Court for the enforcement of fundamental rights under article 102 was restored by substituting the existing article 44 by a new article to read, in effect, as it was before the Fourth Amendment. [22] Not only was the jurisdiction of the High Court (later High Court Division) in respect of the enforcement of fundamental rights restored, but the Supreme Court itself had undergone a structural change, more than once, within a period of eighteen months. In May, 1976, the Supreme Court consisting of the High Court Division and the Appellate Division was substituted by two separate Courts, namely, the High Court and the Supreme Court with well-defined powers, functions and jurisdictions. [23] The original Chapter I of Part VI was substituted establishing the Supreme Court as the highest court of appeal in the country with, as before, appeallate and advisory jurisdictions and power to review any judgment pronounced or orders made by it. The Chief Justice was to be appointed by the President and other judges were to be appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice. [24] Judges of the Supreme Court were to hold office up to the age of sixtyfive and those of the High Court up to

20. The Second Proclamation (Fourth Amendment) Order, 1976. Second Proclamation Order No. I of 1976, *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated January 23, 1976.

21. The Proclamations (Amendment) Order, 1977. Proclamations Order No. I of 1977. *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated April 23, 1977.

22. The Second Proclamation (seventh Amendment) Order, 1977. Second Proclamation Order No. IV of 1976. *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated May 28, 1976.

23. *Ibid.*

24. President's obligation to consult the Chief Justice while appointing puisne judges was provided in the original constitution of 1972, but was dispensed with by the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975.

the age of sixty-two, and were removed by the President pursuant to resolution of Parliament passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total number of members, on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. [25]

A new Chapter I A was added to provide for the establishment of a High Court consisting of a Chief Justice and other judges to be appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court. The High court with its separate existence was to have all powers, functions and jurisdiction as were conferred on the High Court Division of the Supreme Court under the original Constitution before the Fourth Amendment. A new office of Advocate-General was created under a new article 64 A. The Advocate-General was to be appointed by the President and to hold office during his pleasure. Other minor amendments to the provisions of the Constitution were made to facilitate independent functioning of the High Court and the Supreme Court.

But the two Courts were again integrated to become one Supreme Court comprising two Divisions viz., the High Court Division and the Appellate Division.[26] The Chief Justice and other Judges of the Supreme Court are now to be appointed by the Peesident who has no obligation of consultation with any person or body in making these appointments, but the Chief Justice and the other Judges are to be independent in the exercise of their judicial functions. The new provisions relating to the composition, powers, functions and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court have virtually restored the position as it was in the original Constitution except with regard to the provisions relating to the removal of the judges and their disabilities after retirement. The judges now are to hold office till they attain the age of sixty two years, and are removable by the President on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council. This super-council consisting of the Chief Justice and the two next senior Judges is 'to prescribe a code of conduct to be obseved by the Judges, and to inquire into the capacity or conduct of a Judge or any other functionary who is not removable from office except in like manner as a Judge.' On being directed by the President the Supreme Judicial Council is to make an inquiry and report to the President about the capacity or conduct of a Judge. And on an adverse report by the

25. Under the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975, a judge was removable by the President in his discretion.

26. Second Proclamation (Tenth Amendment) Order, 1977, *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated November 27, 1977,

council a judge is to be removed from office by the President.[27] A judge of the Supreme Court is now eligible to hold, after retirement or removal, any judicial or quasi-judicial office, and a judge of the High Court Division is, on his retirement or removal from office, entitled to plead or act before the Appellate Division.[28] The Supreme Court is a court of record having all the powers of such a court including the power to make an order for the investigation of or punishment for any contempt of itself.[29]

The changes which have been discussed so far are no doubt significant ; but more significant changes have been brought about by amending the preamble and articles of the Constitution which contained the philosophy and ideals, on which the Constitution originally was based. In contrast with the secular character of the constitution where the principle of 'secularism' was described as one of the four 'high ideals', the Constitution, as it stands now after the amendments, has a clear Islamic bias in its form and philosophy. This has been done by thoroughly amending the preamble and the relevant articles by the Proclamations (Amendment) Order, 1977.[30] The Preamble to the Constitution now begins with 'BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM (In the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful'.[31] In the first paragraph of the Preamble, the words 'a historic struggle for national liberation' have been substituted by the words 'a historic war for national independence', thus emphasising the armed struggle which took place during the nine months preceding the establishment of independent Bangladesh on December 16, 1971, where military element as an immediate means of achieving independence found natural prominence.

27. The provision for the Supreme Judicial Council was made by the proclamations (Amendment) Order, 1977 (Proclamation Order No. I of 1977), *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated April 23, 1977 and is now incorporated into the Second Proclamation (Tenth Amendment) Order, 1977. Other functionaries removable in this manner are the comptroller and Auditor-General, the Chairman and Members of the Public Service Commission. Such procedure for removal of a Judge was first provided by the Pakistan Constitution of 1962.

28. These provisions were first made in December, 1975, by the Second Proclamation (First Amedment) Order, 1975.

29. *The Constitution of Bangladesh*, Article 108.

30. Proclamations Order No. I of 1977, *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated April 23, 1977.

31. These words formed the beginning of the Preambles to both the Constitutions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan of 1956 and 1962.

The original second paragraph of the Preamble has been substituted by a new paragraph where the high ideal of 'secularism' has been replaced the ideal of 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah,' and the ideal of 'socialism' has been given a short but definite 'meaning of economic and social justice.' These two, along with 'nationalism' and 'democracy' have now been declared to be the fundamental principles of the Constitution.[32]

In article 8, clause (1) has been substituted by a new clause to reiterate that ideals described in the second paragraph of the preamble 'shall constitute the fundamental principles of state policy,' and a new clause (1 A) to read 'Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis of all actions' has been inserted. The original article 9 which explained 'the basis of Bangalee nationalism' has been substituted by a new article declaring that the State shall encourage local Government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned where 'special representation shall be given, as far possible, to peasants, workers and women.' The original article 10 regarding 'Socialism and freedom from exploitation'' [33] has been substituted by a new article obliging the State to take steps 'to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.' Article 12 of the Constitution which enumerated the means through which the 'principle of secularism' was to be realised has been omitted.[34] In article 25 which describes the principles to be followed in the State's international relations, a new clause (2) has been inserted declaring that the state shall 'endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.' Clause (2) of article 42 has been substituted by a new clause prescribing that any law made for compulsory acquisition,

32. The amended second paragraph reads as follows :— "Pledging that the high ideals of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the war for national independence, shall be the fundamental principles of the Constitution."

33. The phrase was explained in original article 10 to read, 'A socialist econmic system shall be established with a view to ensuring the attainment of a just and egalitarian society, free from the exploitation of man by man."

34. Article 12 read as follows :— 'The principle of secularism shall be realised by the elimination of (a) communalism in all its forms; (b) the granting by the State of political status in favour of any religion; (c) the abuse of religion for political purposes; (d) any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practising a particular religion."

nationalisation or requisition of private property must provide for payment of compensation, and a law which does not provide for payment of compensation or 'specify the principles on which, and the manner in which, the compensation is to be assessed and paid' may now be challenged in the court.[35] The proviso to clause (2) of article 47 has been amended so that the earlier laws which enabled the government to nationalise or otherwise deal with private properties may now be amended modified or repealed in the ordinary process of law-making.[36]

The last instalment of amendments [37] came in December, 1978, relates to the form and structure of the government. Article 58 has been amended to make provision for one or more Deputy Prime Ministers in the Council of Ministers which includes Prime Minister and other Ministers. The President appoints the Prime Minister and other Ministers but the Prime Minister must now be a member of Parliament who appears to (the President) to command the support of the majority of members of Parliament.' Any person, not being a member of Parliament but qualified for election as a member of Parliament, may be appointed a Deputy Prime Minister or other Minister, but it has now been provided that the number of such Ministers shall not exceed one-fifth of the total number of Ministers appointed by the President. The provisions that 'the President shall preside at the meeting of the Council of Ministers or may direct the Vice-President or Prime Minister to preside at such meetings ' and that 'the Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President' as incorporated by the Fourth Amendment have been retained. Clause (3) of article 65 has been amended to increase the number of reserved seats for women in Parliament from fifteen to thirty and the period during which the women are to enjoy this reserved quota has been increased from ten years to fifteen years with effect from the commencement of the Constitution.

The next important changes brought about by the fifteenth amendment of the Second Proclamation Order, 1978, relate to the President's legislative and financial powers. The President's power to

35. The original clause (2) of article 42 enabled the state to acquire etc. any private property "with or without compensation."

36. The original proviso required a majority of two-thirds of the total number of members of Parliament for passing any law which aimed at "divesting the State of any property or of enhancing any compensation payable by the State."

37. Second Proclamation (Fifteenth Amendment) Order, 1978, *Bangladesh Gazette*, Extraordinary, dated December 15, 1978.

veto a bill passed by Parliament has been abolished by amending clause (3) of article 80, but a bill returned by the President to Parliament for its reconsideration now requires, under the amended clause (4) of article 80, 'the votes of a majority of the total number of members of Parliament' to re-present it to the President for his assent.

The President's financial power has been immensely enhanced by the instant amendment. In addition to his power, under article 91, to authorise, subject to the approval of Parliament, expenditure from the Consolidated Fund to meet any additional need or excess expenditure for a particular service in a financial year, a new article 92 A has now been inserted to empower the President to authorise 'withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund money necessary to meet expenditure mentioned in the annual financial statement for that year for a period not exceeding one hundred twenty days in that year…' This extraordinary power of the President applies to the circumstances when Parliament has failed to make the necessary budgetary grants or when Parliament 'has refused or reduced the demands for grants, and a request for the re-consideration of the demands has been made by the President in a message to (Parliament).' This has given the President power to override Parliament, though for a limited period of four months, in financial matters which, as exclusive sphere of legislature, is ideally regarded to be the most effective means in its hand to control the executive.

Article 116 of the constitution has been amended to vest in the President the power to exercise, in consultation with the Supreme Court, the control and discipline over persons employed in the Judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions.[38]

In article 142 which deals with the procedure for amendment of the constitution three new clauses (1 A), (1 B) and (1 C) have been added to curtail, in this respect, the exclusive power of Parliament. The preamble to the constitution and articles 8, 48, 56, 58, 80, 92 A and 142 are now entrenched and cannot be amended unilaterally by Parliament. Under the new procedure when a bill proposing amendment of the preamble or any provisions of the articles aforesaid is

38. Under the original Constitution the control and discipline of subordinate courts were vested in the Supreme Court alone; the Fourth Amendment gave this power to the President alone; now the President's power has been made subject to consultation with the Supreme court.

passed by Parliament by at least two-thirds of the total number of members of Parliament and is presented to the President for his assent, the President is obliged to refer to a referendum the question whether the bill should or should not be assented to. If the result of the popular referendum conducted amongst the persons enrolled on the electoral roll prepared for Presidential election goes in favour of the bill being assented to, the President is deemed to have assented to the bill.

It may be noted that the Preamble to the Constitution and article 8 relate to the principles on which the philosophical foundation of the state is based, articles 48 and 56 deal with the mode of election of the President and the extent of his executive power,[39] article 58 describes the composition of the Council of Ministers and its relations with President and Parliament, article 80 deals with the President's legislative power, and article 92 A relates to the President's financial powers. The requirement of popular referendum as incorporated by the Second Proclamation (Fifteenth Amendment), 1978, has made the articles mentioned along with the amending procedure itself under the amended article 142, difficult to be changed in the future. Thus the system of government established by the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution in 1975, is now fully entrenched and Parliament has been debarred unilaterally to change it. It will require the people's verdict expressed in a referendum.

A new article 145 A has been inserted to provide that all international treaties will be submitted to the President who shall cause them to be laid before Parliament, but the President may withhold submission before Parliament if he considers it 'to be against the national interest so to do.' It will be observed, therefore, that the executive is the sole authority in respect of international treaties and the legislature is involved only when the President causes a treaty to be laid before it and even in such cases its ratification is not necessary, though through discussion the legislature will be able to impress upon the executive its views on a treaty or any provisions contained in it.[40]

39. Articles 48 and 56 as they stand now were incorporated by the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975, establishing the Presidential system of government in place of Parliamentary system.

40. Contrast Section 2 of Article II of the United States Constitution which provides that the President "shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of Senators Present Concur;..."

These are the important changes in the provisions of the Constitution of 1972, made since August 15, 1975. And by the Proclamations (Amendment) order, 1977, issued in April, 1977, these have been given legal validity by declaring that 'All amendments, additions, modifications substitutions and omissions made in this constitution shall have effect as if such amendment additions, modifications··· substitutions and omissions were made in accordance with, and in compliance with the requirements of this Constitution,'[41] and that the Constitution, subject to these changes, shall have effect and operate as if it had been in continuous operation.[42] They have also been immuned from being called in question in or before any court or Tribunal on any ground whatsoever.[43]

From an analysis of the changes made in the provisions of the Constitution discussed above, it may be observed that though the fundamental ideological basis of the Constitution has been thoroughly amended, the system of government that was established under the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975, has not been materially altered. The Presidential system of government with the president as the central figure of the Constitution has been reaffirmed. But Part VI A of the constitution providing for a single 'National Party' in the state as inserted by the Fourth Amendment has been omitted to facilitate the reversion to, and the growth of, a multi-party political system. The President, as before, is elected directly by the people on the basis of universal adult franchise. The executive power of the Republic is vested in the President and is 'exercised by him, either directly or through officers subordinate to him, in accordance with this constitution.'[44] A Council of Ministers, consisting of a Prime Minister and other Ministers, is to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions. Though the Ministers including Prime Minister are to hold office during the pleasure of the President, the latter is required to appoint as Prime Minister a member of Parliament who appears to him to command support of the majority of the member of Parliament.[45] This constitutional provision along with the

41. Sub-paragraph (4) of the new paragraph 3 A of the Fourth Schedule inserted by the Proclamations (Amendment) Order, 1977, (Proclamation Order No. I of 1977), *Bangladesh Gezette*, Extraordinary, dated April 23, 1977.

42. Sub-paragraph (5), *Ibid.*

43. Sub-paragraph (1), *Ibid.*

44. Article 56 (1) of the Constitution.

45. Amended Article 58 (3) of the Constitution.

reported accord between the government and a few opposition parties that 'the members of the Council of Ministers will be answerable to the House' [46] may lead to an impression that the system of government envisaged by the constitution would be a 'blending' of Presidential and Parliamentary systems, resembling something like the French innovation of 'dual executive' [47] under the Gaullist Constitution of France, 1958.

In attempting a comparison bewteen the two systems one will observe that while the Council of Ministers in Bangladesh has only the constitutional responsibility to 'aid and advise' the President in the exercise of his executive functions, the French Council of Ministers as the 'Government' determines and direct the policy of the nation, having at its disposal the administration and the armed forces; it is responsible to Parliament for its policies and programmes.[48] In France the President appoints the Prime Minister and terminates his functions only when the Prime Minister presents the resignation of the Government ; [49] the Prime Minister directs the operation of the Government.[50] It is true, however, that the President while presiding over the Council of Ministers can more than influence the policy and programmes of the Government, but it must be admitted that the Council of Ministers, having a constitutional entity with constitutional functions and responsibilities, cannot at least be ignored by the President. Such is not the position under the Constitution of Bangladesh. The Constitution under article 56 envisages the President as the real executive, ruling the country with the aid and advice of his Ministers who, constitutionally, are no more than President's appointees holding office during his pleasure. Speaking in strict constitutional terms the Ministers' 'answerability' to Parliament is not likely to make any difference in their relations with the President.

The President's relationship with Parliament as provided by the Fourth Amendment remains unaltered. He is liable to be impeached or removed by Parliament, but the procedures is unusually difficult

46. See *The Bangladesh Observer*, January 6, 1979. No stratutory instrument, however, has yet been issued.

47. See John S. Ambler, *The Government and Politics of France*, (Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston, 1971), Chap. V.

48. *The Constitution of France*, 1958, Article 20.

49. *Ibid.*, Article 8.

50. *Ibid.*, Article 21.

making it almost impossible for Parliament to venture to do so.[51] The Presidents' power to veto a bill passed by Parliament has been abolished, but he has power to return a bill to Parliament for its reconsideration in which case the bill must be passed by a majority of a total number of members of Parliament to re-present it to the President for his assent. He has been given extraordinary financial powers to enable him to override the decisions of Parliament in financial matters at least for a limited period of four months.[52] The President summons, prorogues and in his discretion dissolves Parliament.[53] The President's power of dissolution is not dependent on any pre-conditions and it may prove to be a real weapon in his hand to control a recalcitrant Parliament.

In the judicial sphere the President does not exercise any direct judicial functions though as head of the state he has the traditional power to 'grant pardons, reprieves and respites, and to remit suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority.' [54] But in the matters of appointment, removal and discipline of persons employed to exercise judicial functions the President has substantial powers. The Chief Justice and other Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President in his discretion.[55] The Supreme Judicial Council which inquires into the conduct of a Judge does so only when the President 'may direct the Council' in this respect so that on an adverse report of the Council the President passes an order of removal against a Judge.[56] All judicial officers including district judges and magistrates exercising judicial functions are appointed by the President 'in accordance with rules made by him in that behalf.[57] The power of control and discipline

51. According to the provisions of articles 53 and 54 an initiative to move a motion for President's impeachment or removal needs the support of at least two-thirds of the total number of members of Parliament which must be passed by at least three-fourths of the total number of members.

52. *The Constitution of Bangladesh*, new article 92 A, for a discussion see *ante*.

53. *Ibid.*, article 72 (1).

54. *Ibid.*, article 57.

55. *Ibid.*, article 95 (1) incorporated by the Second Proclamation (Tenth Amendment) Order. 1977, dated November 27, 1977.

56. *Ibid.*, article 96.

57. *Ibid*, article 115.

of all judicial officers lies with the President who exercises this power 'in consultation with the Supreme Court.' [58]

Thus the Constitution of Bangladesh as amended up to December, 1978, has, one may be inclined to conclude, provided for a unique multi-party presidential system of government where the President predominates over all other organs of the state. He has unhampered executive powers, substantial legislative powers [59] with real power to control the legislature itself, and considerable power to control the judiciary. Once elected, the President is destined to have unhindered opportunity to formulate state policies and an uninterrupted tenure to implement his programmes.

58. *Ibid.*, article 116, as amended by the Second Proclamation (Fifteenth Amendment) Order, 1978, dated December 15, 1978.

59. Besides the requirement that all bills passed by Parliament must be assented to by the President, he has under article 93, power to make and promulgate Ordinances having the force of law as Acts of Parliament, when Parliament is not in session or stands dissolved.

Theatre Arts in Bangladesh

Kabir Chowdhury

Of the various art forms theatre appeared on the scene in Bangladesh at a fairly late period. Socio-cultural as well as economic factors were responsible for this.

In Greece of the fifth century B. C. and England of the sixteenth century A. D. the world witnessed two of the most gloriously creative periods of drama, both in respect of literature and theatrical presentation on the stage. By the end of the seventeenth century many countries of the world had started to produce plays of considerable merit, among which special mention might be made of France, made famous by Moliere, Corneille and Racine. However, Bengal had to wait till almost the very end of the 18th century before it could present a play on the stage even remotely approximating the modern theatre. The exact date of that memorable event is November 27, 1795. Gerassim Lebedeff, a Russian merchant-traveller, then resident in Calcutta, presented on that date a play called *Chhadmabeshi* (The Disguise). It was a foreign play rendered into Bengali, enacted by both male and female players. The entry of the audience was regulated by tickets, whose rates were pretty high. It was Taka Eight and Taka four at first, later raised to a gold *mohur*.[1]

Prior to this, however, there were pantomimes, verbal duels of two or more poets extemporising, singing and declaiming their lines and providing sharp rejoinders on the stage with dance-like movements, and there were song-strewn jatras (somewhat crude folk-plays of the operatta kind). These were generally presented at village fairs on the occasion of religious festivals or at harvesting time. But gradually these decayed, and it took a long time for something more modern and refined to emerge,

Lebedeff's venture in 1795 failed to produce any immediate noticeable impact, During the thirties and fortees of the 19th century, however, occasional foreign plays were performed in private

1. Shri Brojendranath Bandyopadhaya, *Bongiya Natyashala*, (Viswa-Yarati, Calcutta, 1350 B. S.), PP 2-4.

homes as well as in semiprofessional playhauses. Some plays modelled on the Jatra were also performed during this period. One might mention *Ramacharita* and *Julius Caesar* performed in 1831 in the home of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, *Vidyasundar* performed in 1835 on the private stage in the home of Nabin Krishna Bose, and *Othello* performed in 1848, where Baishnava Chand Adhya, a Bengali appeared in the main character of Othello with various English actors in different roles.[2]

It was only in the latter half of the ninteenth century that local playwrights tried their hands at indigenous plays. Some pioneering names are Taracharan Shikder Harachandra Ghose and Ramnarain Tarkaratna, but their plays are important only historically. Very different are the works of Michael Madhusudan Datta, the first Bengali modern playwright of undeniable merit. His *Sharmishttha*, published in 1858, and presented on stage on 3rd September 1859 is the first authentic modern Bengali play of real stature. Madhusudan wrote a number of fine plays including two remarkable satires. The next great event which created theatrical history is Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpana*, a classic and a milestone in the development of Bengali theatre. It was presented by Calcutta National Theatre on 7th December, 1872. An interesting fact worth noting here is that *Nildarpana* was first published in Dacca in 1860 and was presented on stage there which created a tremendous enthusiasm among the lovers of theatre arts as well as in the minds of people imbued with nationalistic feelings. After Dinabandhu Mitra, among the playwrights who contributed in on mean measure to the growth of Bengali theatre, mention may be made of Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, Grish Chandra Ghose, Amritalal Bose, Dwijendra Lal Roy and Khirode Prasad Vidyabinode. And then one comes across the towering figure of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore gave a significant turn to Bengali drama. He wrote plays of many kinds — lyrical, symbolic, realistic, romantic, poetic dramas, dance dramas, humorous as well as tragic plays. Some of his well-known plays are *Bisharjan* (1890), *Dakghar* (1912), *Chirakumara Shava* (1926), *Raktakarobi* (1926), *Tasher Desh* (1933) and *Shyama* (1939). After Tagore Bengali drama branched out into still newer directions and a major play that heralded the new drama movement was Bijon Bhattacharya's *Nabanna* (1944).

2. *Ibid*, PP 14-15.

It was a period of unrest, of famine and death, of revolutionary endeavour, of movement against the British to quit India, culminating in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Bengal was divided into two parts. East Bengal and West Bengal. The geographical area which constituted East Bengal (East Pakistan) became Bangladesh in 1971 and we would speak, from now on, mostly of the theatre of this region. However, theatre arts in Bangladesh did not start from scratch in 1971-72, or, for that matter, in 1947-48. True, it acquired certain distinctive features of its own after the Partition in 1947, but it had a heritage, the heritage of Bengali literature as a whole, from which it drew inspiration. Besides, Dacca, now the capital of Bangladesh, witnessed certain attempts, albeit sporadic, at developing a local theatre in the twenties and the thirties of the present century. Perhaps the first professional theatre in Dacca was founded about 1920 in Islampur in the house which is the Lion Cinema of today. The Zamindars of Baliati started this and called it the Jubilee Theatre.[3] Calcutta had three professional theatres at this time, Star, Minerva and Monomohon. Amateur theatre groups had not yet appeared on the scene. Professional actors and actresses presented Bengali palys at Dacca's Jubliee theatre fairly regularly till the end of 1921. Plays were also produced occasionally at the homes of the rich landlords of this region, notable among whom were the Zamindars of Balda, Muktagachha and Sripur.[4] Sometimes actors and actresses along with theartical equipments were brought over from Calcutta. These activities, however, did not lead to the growth of a local theatre on a durable basis, though in the 1930s some amateur groups presented plays not infrequently to limited audiences in Wari, Tikatully and old Dacca. In 1931 a dramatised version of Tagore's famous novel *Gora* was staged in Dacca. In the late 30s and early 40s the University of Dacca provided the main stimulus to dramatic activities here. Different students' residence halls regularly presented their annual plays, which often attained a high standard of performance. The reader may find it interesting to note that in these plays sponsored by the University no girls appeared in the female roles which were enacted

3. Tafazzal Hossain, "Shekaler Dhakai Natyabhinaya" (Theatre in the old days in Dacca), *Theatre*, February, 1973, P. 82

4. Asrafuzzaman, "Bismrita Natika," (Forgotten Drama), *Theatre*, December, 1974, P. 92

by boys instend. It was probably in 1951 that we saw for the first time boys and girls acting on the same stage in a theatrical performance.[5]

The dramatic activities of the region which now constitutes Bengladesh drew its inspiration mainly from Calcuttabased plays and playwrights till 1947, the year of Partition. This was largely true both of our fiction and poetry, too. But from 1947 onwards, one notices a certain shift, especially in the choice of themes, the lives portrayed and the locale providing the background. Some of our writers who had been writing from the days of undivided Bengal came over to this part and helped depict scenes of this region and portray the lives of its people. Many young writers also made their appearance on the scene for the first time. The seniors and the juniors both found the material for their writings in the life of the poor peasant, the cruel landlord, the ruthless blackmarketeer, the hypocritical religious preacher, the progressive political worker, the middle-class government official of the country and various other kinds of people they constantly came in contact with.

The senior playwrights who wrote on either local contemporary muslim social life, primarily in the rural context, and on historical heroes of the muslim world both of the recent and remote past were Ibrahim Khan (b 1894), Shahadat Hossain (b 1894), Akbaruddin (b 1896) and Abul Fazal (b 1903). Their plays are, however, quite traditional both thematically and technically, and of no great merit intrinsically.

Among the major playwrights of Bangladesh of the fifties and sixties who succeeded in making an impact on our dramatic scene are Nurul Momen (b 1908), Shaukat Osman (b 1919), Munier Chowdhury (1925-1971) and Asker Ibne Shaikh (b 1925). The plays of the first three are full of brilliant, witty dialogues. One finds many cleverly contrived situations in Nurul Momen's plays where humour is the predominant emotion. His *Nemesis* (1948) however is different in tone and colour. Written in the prepartition days in the background of the Bengal Famine of the early forties it is a very moving ling one-act play of a soul corrupted by greed, lacerated by internal conflict, finally finding peace in death at the hands of the relentlessly pursing

5. Momtazuddin Ahmed, "Bangladeshe Shampratik Natyacharchar Itibritto" (A History of Current Dramatic Activities in Bangladesh), *Theatre*, February, 1975, P. 258

Nemesis Techniquewise, too, it is a very fine paly. Among other major plays of Nurul Momen are *Rupantar* (1948), *Alochhaya* (1962) and *Naya Khandan* (1962). In Shaukat Osman's plays satire predominates. An extremely socially conscious artist he is rather Ben Jorsonian in his approach to the theatre arts. In his plays he tries to expose the evils of a capitalist society where a fierce competition for money and wealth rages constantly and the nobler values of life are thrown to the wind, the evils of bureaucracy, the machinations of a blackmarketeer and similar things. Among his major plays are *Tashkar O Lashkar* (1945), *Amlar Mamla* (1949) and *Kankor Moni* (1949). Perhaps more than any other playwright Munier Chowdhury has helped shape and influence our modern theatre. He was very aware of the society around him, was a conscious craftsman, had thoroughly studied the art of theatre and was a bold innovator and experimenter. He has written among other things a number of very fine one-act plays, a three-act historical play and a musical comedy. His is a refined urban sensibility, equally adept in exploiting comic and tragic situations, as is amply evidenced by his *Raktakto Prantar* (1962), *Chitthi* (1966), and the one-act plays in *Dandokaranya* (1966) and *Kabar* (1966 . His best-known work is *Kabar*, a landmark in the history of Bangladesh theatre.

Munior Chowdhury wrote *Kabar* in the Dacca Central Jail in 1953 while he was detained there as a political prisoner for his invlovement in the Bengali Language Movement of 1952. It was first staged inside the jail secretly in a cell.[6] Written in expressionistic technique with the language movement as background it turned out to be a magnificent play. In characterisation, dialogue, creation of mood and atmosphere, suggestiveness, with a hint of the deathlessness of the martyrs who died physically for their mother-tongue the play attained a unique stature which it still retains.

Compared to Nurul Momen, Shaukat Osman and Munier Chowdhury, Askar Ibne Shaikh is more traditional and conservative and has less flashes of brilliance. This is evident in his choice of themes and art of characterisation as well as in the way he contrives his dramatic situations and writes his dialogues. His range, however, is quite wide. He has witten social plays that deal with various problems

6. Ranesh Dasgupta, "Munier Chowdhuryr Rajnaitik Biplobi Shatta Shamparke" (On Munier Chowdhury's Revolutionary Political Entity), *Theatre*, November, 1972, P. 102

of our rural areas, and historical plays, clearly with a view to rousing national consciousness and patriotic feelings. Among his more important plays are *Vidrohi Padma* (1952), *Agnigiri* (1959), *Raktapadma* (1961) and *Onek Tarar Hatchhani* (1965).

During the fifties and sixties many educational institutions and amateur theatrical groups of this region presented the plays of the above four playwrights. Not that there were not other playwrights who appeared on the scene during this period. One certainly ought to mention the names of Aris Chowdhury (b 1929), Obaidul Huq (b 1912), Jasimuddin (1903-1976), Syed Waliullah (1922-1976), Sikandar Abu Jafar (1918-1975), Abdul Huq (b 1920), Alauddin Al Azad (b 1932) and Farukh Anmed (1918-1975) and A. N. M. Bazlur Rashid (b 1911). Special mention should be made of Jasimuddin's verse-play *Beder Meye* (1656), Syed Waliullah's experimental plays *Bahipir* (1960) and *Tarangabhanga* (1964), and Farukh Ahmed's verse-play *Naufel O Hatem* (1967). During all these years efforts were made by various groups to set up a regular theatre hall in Dacca, to establish a national stage, to start a semi-professional, if not a professional drama group. None of these efforts met with any success, though plays continued to be presented from time to time, specially during the winter season, in medium-sized auditoriums normally used for lecture programmes, conferences and conventions. These plays were produced by certain amateur drama enthusiasts, cultural clubs and the students unions of academic institutions. The efforts of one particular group, however, deserve to be mentioned in greater detail. I propose to talk about the group theatre movement in Bangladesh in a later section of this paper. But the Drama Circle, the pioneers of the group theatre movment in Bangladesh, came into existence about the mid fifties and for historical continuity's sake it would be appropriate to talk about it here.

The Drama Circle, born in 1956 in Dacca, played a major role in the development of theatre arts in Bangladesh, mainly during the first eight years of its existence, that is, from 1956 to 1963. The life force of this organisation was late Bazlul Karim. It was imbued with true group spirit and its approach to theatre arts was enlightened, modern and progressive, without being pretentions or highbrew. Some other groups were also trying to come up about this time, for example, "Prantik" and "Jagriti" in Chittagong, "Natyaniketan" and "Shilpi Sangsad" in khulna and Barisal, and the "Dacca University

Sangskriti Sangsad". I still remember the tremendous enthusiasm that was generated in Barisal when the Sanskriti Sangsad produced my adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* under the title of *Shatru*. However, the impact of these little theatre groups of the remote provinces on the drama movement of the country as a whole was negligible. Only Dacca's Drama Circle by its dedication, persistence and undeniable merit helped create an awareness of the potentialities of this art form among our people. Let me list the names of the plays it produced between 1956 and 1963. (1) *Kaboyo*, Bengali adaptation by Banaful of "The Poetasters of Ispahahan" (2) Munier Chowdhury's adaptation *Ken Kichhu Bolte Parena* of Shaw's "You never can Tell" (3) Anis Chowdhury's *Manchitra* (4) Tagore's *Raktakarobi* (5) *Shaboi Amar Chhele*, Bengali adaptation by Bazlul Karim and Mahmud Hasan of Arthur Miller's "All My Sons" (6) Syed Waliullah's *Bohipeer* (7) Tagore's *Raja O Rani* (8) Tagore's *Tasher Desh* (9) *Oedipus* Syed Ali Ahsan's Bengali translation of Sophocles's "Oedipus Rex" (10) *Kalbela*, Bengali translation by Bazlul Karim of Sayeed Ahmed's "The Thing" (11) *Arms and the Man*, Bengali translation by Bazlul Karim of Show's "Arms and the Man", and (12) *Shoptoshurer Thebes Akromon*, Bengali translation by Bazlul Karim of Aeschylus' "Seven Against Thebes". Most of these plays were presented in Dacca, but a few were presented in Chittagong, Karachi and Peshawar. The wide range of interests of the Drama Circle is obvious from the above list. There are Greek, English, American and Bengali plays. There are original plays, adaptations and straight translations. They presented realistic plays with unmistakable social content, poetic plays where dance and songs predominated, symbolic plays and humorous plays that had plenty of fun and *joie de vivre* in them. However, the Drama Circle's activities abruptly came to an end in 1963 when their major personalities scattered forth in different directions, pressed by a more mundane need, namely, that of earning their livelihood. After a decade they reappeared for a brief period in 1973, presented their old play *Arms and the Man* in 1976, and their new play *Dantoner Mrityyu*, Bazlul Karim's Bengali rendering of German playwright George Buchner's play, in early 1977. With the sudden and untimely death of Bazlul Karim in April 1977 the Drama Circle had a tremendous set-back. This is most unfortunate, especially in view of the fact that there seems to be a great spurt of dramatic activities in the country at the present moment, spearheaded by about half-a-dozen very lively amateur theatre groups who, almost overnight,

have established in Bangladesh the tradition of purchasing a ticket for the privilege of witnessing a play produced on the stage. But more about this phase later.

Most of the plays produced by the Drama Circle in the early sixties clearly show their progressive attitude in the context of those times. Tagore was by no means a 'popular' playwright then, or for that matter, is he one even now. Many educational institutions in Bangladesh, even in the sixties, would stage a Bidhayak Bhattacharya, a D. L. Roy or a Tarashankar play rather than a Tagore play. But the Drama Circle produced three Tagore plays in Dacca in 1961. It should be noted, however, that the year was Tagore's birth centenary and the productions were meant also to be a homage to the greatest Bengali writer of the century, if not all times. Syed Waliullah's *Bohipeer*, again, was a new kind of play, very different from the conventional type of plays usually produced in the East and West Bengal of those days. Still more unconventional was Sayeed Ahmed's *Kalbela*, which clearly drew its inspiration from the most modern European plays. Our audience in those days knew little about Beckett, Sartre of Ionesco, but Drama Circle's competent production of *Kalbela*, the story of a group of villagers trapped in an island,counting their last moments before an approaching hurricane, served for them as a memorable introduction to the New Drama of the mid-twentieth century.

During the fifties and the sixties, in fact right upto the post-liberation period of Bangladesh in 1972, the theatre-arts moved forward through intermittent sporadic efforts, thwarted on the one hand by reactionary elements and encouraged on the other by various groups of enlightened progressive youngsters. Munier Chowdhury's *Kabar* produced in 1953, a product of the 1952 Language movement established the first major landmark. Which was appropriate. For 1952 meant for us, still means, and will continue to mean an emergence into a new awareness, a discovery, a flowering of the spirit of Bengali nationalism, and *Kabar* came to symbolise both a protest and a dream. The enthusiasm generated during this period led to the production of such people-oriented, class-conscious plays as *Nabanna*, *Chhera Tar*, *Dukshir Imam*. The progressive tide, however, had a temporary set-back during 1958-68 years when the reactionary antiliberal forces dominated the political scene. Theatre arts lapsed into a few productions of stereotyped conventional insipid plays or cheap cheap melodrama, banning some hold exceptions. *Bohipeer* and *Kalbela*

have already been mentioned. One ought to mention *Tarangabhanga*, again by Syed Waliullah, a remarkable play but not yet, I think, staged anywhere in Bangladesh, Alauddin Al Azad's *Moroccor Jadukar* and Ramendu Majumdar's adaptation of Shaukat Osman's well-known novel *Kritadasher Hashi.*

Towards the end of 1968 Bengali nationalism entered a new positive near-militant phase which was reflected in the arena of drama, too. In 1968 was born the *Nagarik*, the theatre group which created history in Bangladesh by first staging regular plays against tickets in 1973. In 1970 was born the *Parapar*, another theatre group, more conscious than *Nagarik* so far as the need for presenting the revolutionary ardour of the common man on the stage was felt. In 1970-71 various amateur little theatre gorups in Dacca and Chittagong presented revolutionary plays with the urge for freedom as the central, dominant theme on open stages, on trucks, on football fields which were witnessed by thousands of people from all walks of life. It was strongly felt by all concerned that the theatre was a powerful art medium for the presentation of social, political and economic realities as well as for the projection of the dream of the people for a better life. Not that this was a sudden revelation. One noticed it more than a hundred years ago in Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpana* (the play was staged in Dacca in 1873 by the Bengal National Theatre and the Hindu National Theatre of Calcutta).[7] One noticed it in Tagore's *Raktakarobi* which came out in 1926 (the play was staged in Dacca in 1956 by "Baurupi" of Calcutta and in Chittagong in 1958 by the Drama Circle of Dacca), and one noticed it from a somewhat different angle and with a new perspective in Bijon Bhattacharys's *Nabanna* in the nineteen forties. But this age-old truth struck the playwrights, the group theatre workers and the theatre audience of Bangladesh in the early seventies with a special force. Coupled with the general enthusiasm of the people in all fronts as a result of the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign and independent nation the theatre arts of the country seemed poised to embark on a glorious voyage of new productions, bold, experimental and innovative.

A number of new theatre groups emerged. I have already mentioned Nagorik and Parapar. Aronyak was formed in 1971. Then from 1972 onward till to date scores of theatre groups have come into being, most of them in Dacca, a few in Chittagong and a few scattered

7) Ahmed, "Bangladeshe Shampratik Natyacharchar Itibritte", P. 258

all over the country. Most of these groups had to work against many odds, chief among which was the absence of a suitable theatre hall and stage where they would produce their plays. Not all these groups made a major or significant contribution to the growth of theatre arts in Bangladesh. Some were too amateurish; some seemed over-preoccupied with technical innovation; some were obsessed with the *absurd* motif and with complex symbolism. But some of these new groups played a remarkable role in revitalizing the theatre in Bangladesh so much so that according to many art-lovers, critics and intellectuals as well as ordinary common people (admittedly limited to the urban literate class) drama came to be considered as the most living art form in the post-liberation years of the country. A number of new playwrights, directors, actors and actresses appeared in the scene the likes of which were rarely seen here before. Bold original plays were written and performed with surprising competence. The themes ranged from the frustration of the urban youth in the face of the chicanery greed and falsehood of the corrupt strongholds of power, the disintegration of moral values, the devastation caused by flood and scarcity of food to the search for the fundamental enemies of the people either in a system or in a group of men and to the fury and anger of the people levelled against the exploiters of all kinds and manners. Adaptations and translations of well-known foreign plays were produced with understanding and skill. The influence of Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Ionesco and other avant garde playwrights was clearly discernible in several production of these new angry yougmen of Bangladesh theatre world. We can't discuss all these groups, even the major ones in detail, but this paper would be grossly incompl te without a general description of the achievement of some of them.

Let us talk of "Nagarik" first. Though formed in 1968 and occasionally performing on the radio and television the Nagarik appeared on the stage for the first time only about the middle of 1972. However, from early 1973 it began to perform regularly and earned the distinction of being the first group regularly to stage plays in Dacca against tickets. Prior to this plays in Bangladesh were staged by different amateur clubs and educational institutions where the entry of the audience was regulated by invitation cards. The organisers sometimes accepted with thanks donations from playgoers and other patrons to enable them to meet production expenses. The Nagarik's veture brought about a most welcome change in this regard. It was suddenly observed that there was a very real theatre audience, limited

to be sure, who was not only willing but keen on seeing well-produced plays even in make-shift auditoriums and was glad to pay for the privilege. Nagarik has so far presented adaptations / translations of Molnar, Brecht, Albee, Camus and Moliere, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Buro Shaliker Ghare Ron*, Badal Sarker's *Baki Itihash*, Rashid Haider's *Tailo Sankat*, Syed Waliullah's *Bohipeer* and Sayeed Ahmed's *Milepost*. A healthy team spirit which is the essence of group theatre characterises all Nagarik porductions. Of its several successful productions *Aei Nishiddha Pallite* (adaptation of Edward Albee's In the Garden), *Shat Manusher Khonje* (adaptation of Brecht's The Good Woman of Suetzan) and *Dewan Ghazir Kissa* (adaptation of Brecht's Herr Puntila) were highly acclaimed by the audience. The productions were neat, the set designs revealed both imagination and skill, and the quality of acting by most performers was most commendable, especially that of Sara Zaker. Particularly the two adaptations of Brecht introduced many of our playgoers to a new kind of dramatic presentation, although this influence has not always been for the best, as it encouraged a tendency in some to cheap undigested imitations.

I mentioned Parapar earlier. Its two major productions were *Poster* and *Jane Jane Janata*. Born in 1970 it seems to have lapsed into complete inactivity, perhaps because of the departure of its young talented playwright-producer-director Kabir Anwar from the world of the theatre to the world of the silver screen. Parapar's plays clearly revealed the group's socio-political commitments and populist orientation.

The last statement is applicable with slight modifications to another little theatre group, namely, Dacca University's Natya Chakra, formed after the liberation of the country in 1972. Here the playwrights. the actors and actresses, the directors, set designers, in fact all connected hands were young University students with no formal training in theatre arts and little practical experience of participation in such activities in the past. But many of them were widely read in the world's best dramatic literature, aware of the experimentations going on in the contemporary theatres of Europe and America and, above all, eager to break new ground, unafraid of initial failures. By now. the Natya Chakra has presented over a dozen and a half plays. Both Al Mausur and Selim al Deen, two of our promising young playwrights are as much the products of the Natya Chakra as they themselves helped the Natya Chakra to grow and consolidate its position. Some of the important productions of Natya Chakra are Selim al Deen's

Jaundice O Bibidha Baloon, Al Mansur's *Roller Ebong Nihata LMG*, Shahnoor Khan's *Pendulum-e-Khun* and the dramatised version of late Zahir Raihan's famous novelette *Ar Koto Din* (Let there be Light). Natya Chakra is currently making preparations for presenting sophocles's *Oedipus* in Syed Ali Ahsan's Bengali translation and a dramatised version in Bengali of Howard Fast's well-known novel *Spartacus*. One handicap that the Natya Chakra unavoidably suffers from is the regular departure of their playwrights, directors and other activists from the organisation at the end of their student career in the University. To cite only one example, Selim al Deen is now us longer associated with Natya Chakra. Instead, another group theatre, namely the Dacca Theatre, greatly benefited from his association with it. But about Dacca Theatre a little later.

The group that has most captured the imagination of the audience primarily because of its effective presentation of indigenous new original plays dealing with contemporary social questions is simply called "The Theatre." Formed in early 1972 it first appeared on the scene of Bangladesh theatre in November of the same year with a quarterly journal on drama which was received by all loves of theatre arts in Bangladesh with great enthusiasm. The journal is being brought out with commendable regularity and its standard is of a fairly high order. The theatre staged its first play, Munelr Chowdhury's *Kabar*, in early '74 but from about the middle of 1975 it started to present its plays regularly against tickets, thus strengthening the healthy trend initiated by Nagarik. They have presented so far five plays besides *Kabar*, namely, *Subochon Nirbashane*, *Ekhon Dushhomoy*, *Charidike Yuddha*, *Chor Chor* and *Payer Awaz Pawa Jai*. The first two have been written by Abdullah Al Mamoon who is the group's main male actor-director as well as its major playwriwht. The social awareness revealed in these two plays, the barbed dialogue full of keen satire and wit, unconcealed realism which had yet a streak of hidden poetry in it, excellent rendition of their roles by the central characters, especially of the heroine by Ferdousi Majumdar, appropriate, simple and effective sets designed for the plays and last but not the least competent direction made these two plays extremely popular not only in Dacca but in many parts of the country. The next two plays did not achieve the same standard, but with *Payer Awaz Pawa Jai*, a verse play in the background of the liberation war by Syed Shamsul Huq, The Theatre created an unprecedented impact on the arena of the dramatic arts in Bangladesh. There is melodrama in the play but it is

convincing and theatrically effective. Often verse-plays treat of ancient historical subjects, some legend or myth, But *Payer Awaj Pawa Jai* deals with a topical theme. It tells of a realistic story with genuine poetic flashes in the dialogue. The magnificent team work of the caste makes the play very moving, sometimes full of pungent satire, sometimes full of little gems of worldly wisdom expressed in homely idiom and metaphors, sometimes full of poignant and tragic emotions. Ferdousi Majumdar, Zakaria and Abdullah al Mamoon in particular, the three top artistes of The Theatre, clearly demonstrated perfect understanding of the characters they portrayed, For its poetry, its social content, its realism and the high quality of production *Payer Awaj Pawa Jai* will remain a landmark in the history of the theatre arts of Bangladesh.

I had mentioned the Dacca Theatre a little while ago. Formed in mid-nineteen seventythree by a group of youngmen and women who considered the theatre as a powerful weapon for social change as well as a great art form this group has already made a name for itself as belonging to a competent avant garde class. There is a clear message in the plays produced by the Dacca Theatre, but imaginative presentation has kept the element of propaganda, in most cases, though not in all, properly subservient and unobtrusive. Sometimes the symbolism, however, seems a little stretched. Many of the plays produced by them are rather short, in fact they are sketches, though excellent in their way. Their first production Selim al Deen's *Sangbad Cartoon* created an immediate impact because of the socio-economic and political overtones of the play, the humorous and satiric element in the dialogue and the free, buoyant acting style of the players. Among the other plays so far presnted by this group are *Jaundice O Bibidha Baloon* and *Muntasir Phantasy* by Selim al Deen, Habibul Hasan's *Shamrat O Pratiddandigan* and *Char Kankrar Documentary*, and Al Mansur's *Bidai Mondlisa*. Of these *Muntasir Phantasy* has achieved great success both because of its original conception and competent presentation. With *Char Kankrar Dacumentary* the Dacca Theatre attempted sometime ago a bold new venture of staging plays at rood-side islands, which, however, has so far met with limited success. It is a very lively group, eager to experiment and explore, and has vast possibilities before it.

There are other drama groups in Dacca besides the ones I have mentioned above, but we need not talk about them here for the purpose of this paper which is frankly introductory and does not pretend to be

exhaustive. We must say a few words, however, about the theatre groups outside Dacca, of these the ones in Chittagong are most active, although there are some competent group even in remote subdivisional towns. In the first national drama festival organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and held in Dacca in Jan-February 1977 some of these provincial groups participated and, considering the many initial handicaps they suffered from, acquitted themselves quite creditably. "Theatre '73" (Chittagong) is perhaps the most important drama group today outside Dacca. Momtazuddin Ahmed, one of our major contemporary playwrights, was actively associated with this group till recently. Theatre '73 Chittagong has so far successfully presented, among other plays, Ahmed's *Spartacus Bishoyok Jatilata*, *Horin Chita Chil* and *Falafal Nimnachap*, and Zia Haider's *Shevra Sundar Kalyani Ananda*. Chittagong has also the distinction of regularly bringing out the only other theatre periodical of the country called "Tirjok." We have already talked of the quarterly called "Theatre" brought out from Dacca in an earlier section of this paper. These two journals, particularly *the Theatre*, are doing a great service to the cause of theatre arts in the country. They publish informative articles regarding various dramatic activities at home and abroad, academic articles on such diverse topics as the Greek Theatre, Britain's National Theatre, Brecht and Chekov, but more importantly, they make new original plays available in print to the many theatre groups who are always eagerly looking for suitable plays that they can stage.

As I write this paper in early January 1978 we stand at the threshold of our second national drama festival, due to begin in Dacca from 14 Jaunary. Twentythree groups will participate in the festival and present their plays—six from Dacca, two from Chittagong, three from three subdivisional towns and twelve from twelve district towns. The plays scheduled for production offer a wide spectrum technically as well as thematically. There will be two adaptation of Brecht, two direct translations—one of Sophocles and another of Shaw, realistic plays, symbolic plays, verse-plays, bold new experimental plays as well as tested well-established popular plays of both recent and somewhat remoter past. Well-known works of some of our most important dramatists, both young and old, living and dead, will be presented during this festival. To name a few : there will be plays by Munier Chowdhury, Syed Waliullah, Abdullah Al Mamoon, Momtazuddin Ahmed, Selim Al Deen and Zia Haider, all whose efforts have enriched our theatre. I am sure we shall see quite a few new promising actors

and actresses, especially from among the groups coming from the provinces. No doubt innovations will be attempted in matters of direction, set design and lighting. This we say on the basis of our experience of the last festival as well as on the basis of the reports on dramatic activities all over the country that have reached us. Clearly the theatre arts in Bangladesh have made considerable headway since the independence of the country in December 1971. However, there is no room for complacence and a number of problems have to be solved, hundles crossed, difficulties overcome before we can hope to embark on a relatively smooth voyage of dramatic ventures in the near future. What are some of these difficulties? Let us try to list a few. A major source of encouragement would have been the establishment of a National Theatre in Bangladesh. A demand for this was raised more than a decade ago, but we do not have one till today. The term National Theatre, however, may mean different things to different people. What most people consider as a major hundle in the growth and development of drama in Bangladesh is the lack of a theatre hall with a suitable proscenium stage where our group theatres could regularly produce their plays without facing much difficulty or incurring heavy expenses. At present most plays in Dacca are staged in the Mahila Samity Auditorium which has very limited facilities and whose rental charge is not very low either. Other halls occasionally used by various groups include those of the Engineering Institute, the Mahbub Ali Institute, the British Council, the WAPDA and the Dacca University Teacher Student Centre. This is by no means a happy situation. The Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy can possibly build a suitable stage and medium-sized theatre hall in the near future and solve one of the long-standing problems in this field. The matter of censorship clearance before a play can be staged is another factor which everyone connected with our theatre world finds irksome, to say the least. Various theatre groups have urged from time to time for effective simplification of the censor procedure and reduction of amusement tax, unless the whole business could be totally done away with, but these moves have so far produced little effect. Another handicap that many speak of is the absence of a School of Drama or an Institute where formal academic training in theatre arts could be imparted. Chittagong University had opened sometime ago a small section of dramatic arts, but it is mostly theoretical in nature and far from adequate. Dacca University's Natya Chakra has been running a School of Drama for about a year now. It is a most welcome venture and needs liberal

patronage. In the absence of a properly organised full-fledged independent School of Drama or Drama Institute in Bangladesh the matter of training up drama workers—actors, actresses, directors, set designers, make-upmen and various other technicians—is being sadly neglected. The different theatre groups themselves try to fill up this gap as best as they can by holding seminars, discussion programmes and practical workshops from time to time. An important contribution in this area was made in mid-1974 by USIS, Dacca when under its sponsorship a four-member American team of theatre experts conducted a week-long theatre workshop in which nearly one hundred persons of the theatre world of Bangladesh participated. Preparations are under way, I understand, for another theatre workshop of a somewhat longer duration to be held in February 1978, this time under the sponsorship of the British Council. But such workshops can hardly take the place of a regular School. The late Jyotirmoy Guha-Thakurta of the Department of English in the Dacca University had said nearly two decades ago in a seminar on Contemporay Writing in East Pakistan, "Why not build a permanent theatre right in the University and introduce a course in Dramatics like the Universities elsewhere ? The Pakistan Arts Council like its counterpart in Britain also could help. Small groups of actors at Dacca and in the districts are but too eager to respond to an offer of this kind. It is a pity that our businessmen would rather invest capital in the film industry than in the theatre." [8] Only substitute Pakistan Arts Council by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and the above observation would be valid, as of now, word for word. Among other difficulties and problems faced by our drama groups which have been raised in the symposia and seminars held in the recent past are the following :

a) there seem to be too many translations and adaptations of foreign plays which possibly inhibit the growth of the native drama.

b) often foreign influences lead our playwrights to introduce absurd complex symbols in their plays and encourage them to present states of feelings irrelevant and inappropriate to our situations.

c) not infrequently do our playwrights shy away from depicting the many conflicts, at different levels and of different kinds, with which our society is riddled, and choose the path of effete compromise.

8. Jyotirmoy Guha Thakurta, "Drama," in *Contemporary Writing in East Pakistan* Ed. Sarwar Murshid, Dacca, 1960, P. 85

d) enough attention is not paid by our theatre workers, particularly the playwrights, in the matter of drawing sustenance from our ancient folk-plays, the Jatra.

Let us briefly look at each of the issues mentioned above and try to see if there is any real problem involved and, if so, how best we can solve them.

It is true that we have translated and adapted a fair number of foreign plays in a bid to enrich our dramatic literature. Some of our major translated works are the Bengali renderings of Aeschylus's *Prometheus unbound*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, Oneill's *Emperor Jones*, *Ah Wilderness*, *Desire under the Elms* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* and *The Death of a Salesman*, Sartre's *No Exit*, Camus' *Cross-purpose* and Ibsens's *A Dell's House*, *The Wild Duck* and *Ghosts*. Most of these plays have not been staged, though, *Oedipus* and *Arms and the Man*, have been presented on the stage with reasonable success, and *The Taming of the Shrew* on the television with tremendous success. The lack of entusiasm among our theatre people for staging a translated play is, of course, understandable. Apart from the inherent difficulties of setting and costume there is always the possibility of inadequate audience-spectator response.

Among our important adapted plays are Moliere's *Intellectual Women*, Albee's *In the Garden*, Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*, Galsworthy's *Silver Box*, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Priestley's *Dangerous Corner*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, Brecht's *The Good Woman of Suetzan* and *Herr Puntila*, Clifford Odet's *Waiting for Lefty*, Strindberg's *Father*, Capek's *RUR* and several one-act plays. Most of these plays, notably the two Brocht adaptations, have been staged with great success. I am not inclined to say that translation adaptations by themselves inhibit the growth of the indigenous drama or otherwise exert any pernicious influence on our theatre. However, it is certainly not a healthy sign to lean too much on foreign plays, either translated or adapted, particularly by an otherwise enterprising group. Most of our group theatres seem to be growing increasingly aware of this fact. Which is all for the best.

As for the second point, one cannot deny that under the influence of some experimental avant garde dramatists of the West a few younger playwrights of Bangladesh do tend to introduce unduly complex

symbolism in their plays and depict scenes of frustration, ennui and boredom which strike the audience not as genuinely felt realities in our own context but as artificial importations. Not in every case though, but this tendency must be guarded against.

As for the change that our playwrights often refrain from depicting the many conflicts present in our contemporary society, I would say that it is only partially true. Many of our post-liberation plays do present such conflicts, often quite sharply, though the playwrights do not, perhaps, push these to their logical conclusion and let their plays end somewhat tamely, not with a bang but in a whimper.

Now about the tradition of the jatra. It is not true that our playwrights totally ignore the value of folk-plays, though, perhaps, they could study that genre more thoroughly with profit to themselves. But let us admit unequivocally that the modern drama is very different art form, and while getting rid of our indifference to our native ancient jatra we must not hesitate to promote every way we can the growth of modern drama as it is understood today all over the world. Our theatre must have its roots in our soil, but we must keep our windows to the wide world open and let the diverse fresh currents blow in from there.

Our drama has travelled quite far from the unrealistic melodrama, historical romance and crude social plays of the early years. Drawing its sustenance and inspiration from native sources as well as from international influences it can safely be said to have crossed its adolsecence, and is now poised to attain a sturdy manhood.

Problem and Model of the Study of Elites in a District Town in Bangladesh.

Fazlur Rashid Khan

PROBLEM

The main problem of the study should be an analysis of the interactive process of the elite members and their linkages with and involvement in the power structure [1] in a district town in Bangladesh. Because the elite members from different occupational groups are generally connected by various institutions and organizations such as family marriage, kinship, land tenure system, caste system, political party etc. It is important to examine how far and in what way these institutions and organizations enter into the interactive process of the elite members. As the background characteristics of the elite members (i.e., sex age, religion, education, occupation, income, size of landholding, father's education and occupational position), their structural arrangements such as categorization of elite members, caste and caste-like groups, kinship network, the hierarchical ordering of the elite members at occupational group level, the pattern of elite recruitment and mobility and the pattern of participation in some identified community issues are intimately linked up with the elite members' interactive process as well as the pattern of linkages that elite members or a groups of elite members develop around them, these problems should be discussed to have a clear picture of such an interactive process. Moreover, since the elite members' linkages often cross-cut the community boundary and extend to some elite and non-elite members belonging to different urban and rural communities in and outside the district—this problem of outside linkages should become one of the important features of the study.

1. Power structure may be defined as an arrangement of elite groups of members which possesses the controlling authority and power of taking or making decisions on community affairs as well as power of issuance of orders and getting those orders adhered to.

An endeavour should be made to examine how in the interactive process of the elite members patron-client relationships as well as horizontal alliances [2] emerge amongst the elite members themselves and between the elite and non-elite members. We should also focus our attention on the problem of conflict in the interactive process of the elite members.

So far we have talked about the elite members, but have not made any attempt to clarify the concent of 'elite.' In this section we shall make an attempt in that direction. The term 'elite' has been explained and defined by Giddens as follows :

> As it is sometimes employed 'elite' may refer to those who 'lead' in any given category or activity : to actors and sportsmen as well as to political or economic 'leaders'. There is evidently a difference, however, between the firts and the second in that the former 'lead' in terms of some sort of scale of 'fame' or 'achievement', whereas the second usage may be taken to refer to persons who are at the head of a specific social organization which has an internal authoity structure (the state, an economic enterprise etc.). I shall ues the term 'elite group' in the latter sense, to designate those individuals who occupy positions of formal authority at the head of a social organization or institution, and elite very generally, to refer either to elite group or cluster of elite groups.[3]

Giddens further explains :

> It should be noted that this inclusive definition leaves two problems unsettled, one is where the division between 'elite' and 'non-elite' is to be drawn ; because in spite of Dahrendorf's assertions to the country, 'authority' normally implies a graded hierarchy of spheres of administrative autonomy—there is not always a clear-cut line between those 'at the top' and those who possess recognized authority but who are not in the 'elite'. The other is the question of the relationship between formally defined authority and 'effective' or 'real' power : the fact that an individual possesses certain formal trappings of authority does not *ipso facto*, allow us to infer what effective power he wields. It is precisely one of the major objectives of the study of elites to examine the relationship between formal authorlty and effective power.[4]

2. For an elaborate discussion on patron-client relationships and horizontal alliance, see pp. 9-19.

3. Giddens, A. *The class structure of the Advanced Societies*, London, 1973, pp. 119-120.

4. Giddens, A. 'Elites in British Class Structure', *Elites and Power in British Society*. (eds.) Stanworth, P. and Giddens, A., Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 4.

In a study of the elite of a district town we should broaden the horizon of the concept of 'elite' by including those people who are associated with various occupations, organizations, institutions, bureaus, departments etc. and occupy important and influential positions. Thus by the term 'elite' we do not mean only the heads of social organizations or institutions with formal authority.

It seems to us that to make a meaningful study of the elite members and groups we should broaden the concept of 'elite' to include some persons who are not at the head of organizations and some of whom may not even occupy any formal positions of authority but who are in effective control of power and exert significant influence upon the life of the people of the community. Thus for the purpose of the study of elite members of a district town the following criteria are suggested for defining the concept of 'elite' : (i) persons of imortance who have high access to economic resources ; (ii) who have some degree of corporateness or group character and are bound up in a network of relationship with each other ; (iii) some consciousness of position they occupy within the community ; (iv) who enjoy high status and privileges.

From the above discussion it can be seen that Rajshahi town contains more than one 'elite' so that 'elite should rightly be in plural. This assumption is well documented in various works on 'elite' of 'modern' societies. But this assumption is also applicable to Rajshahi town even though it is not a modern community. Pareto had possibly some such plurality of elites in mind when he suggested :

> Let us assume that in every branch of human activity each individual is given an index which stands as a sign of his capacity, very much the way grades are given in the various subjects in examinations in school. The highest type of lawyer, for instance, will be given 10. The man who does not get a client will be given 1—reserving zero for the man who is an out and out idiot. To the man who has made his millions honestly or dishonestly, as the case may be—we will give 10. To the man who has earned his thousands will be given 6 ; to those who just manage to keep out of the poor house 1 ; and zero to those who get in...And so on for all the branches of human activity...So let us make a class of people who have the highest indices in their branch of activity, and to that class give the name of 'elite'.[5]

Mannheim enumerates several types of elites—political, organizing, intellectual, artistic, moral-religious under two broad categories of

5. Pareto, V. *The Mind and Society*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1953, III. pp. 1422-23.

integrative elite and sublimative elite.[6] And more recently Lasswell and Kaplan have introduced the concept of 'mid-elites' for various groups in a society which is composed of specialists in characteristic skills, such as lawyers, the military etc.[7] Though Raymond Aron has been chiefly concerned with the elite in the sense of governing minority he have attempted to establish a relationship between the elite and social classes and insisted upon the plurality of elites in modern societies, and has examined the social influence of the intellectual elite, which does not ordinarily form part of the political power elite.[8] Cole refers to the elites as 'groups which emerge to positions of leadership and influence at every social level'.[9]

However for a better conceptualization of elites in Rajshahi town it is necessary to discuss Bottomors's ideas about the meaning of 'elites'. According to Bottomore :

> The fresh distinctions and refinements which have been made in the concept of elite call for a more discriminating terminology than has been developed hitherto. The term 'elite (s)' is now generally applied, in fact, to functional, mainly occupational, groups which have high status (for whatever reasons) in a society ; and henceforward I shall use it without qualification, in this sense.[10]

He further argues :

> If the general term 'elite' is to be applied to these functional groups, we shall need another term for the minority which rules a society, which is not a functional group in exactly the same sense, and which is in any case of such great social importance that it deserves to be given a distinctive name I shall use here Mosca's term, the 'political class', to refer to all those groups which exercise political power or influence, and are directly engaged in struggles for political leadership ; and I shall distinguish within the political class a small group, the political elite, which comprises those individuals who actually exercise political power in a society at any given time. The extent of political elite is therefore, relatively easy to determine ; it will include members of the government and of the high administration, military leaders, and, in some cases, politically influential families of an aristocracy or royal house and

6. Mannheim, K. *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, London, 1946, Part V. pp. 82-83.

7. Lasswell, H. D. and Kaplan, A. *Power and Society : A Frame of Political Inquiry*, 1950, p. 253.

8. See, Bottomore, T. B. *Elites and Society*, London, Pelican Books, 1966, p. 13.

9. Cole, G. D. H. *Studies in Class Structure*, London, 1955, pp. 102-103.

10. Bottomore, Op. Cit., P. 14.

> leaders of powerful economic enterprises. It is less easy to set the boundaries of the political class ; it will, of course, include the political elite, but it may also include 'counter-elites' comprising the leaders of political parties which are out of office, and representatives of new social interests or classes (e. g. trade union leaders), as well as groups of businessmen, and intellectuals who are active in politics. The political class, therefore, is composed of a number of groups which may be engaged in varying degrees of co-operation, competition or conflict with each other.[11]

If we carefully examine Bottomore's statements it becomes apparent that he has termed the high status functional or occupational groups elites. But it is not very clear from his statement whether by a high status functional or occupational group he means the group as a whole or the high status members of that group. If he terms a particular functional or occupational group a high status one in the sense that all the members of that group have high status then a problem is created because though it is possible to find all the members of some occupational groups such as industrialists and trade union leaders having high status, yet most of the occupational groups such as bureaucrats, military, physicians, engineers, lawyers, academicians, contractors, traders etc. are composed of both high and low status persons. But if Bottomore's conception also refers to persons possessing high status in various occupational groups then we shall be able to use his conception about the elites in fruitful way to find out the high status persons or groups of persons by recognizing those who are treated as important, influential, powerful and leading persons in various occuptional or functional groups.

One interesting point in Bottomore's statement is that he has included the high administrative presonnel, military leaders and leaders of powerful economic enterprises within the category of political elites and excluded the opposition political leaders whom he has termed as "counter-elites" from this category. The justification for his argument can possibly be found in the involvement of all the above groups in the process of decision-making on various socio-politico-economic problems of society. To recognize the importance of 'counter-elites' he has included them along with political elites in the 'political class'. He is probably justified in doing so because in a developed country the opposition political leaders very often play important roles in various decision-making processess and their roles as opposition leaders sometimes become important even for person in

11. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

power when they make constructive criticism of the policy of the government and expose the merits and demerits of such policies. But in Rajshahi town the political leaders of the ruling party keep their counterparts belonging to opposition parties away from playing any role in the decision-making process.

However, Bottomore's distinction between 'elites' (as "functional, mainly occupational groups which have high status") and the 'political class' seems to be a little confusing since the 'political class' which is earlier distinguished from elites (i. e., functional groups), is later viewed as containing the political elite composed, among others, of members of top civil and military services who are clearly to be viewed as elite members of distinct functional or occupational groups, possessing high status as well as high power. Hence in the study of elite we should keep the political leaders separate from high administrative, high ranking military officers and leaders of powerful economic enterprises who constitute separate elite groups.

Though in the study of elite one should try to accommodate some of the points of the conventional type of elite study which emphasizes structure, function, recruitment and mobility of the elites etc. one should give greater emphasis to the system of interaction and the network of relationships of the elite members of the community. It should be done because the structural analysis seems to be inadequate for the understanding of the process of action and the pattern of linkages which cross-cuts the community boundary. Moreover, this type of study should enable us to examine the inner mechanism of the functioning of the community. However, this approach to the study of the elite members of the community is not something new because there are other scholars[12] who have already adopted this approach fully or partially to the study of elites at local and regional levels.

12. Carter in his study of 'Elite Politics in Rural India' has given a good account of the interactive process, linkages, alliance formations and conflicts among the political elites and between the local political elites and the non-elites. He has also dealt with the problem of interactive process and linkages between the local political elites and the district, provincial and national level political leaders. See Carter, A. T. *Elite Politics in Rural India: Political Stratification and Political Alliances in Western Maharashtra*, Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Broomfield's work on 'Elite conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal' deals with the problem of interactive process and networks of relationships amongst the elite members themselves and between the elite and non-elite people of Bengal. See Broomfield, J. H. *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal*, Oxford University Press, 1968

ANALYTICAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

The analytical tool of the study of the elite members should be a network model. This model has been first used by Barnes (1954) in his study of a Norwegian island Parish and developed and used by Elizabeth Bott (1957) in her study of 'conjugal roles in London families'. Both Barnes and Bott have seen networks as series of relationships which an individual builds up around himself on a personal basis. In a review article Barnes notes that the concept of network was developed in social anthropology to analyse and describe those social processes involving links across, rather than within, group and category limits.

> The interpersonal links that arise out of common group membership are as much part of the total social network as are those that link persons in different groups, and analysis of action in terms of network should reveal, among other things, the boundaries and internal structure of groups. While there are other ways of discovering groups, the network concept is indispensable in discussion (Aic) those situation where for example, the individual is involved in 'interpersonal relations which cut right across the boundaries of village, sub-caste, and linkage' (Srinivas and Beteille ; 1964, p. 166).[13]

Here a question arises whether the network model is capable of taking care of both positive and negative relationships. On this question Barnes says :

Karim's study of 'The Modern Muslim Political Elite in Bengal' partly deals with the interactive process and network of relationships of the Muslim Political elites with the British rulers and the Hindu elite members, especially Hindu political leaders as well as with the Muslim and non-Muslim population of Bengal. See Karim, A. K. N, '*The Modern Muslim Political Elite in Bengal*'—Ph. D. Thesis, University of London, 1964.

A. C. Mayer's work on 'Patron and Brokers, Rural Leadership in Four Overseas Indian Communities' provides a good example on this point. See Mayer, A. C. 'Patrons and Brokers, Rural Leadership in Four Overseas Indian Communities' in Freedman, M. (ed.), *Social Organization*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967.

In his article on 'Local Government and politics, and Political and Social Theory in India' Tinker has also dealt with the problem of linkages of the British and Indian elites with the general mass of the population as well as the interactive process between the British elites and Indian elites. See Tinker, H. 'Local Government and Politics and Political and Social Theory in India' in Swartz, M. J. (ed.) Local-Level Politics : Social and Cultural Perspectives, Chicago. 1968. pp. 217-26.

13. Barnes, J. A. 'Networks and Political Process' in Swartz (ed.) Local-Level Politics : Social and Cultural Perspectives, Chicago, 1968, p. 109.

> "The fact remains that there are people in the real world and some of them impinge on others. The notion of one person impinging on another is left vague deliberately. The kind of analysis we are concerned with at given time will determine how broad and how narrow a meaning we give to 'impinging', whether we are concerned with only positive rather than negative relationship, with direct rather than indirect interaction, and so on." [14]

From the above quotation it is quite clear that the network model can be used to deal with both positive and negative relationships if demanded by the kind of analysis with which a researcher is concerned. Bernard Cohn and Mokim Marriot have described Indian civilization as comprising numerous levels of diversity whose integration is accompanied by 'networks' of kinship, ritual and trade relations which join the local community with the larger society and by urban 'centres' where economic religious and political specialists congregate and mediate between the local area and the next larger unit.[15] Epstein has used the network model to explain how the norms and values of the local elites in a town percolate into the ranks of the non-elites with whom the elites themselves had no direct contact.[16] A. C. Mayer has written a series of valuable papers in which he has used Barnes' concept of network to analyse both the principle of recruitment within Indian factions and the principle of alliance among factions.[17] Mitchell (ed.) *Social Networks in Urban Situations* contains some valuable articles where the network model has been used to analyse the data.[18]

14. Ibid., p, 110.

15. Cohn, B. and Marriott, M. 'Networks and Centers in the Integration of Indian Civilization', Journal of Social Research, I, 1958, pp. 1-8.

16. See Epstein, A. L. 'The Network and Urban Social Organization' in Mitchell, J. C. (ed.) Social Networks in *Urban Situations*, Manchester University Press, 1969, pp. 77-127.

17. Mayer, A. C. 'System and Network : an approach to the Study of Politics in Dewas' (1962) in Madan, T. N. and Saran, G. (ed.) *Indian Anthropology*, London : Asia Publishing House.

Mayer, A. C. 'Municipal elections : a Central Indian Case Study' (1963) in Philiph, C. H. (ed.) *Politics and Society in India*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Mayer, A. C. 'The significance of quasi-group in the study of *Complex Societies*, A. S. A. Monograph 4 (London : Tavistock Publications).

Mayer, A. C. 'Local Government elections in Malwa Village' (1958) Eastern Anthropologist 11 : pp. 97-108.

Mayer, A. C. 'Patrons and Brokers : rural leadership in four overseas Indian Communities' in Freedman, M. (ed.) Social Organisation : Essays presented to Raymond Firth, London, 1967.

18. See Mitchell, J. C. (ed.) Social Networks in Urban Situations, Manchester University Press, 1969, p. 37.

In the study of elite the network model should be adopted because in the first place, this model would to be an effective tool for the analysis of the interactive process of the elite members as well as the network of relationships that emerges around an elite member or a group of elite members. Secondly, this model is particularly suitable to deal with the outside linkages of the community elite members.

Before we carry on the discussion of the network model any further it is necessary to discuss why we should not adopt a class model to analyse the data at the community level. Studying the literatures relating to class models [19] it seems to us that there are two class models : a class model of conflict and a class model of cooperative interdependence. The first model is most notably represented by Marx and his followers and the second one is upheld by the scholars oriented to structural-functional school. In the first model inter-class conflict is the main focus of attention, where as in the second one inter-class cooperation and interdependence feature most prominently. However, both these class models are primarily concerned with the problem of inter-class relationship within a bounded society or community, and both of them place very little emphasis on explaining the networks of relationships of different calsses in a particular community which frequently cut across the community boundary and extend to outside communities. Moreover, the first model seems to be inadequate to deal with the problems of political groupings in a community in an underdeveloped agrarian country like Bangladesh where these groupings generally cut vertically across the class lines and

19. See CarlsSon, G. Social Mobility and Class Structure, Lund, 1958, pp. 2-18 ; Pfautz, H. W. and Duncan, O. D. 'A Critical Evaluation of Warner's Work in Community Stratification,' *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, April, 1950, p. 210 ; Lopreato, J. and Hazelrigg, L. E. *Class Conflict and Mobility : Theories and Studies of Class Structure*, 1972 pp. 18-19 ; Bendix, R. and Lipset, S. M. (eds.) *Class, Status, and Power*, New York, 1966, p. 7 ; Giddens, A. *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, London, 1973, pp. 28-30 ; Bottomore, T. B. Sociology : *a guide to problems and literature*, London, 1564, p. 193 ; Bukharin, N. *Historical Materialism, A System of Sociology*, New York, 1925, pp. 282-84 ; Ossowski, S. *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*, New York, 1963, p. 83 ; Marx, K. *Capital* (3 vols), 1867, p. 885, International Publishers, New York, 1967 ; Weber, M. *Essays in Sociology*, (translated by Gerth and Mills), London, 1948, p. 181 ; Littlejohn, J. *Social Stratification, An Introduction*, London, 1972, p. 23 ; Dhrendorf, R. *Class and Class Conflict* in *Industrial Society*, Stanford University Press, 1959, p. 165 ; Warner, L. W. and Lunt, P. S. The Social Life of a Modern Community, New Haven, 1941, p. 82.

where even nominally class-based organizations like trade unions are simply personal vehicles for upward mobility. On the other hand, the second model being highly concerned with the problem of co-operative interdependence at the inter-class level will have a very limited capacity to account for conflicts between different classes of people.

There are other reasons for not using a class model as an analytical tool in the study of elite at the community level. In the first place, class categories are not at all prominent in the community mainly because of lack of industrialization, very weak market situation and force, a very low level of technological development and division of labour.

Secondly, at the community level the interactive process and networks of relationship generally centre around an individual or a group of actors. This characterizes a significant part of the socio-economic and political processes in the community. The class model which presupposes class category as the unit of analysis and places a very high degree of emphasis on the analysis of the inter-class relationship, paying very little attention to the problem of inter-personal relationships, cross-cutting class categories, seems inadequate for the socio-economic and political processes stated above.

Thirdly, as has already been mentioned, the networks of relationship of the elite members of the community generally cross-cut the community boundary. This problem cannot be properly explained by the class model.

Fourthly, informal types of relationships at individual and group levels which have penetrated into various institutional and organizational structures of the community cannot be fruitfully studied with the help of a class model. For example, if we try to examine why a bureaucrat's authority is likely to depend, to a large extent, more on his personal supporters and extra-bureaucratic activities and connections than on his formal post, or why the political parties in the community seem more like ad hoc assemblages of notables together with entourages than arenas in which established interests are aggregated, the use of the class model cannot give us much analytical leverage.

From the above argument one should not, however, assume that the class model cannot be applied as an analytical tool to explain the macro-process in Bangladesh.

Returning to our discussion of the network model it should be noted that the positive relationship in the network model largely assume two important form i. e., patron-client relationships and horizontal alliance, which should be treated as two sub-models under the general network model which as has already been mentioned, would take care of negative relationships (i. e, conflicts that emerge around an individual or a group of elite members. Of these two sub-models the first one plays the dominant role in the network of exchange relationships of the elite members.

Horizontal alliance refers to an exchange relationship between two or more elite members of comparable socio-economic status. When such relationship is established between two elite members it assumes the pattern of two-elite horizontal alliance in which the relationship becomes direct and face-to face ; but when it is established between more than two elite members it assumes the pattern of multi-elite horizontal alliance and the relationships may be both direct and indirect. The typical representation of the horizontal alliance are given below :

Two-elite horizontal alliance

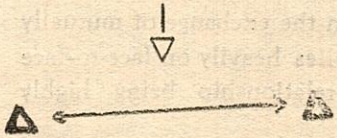

Diagram 1

Multi-elite horizontal alliance

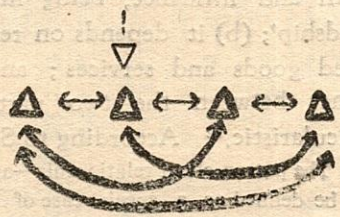

Diagram 2

However, the horizontal alliance has its dynamic aspects because it is not difficult to see the breakup of an old horizontal tie and the emergence of a new one. Thus although sometimes one may see a long enduring horizontal tie between two parties, one may also equally see a short-lived one. Moreover, in a horizontal network of an elite member there may be inclusion of new parties and the exclusion of the old allies, especially when conflicts arise between the partners. However, when a horizontally allied partner is able to enhance his politico-economic power and tries to behave like a patron with his partner the relationship breaks up if the latter is unwilling to accept the position of a client. But if the latter accepts the position of a client the relationship turns into a ptron-clientage.

Regarding the patron-client relationship it is necessary to summarise how the concept has so far been used and how and why in certain situations the concept should be modified for its proper application in the analysis of data. The concept of patron-client relationship has been defined and interpreted differently by various authors. Consequently, the concept has undergone some modifications, while keeping its basic assumption i. e., of a relationship between unequal partners, more or less undisturbed. According to Foster the term 'patron' is derived from the spanish *patron* meaning a person of power, status, authority and influence. It may signify an employer, a commercial sponsor or even a saint, but is only relevant in relation to a less powerful person or 'client' whom he can help and protect.[20] Lemarchand and Legg have defined clientelism widely as a more or less personalized relationship between actors or sets of actors, commanding unequal wealth, status or influence based on conditional loyalties and involving mutually beneficial transactions.[21] Powell specifies three basic factors in patron-client relationship which, he claims, defines and distinguishes it from other power relationship between individuals and groups, (a) the tie develops between two parties unequal in status, wealth and influence, being in Pitt-River's description, a 'lop-sided friendship'; (b) it depends on reciprocity in the exchange of mutually valued goods and services; and (c) it relies heavily on face-to-face contact between the two parties, the relationship being highly particularistic.[22] According to Scott :

> The patron-client relationship—an exchange relationship between roles—may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely intrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both for a person of lower status (client) who for his part reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patrons.[23]

20. Foster, G. M. 'The dyadic Contract in Tzintzuntzan : Patron-client Relationships,' *American Anthropologist*, 1963, LXV, pp. 1280-94.

21. Lemarchand, R. and Legg. K. 'Political Clientelism and Development : A Preliminary Analysis,' *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1972. pp. 149-78 ; see also Lemarchand, R. 'Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa, Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building,' *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2972, p. 69.

22. Powell, J. D. 'Peasant Society and Clientelistic Politics,' *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 1970, p. 412.

23. Scott. J. C. 'Patron-client Politics and Political Change in South-east Asia,' *American Political Science* Review, Vol. 65, No. 1, 1972, p. 92.

Then he elaborates three distinguishing features of patron-client links, implied by his definition, their basic inequality, there face-to-face character and their diffuse flexibility.[24] In the first place, there is an imbalance in exchange between the two partners which expresses and reflects the disparity of their relative wealth, power and status. A client in this sense is someone who has entered an unequal exchange relation in which he is unable to reciprocate fully. A debt of obligation binds him to the patron. In his search for the reasons of imbalance in reciprocity between a patron and a client he relies heavily on Peter Blau's argument that an imbalance in reciprocity is based on the fact that the patron is often in a position to supply unilaterally goods and services which the potential client and his family need for their survival and well-being.[25] But the problem is that his argument cannot be a general principle in explaining the imbalance in reciprocity between a patron and his clients because all clients' economic conditions may not be so desperate as to make them fully dependent upon the supply of goods from their patrons for their survival. In fact, some clients who are already in some elite positions may require the help of their patrons for their further upward mobility and in return they may supply goods and services to their patrons. A second distinguishing feature of the patron-client dyad is the face-to-face, personal quality of the relationship. The continuing pattern of reciprocity that establishes and solidifies a patron-client bond often creates trust and affection between the partners. The third distinctive quality of patron-client ties, one that reflects the affection involved, is that they are diffuse, 'whole person' relationship rather than explicit, impersonal contract bonds, such a strong 'multiplex' relationship as Mayer terms it covers a wide range of potential exchanges [26] According to Kaufman :

> The patron-client relation is defined here as a special type of dyadic exchange, distinguishable by the following characteristics :
>
> a) the relationship occurs between actors of unequal power and status ;
>
> b) it is based on the principle of reciprocity ; that is, it is a self-regulating form of interpersonal exchange, the maintenance of which depends on the return that each actor expects to obtain by rendering goods and services to the other and which ceases once the expected rewards fail to materialize ;

24. Ibid, pp. 93-94.

25. Blau, p. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York, 1964, pp. 118-20 and 209.

26. Mayer, A. C. in M. Banton (ed.) *The Social Anthropolgy of Complex Societies*, New York, Washington, 1966, pp. 97-122.

c) the relationship is particularistic and private, anchord only loosely in public law or community norms.[27]

Now it is necessary to examine how far the characteristics of the patron-client relationship mentioned by various authors can be maintained and whether any modification of the concept would be necessary for its application as an analytical tool in the study. With that purpose in view we shall take up each characteristic mentioned by the above authors and point out the areas where modification or refinements should be made.

1. *Status of a patron and client* : From the above discussion it emerges that all the authors have agreed on the point that a patron's socio-economic status is higher than that of a client. We also agree with other scholars on this point because in Rajshahi town a patron is always treated as superior to his client. So far as the patron-client tie between an elite patron and his non-elite clinet is concerned there is little problem in determining the higher status of the patron because by definition an elite member's socio-economic status is higher than that of a non-elite member. But in an exchange relationship between two elite members it would be necessary to find out the relative socio-economic status of the two partners. When such a tie developes between two elite members belonging to two different strata of the same occupational group it is not difficult to find out their socio-economic position because one partner will be higher than the other in the hierarchical ordering which is based on the factor of differential socio-economic power.

However, there may be some cases where the partners develop patron-client ties in spite of the fact that socio-economically they are of comparable status. Here the behaviouristic criteria (such as allegiance or loyalty of one partner to the other, domination over or submissiveness of one partner to the other etc.) should be taken into consideration to ascertain the superiority of one partner, over the other. This shows that a patron and a client may not always have higher and lower socio-economic status rspectively. But when two elite members belonging to two separate occupational groups become involved in a patron-client tie the party which has higher access to power structure, higher control over the decision-making process than the other should be treated as the superior one. If it is difficult to

27. Kaufman, R. R. 'The Patron-client concept in Macro-Politics : Prospects and Problems,' *Comparative Studie i Socie a H tory* , 1 1974, p.

ascertain the relative status of the partners by applying the above criteria we have to resort to behaviouristic criteria as mentioned earlier. Thus it may be said that a patron is always superior to a client whatever may be the criteria used for determining the superior position of the former.

2. *Dyadic face-to-face relationship* : All the authors we have mentioned earlier, except Lemarchand and Legg, have directly or indirectly said that the patron client relationship is dyadic in nature.[28] In fact, we have seen that the relationship generally assumes a dyadic form when the clients are directly connected with a patron. But the problem arises when the exchange relationship between the two parties who are not in direct contact is established through an intermediary. Here the essence of the dyadic face-to-face nature of the patron-client tie is upset. This creates a pyramidal type of patron-client network which may extend further downward as well as upward. Thus it may be argued that the patron-client realtionship is dyadic and face-to-face when it assumes a clustering pattern.

3. *Exchange* : Powell, Lemarchand and Legg have clearly mentioned that the parties in a patron-client tie exchange mutually valued goods, services and other things. The involved parties must see their mutual advantage in the transaction. Foster and Kaufman have talked about mutual exchange between a patron and a client but did not specifically mention whether the transaction is based on mutual advantage of th involved parties. Scott, on the other hand, did not raise the issue of mutually beneficial transaction. He has emphasized the point that it is a mutual but unequal exchange relationship in which a patron supplies more resources to his client who is unable to reciprocate fully because the former's control over resources is much higher than the latter's. In general a patron's control over resources is undoubtedly higher than that of a client, and hence he is in a position to contribute more than his clients in a transaction. But the important point is that he did not pay much attention to the question of why a particular patron gives something to his client in

28. Scott has changed his stand on this point and argued that there may be indirect contact between the patron and client through an intermediary, Scott, Op. Cit., p. 94.

exchange for something from the latter. This point has been clarified by Powell, Lemarchand and Legg by introducing the idea of mutual advantage of the involved parties. We have also seen that the involved parties in a patron-client tie exchange mutually valued goods services and other things. But the factor of mutual advantage in a transaction does not always necessarily mean the absence of exploitation by the patron over the clients because in a particular situation where the patron has full control over the resources desperately needed by a client for his subsistence and survival the former may exploit the latter. For example, a *bargadar* (sharecropper) client gives much value to getting lands on lease from a landholding patron who, in turn, is interested in getting a share of the crops and control over the former. Here both the parties see their advantage in the transaction, in spite of the fact that a landholder patron indulges in exploitation by appropriating the surplus value created by the labour of a *bargadar* client. However, the desperate economic condition of a *bargadar* client who can expect and get some other types of help and support from his patron may make the question of exploitation unimportant to the former.

4. *Multiplex nature of relationship* : Scott and Mayer have argued that the patron-client ties are diffuse 'whole person' relationship ; they are not purely impersonal contract bonds. The study should extend support to the above point because we have seen that when two parties become involved in a patron-client tie they develop a multiplex type to exchange relationship in which the involved parties generally make various kinds of demands on each other.

Thus for our purpose the concept of patron-clientage refers to a multiplex, diffused, largely personalized and particularistic type of exchange relationship, accommodating both face-to-face and non face-to-face contact between the involved parties, between persons of superior and inferior status who exchange mutally valued goods, services and other things to their respective advantages though some amount of exploitation by the patron over his clients may be present in certain situations.

The patron-client network can be projected through the following diagrams :

Patron-client cluster

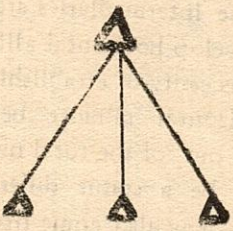

Diagram 3

Patron-client Pyramid

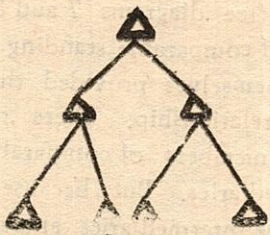

Diagram 4

But when the above diagrams are combined with the two-elite and multi-elite horizontal alliance (see page 159) the following representations can be found :

Patron-client cluster combined with the two-elite horizontal alliance

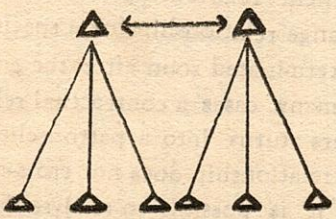

Diagram 5

Patron-client cluster combined with the multi-elite horizontal alliance.

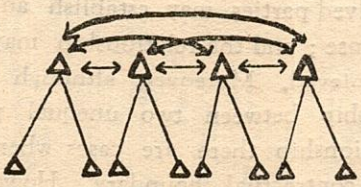

Diagram 6

Patron-client Pyramid combined with the two-elite horizontal alliance

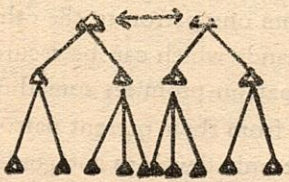

Diagram 7

Patron-client Pyramid combined with the multi-elite horizontal alliance

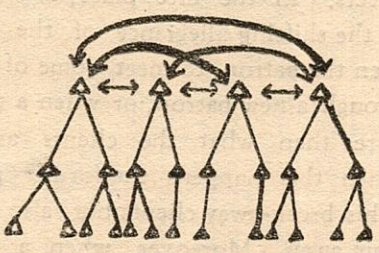

Diagram 8

Our field study in Rajshahi should show the existence of all these types of horizontal and vertical linkages. However there may or may not be horizontal links between those who are functioning as intermediaries (see diagrams 7 and 8). If all the intermediaries are elite members of comparable standing they may develop horizontal alliances amongst themselves provided they feel the necessity of establishing an exchange relationship. There may be horizontal alliance between some elite members of comparable standing out of the total number of intermediaries. But because there may be a status differential between the intermediaries, and some of them may also come from the non-elite category there may not be horizontal linkages between all the elite and non-elite intermediaries. Even an intermediary of a particular patron may be a client or patron of an intermediary of another patron who has horizontal alliance with that particular patron.

Before we examine the dynamic aspects of the patron-client relationship it is necessary to make it clear that the positive relationship between two parties of socio-economically unequal status may not always assume the character of a patron-client relationship because the involved parties may establish an exchange relationship for a specific purpose ; and the relationship may be terminated soon after the goal is achieved. Moreover, although in many cases a contractual relationship between two unequal partners turns into a patron-client relationship there are cases where the relationship does not cross-cut the contractual boundary. However, it is possible to analyse data relating to this type of relationship with the help of the network model.

Returning to the discussion of the patron-client relationship we wish to say that the patron-client relationship has also dynamic aspects. In the first place, in a patron-client network there is scope for the shifting allegiance of the clients from one patron to the other when the patron to meet some of their demands which can be secured through a new patron, or when a potential patron promises something more than what the clients are getting from their present patron. When this happens the former patron not only develops antagonism to his break-away clients but also accuses their new patron of alluring them away. Moreover, when a patron is displaced from the power structure and loses his control over resources required by his clients

his patron-client network begins to erode because many of his clients sever connections with him and form a patron-client tie with a resourceful and powerful patron who is capable of supplying things, rendering services and giving protection valuable to and desired by the clients in exchange for something which they posses and which is valuable to and required by the patron. The competition among the patrons to secure more and more offective clients gives an impetus to the shifting of the clients from one patron to another. This, sometimes, enables a client to acquire certain advantage in the sense that he might have a choice of binding himself with one patron or the other out of a group of competing patrons from whom he may be able to secure higher patronage.

But when a patron finds that some of his clients are contributing nothing to his cause and doing something which goes against his inetrest he terminates his patron-client tie with them. This shows that though the system of patron-clientage continues there may be changes of membership in the tie. And the network of patron-clientage of a particular patron is subject to expansion as well as erosion depending upon his position in the power structure.

Moreover, it should not be assumed that once two parties are involved in a patron-client tie it will always remain like that. Although generally a patron tries to maintain his superiority over his client, sometimes it may so happen that a client rises to such an important position that both the partners may begin to treat each other on more or less equal terms and thereby change their patron-client relationship into a horizontal tie. But if a patron tries to maintain his superiority over his client whom he has brought to a status comparable to his own and the client is not willing to accept his patron's superiority then conflict starts and the exchange relationship between the two terminates. In yet another situation when a client comes to occupy an important position and his patron is displaced from his position of influence the relationship between the two may take the following three different shapes : first, the client may play the role of a patron to his former patron provided that the parties are willing to change their position in the patron-client tie ; secondly, the exchange relationship will break up and turn into a conflict when the former patron is unwilling to accept the superior position of his former client who

insists on asserting his superiority over the former ; thirdly, both the parties may terminate their exchange relationship without showing any outward sign of antagonism.

At the end of our discussion of the patron client relationship we are faced with a crucial question of whether all the transactions in a patron-client network are in conformity with the community norms. In Kaufman's view the patron-client relationship is anchord only loosely in community norms. He is possibly right in making such an argument because if the system is not somehow connetced with the normal practice of the people and hence in certain respects with the community norms it will break down.

But the problem is that all the transactions in the patron-client network are not normative and some transactions are clearly illegal and illegitimate. It is necessary to explain this situation because in our analysis of the data this question will arise. Clearly some transactions such as giving a bribe for a favour, manipulation of cases violating formal rules etc. are formally declared (through public laws) illegal and illegitimate. But the important point is that these types of transactions have become normal practices in the community ; and people raise the question of the illegitimacy of these transactions when they are unable to resort to them, or when they fail to achieve their goals in a competitive situation. Interestingly enough, people failing in their first attempt go on making further attempts. However, many transactions such as leasing out lands to *bargadars*, advancing loans to someone, offering some money or materials to political workers and voters,[29] assurance of future material help and a job, distribution of relief materials, recommending someone for a job, a licence or a permit etc. in exchange for support and services are supported by the community norms. The above discussion shows that in a network of patron-clientage there may be transactions supported by the community norms as well as illegal or illegitimate transactions which are not in conformity with the public laws or community norms, but are widely practised by the people. However, the patron-client relationship may be based exclusively on transactions supported by the community norms or on widely practised illegal or illegitimate transactions.

29. See Bailey, F. G. *Politics and Social Change : Orissa in 1959*, University of California Press, 1963, pp. 32, 138,

Weakness of the Model

Although we have found the network model and its two sub-models suitable tools for the analysis of data, we should admit here that this particular model may not be proved to be adequate and powerful tools for the study of the macro socio-economic and political processes where the Marxist class model may be a valuable tool. One serious problem for the application of the network model at macro-level study is that it would be very hard and almost impossible on the part of a field worker to observe closely the activities of the people and to elicit information about the networks of relationship of a large number of people coming from various parts of the country because for the collection of data on the interpersonal networks a field worker must live with the people for a reasonable period of time so that he can closely observe the activities of the people and interact with them by participating in some of their activities.

More importantly, the patron-client sub-model, being implicitly tied to the concept of structural-functionalism,[30] is a poor tool in explaining social changes, especially long-run social changes even at the community level. This sub-model is also a very poor tool for the analysis of the macro-level political process. Kaufman has thoroughly dealt with this problem and pointed out the inadequacy of the patron-client concept for the study of the macro-level politics.

Criticizing Powell's stand on this point [31] Kaufman argues that there is an implication, of course, that patron-client relation are germane to understanding the behaviour of other sorts of individuals as well-notably, politicians and brokers, urban voters, and various 'traditional' authority figures. But even so, the dependent variables in Powells formulation would seem to involve attributes of units studied in the anthropological literature—individuals, small, usually rural subsystems, and their linkages to the outside world. Such an approach would stay within the relatively restricted scope of 'micro-politics', considering only selectively the attributes of larger system itself. Given the difficulties involved in extending the clientele

30. Kaufman. *Op, Cit.*, p. 305.

31. According to Powell, the concepts' main value is in its power to explain the "Political behaviour of low status actors...particularly peasants, as they are incorporated, recruited, mobilized, or inducted into the national political process." See Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

concept, it may well be that we ought to be content with somewhat modest choice and concentrate comparative research on the relatively narrow arenas from which the concept was originally drawn.[32]

Methodology

To begin the discussion of the methodology of the study of the elites of Rajshahi town it is necessary to make a short statement of the procedure we should adopt to identify the elite members of the community from and on whom we shall collect a significant proportion of data. In identifying these elite members we should adopt two proocedures : First, we should take those persons as elite members whose statuses are high in various occupational or functional groups and who hold high positions of authority and have high access to socio-economic and political power, of course, assuming the existence of hierarchical ordering of these persons in their respective occupational or functional groups. Secondly, those persons who have reputations as powerful and influential leaders in the community. These persons are so well reputed in the community that they are easily recognizable. This second criterion has been found to be in conformity with the first criterion in the sense that most of those who are well known in the community as powerful and influential men have also high occupational status with the exception of a very few political elite members who, though they do not occupy an important formal political position, are widely known to be influential informal political leaders.

Another important point to note here is that data should also be collected from some non-elite members of the community and the district as well as some outside lite members who are involved in a network of relationships with some elite members of the community in order to get a full picture of the interactive process and network of relationships of the community elite members. Thus the identified community elite members should not constitute the full universe of the study, though a significant amount of statistical information or data would be based on these elite members. In fact, the whole community plus some outside elite and non-elite members should enter into the study of the community elites.

In the study we shall use the concept of methodology in a narrow sense to mean the procedures and techniques for the collection of data.

32. Kaufman, *Ibid.*, p. 302.

It is often argued that the selection of specific field research methods depends upon the nature of the problem to be investigated and the relevant social conditions of the people to be studied.[33] The nature of the problem of investigation in this type of study will make it necessary for us to choose the participant observation method for the collection of data in the field continuously for a reasonable period of time. We think that for a better understanding of the network of relationships of the elite members it is essential to apply the participant observation method which should provide an opportunity to collect valuable information about the process of socio-economic and political activity of the elite members of the community for a reasonable period of time. The survey method which emphasises the collection of data at a particular point of time and the use of a questonnaire with a limited number of questions cannot be a useful tool for the collection of data about the network of relationships of the elite members which frequently cross-cuts the community bonndary. Moreover, while the survey method is not an adequate tool to gather data on the qualitative dimension of social relations, the participant observation method is an effective tool for the collection of such data.[34] But we should use the method of participant observation in a much wider sense, as it has been thought of by McCall and Simmons when they say :

> "... – it refers to a characteristic blend or combination of method and techniques, as exemplified by the work of the love anthropologist, living amongst an isolated people, involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subject of the study some direct observation of events. Some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artifacts and openendness in the directions the study takes."[35]

33. See Hasan, K. A. 'On Collecting Anthropological Data in a Northern Indian Village,' *Eastern Anthropologist*, 1966 (1), pp. 55-65.

34. In support of our statement we may refer to Beteille's study of 'Caste, Class and Power : This author has given higher emphasis to the importance of the qualitative dimension of social relations and has adopted the method of participant observation for the collection of data and extensively used the materials collected through his informations. More importantly, while studying a village in Southern India he has very vividly shown how the villagers' networks of relationship cross-cut the community boundary. See Beteille. A. *Caste, Class and Power*, Berkelay, 1966, pp. 9-12.

35. Mc Call, G. J. and Simmons, J. L. (eds.) *Issues in Participant Observation : A Text and Reader*, London, 1969, p. 1.

These authors have discussed at length the arguments both for and against the participant observation method and defended the method as a powerful one for the collection of more realistic and better quality data.[36]

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

Development Administration Strategy for Rural Development in Bangladesh - an Evaluation

Mohammed Sadeque

Development administration as a new approach to rural development was first conceived and applied in the V-AID programme that began in 1953 with a view to bringing the development agencies of the government closer to the villagers. The V-AID lasted for only few years and the traditional negative attitudes of the government departments still persisted. Basing on the V-AID experiences Comilla Rural Development Academy made concentrated experiments in Comilla kotwali thana for about a decade and successfully applied the development administration approach in co-operatives, rural works programme and in the operation of Thana Training and Development Centre. The present Integrated Rural Development Programme (I. R. D. P.) is nothing but a replication of Comilla type co-operatives, rural works programme and Thana Training and Development Centre. The Swanirvar movement too put similar emphasis on the achievement of viable people administration relationship and effective co-ordination among government departments to facilitate rural development efforts. But the irony is that this approach has not made much headway and in fact it has had a precarious existence for the last three decades.

Introduction

We have inherited a colonial 'heaven born' public administration. During the first decade of Pakistani period (Bangladesh constituted the eastern wing of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971) the public bureaucracy, due to recruitment and training policies based on British tradition in India, represented guardian type paternalism in its outlook and attitude. Since the country was passing through political instability and chaos the bureaucrats got an opportunity to assume political role in addition to administrative functions.[1] Sometimes the politicians too used to employ them for achieving ulterior political motives. In the absence of strong political leadership, the public officials especially

1. Salima Omer, "priorities in Public Administration in Pakistan—Public Administration within a Democracy" in *Problems of Administrative Research in Pakistan* (Karachi : National Institute of Public Administration, 1971).

at the Secretariate continued to demonstrate elitist behaviour pattern. In most circumstances the departmental Secretaries regarded the departments as little empires and took decisions independently. As a result, centralization of decision making powers in the Secretariate, watertight departmental rigidities, conflict between the generalist administrators and the technical officers, became rampant in our administrative system. Similar views were expressed by Westcott [2], Gladieux[3] and Shamsul Hoque.[4]

The similar administrative bottlenecks and unhealthy behavior pattern were reflected in the government departments operating at the lower levels—district, sub-division, thana and union. The Government had to utilize these lower rank public officials for implementing development programmes. But unfortunately their quality was very poor. Moreover, the people-administration relationship was and still is an acute problem. The tradition of official corruptness was one of the stumbling blocks. As one authority succintly pointed out that in a society where the illiterate villager is helpless in the face of corruptible public officials the problem of impersonal honesty and sincere work can harbly be secured.[5]

Delegation of planning and implementation functions to the elected local government agencies was also grossly neglected during the first decade of Pakistan period. This delegation recognizes the democratic participation, involvement and control of the people in the management of their own affairs. Failure of democratic institutions and absence of political leadership turned such agencies into those of cliques and factions.

2. Jay B. Westcott, "Government Organization in Developing Countries" in Irving Swerdlow, ed., *Development Administration concepts and Problems*, (New York : Syracuse University Press, 1963).

3. B. L. Gladieux, *Reorientation of Pakistan Government for National Development*, (Karachi : Government of Pakistan Press, 1962).

4. A. N. Shamsul Hoque, *Administrative Reforms in Pakistan*, (Dacca : National Institute of Public Administration, 1970). Reference to a strong need for interministrial coordination can also be found in the Bangladesh First Five Year (1973-78) Plan. It says, "the next important prerequisite for an improvement in the efficiency of development administration is inter-ministrial coordination and consultation on important policy issues as well as on the implementation of development programs and projects" see Planning Commission of Bangladesh, *Bangladesh First Five Year Plan* (Dacca, 1973), p, 74.

5. Guy Hunter, *Modernizing Peasant Societies : A Comparative Study in Asia and Africa*, (London : Oxford University Press, 1969), p 199,

Esman[6] delineates two goals of modern states—namely, nation building and socio-economic development. According to the author, the Government have to consciously undertake some important steps which include integrating diverse elements into a national community ; the distribution of decision making powers among central, regional and local governments ; creation of modernizing institutions ; widespread popular participation in the development programmes. Hunter[7] speaks of the same thing when he says that the problem of creative development administration in both Asia and Africa 'demands changes both in the shape and the tone of administrative practice.' Since the Government in a country like ours have to provide leadership in the process of social and economic development, there is a great necessity to reorient the outlook of the public officials. Esman and Montogomery[8] call this new band of government officials as institution builders and agents of social change.

Rural Conditions

One particular feature of the agrarian structure of Bangladesh is the average small farm sizes of the majority of the total farm families. Tenant farming, although *present* mainly on crop-sharing basis does not occupy a very high percentage of the total. The Master Survey of Agriculture (Second Round) 1926-1964 puts the percentages of farm families owning less than 1.25 acres and less than 2.00 acres at 50.9 and 62.2 respectively. Bangladesh can rightly be called a land of family since farming activity is carried on in family land with family labour for family consumption. The small farmers sell out portion of their produce for meeting the financial expenses incurred on daily necessities, for paying debts and rents, etc. Only 18% of the cultivated land is tenant operated and the farmers do not treat farming as a business and do not depend hired labour. The mode of production and

6. Milton J. Esman, "The Politics of Development Administration" in John D. Montogomery and Willium J. Siffin, eds., *Approches to Development Politics, Administration and Change*, (New York : Mc Graw-Hill Book Co. 1966. pp 59-87.

7. Guy Hunter, *op. cit.* pp 205-206.

8. Milton J, Esman and John D. Montogomery, "System Approaches to Technical Co-operation. The Role of Development Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXIV, N. 5, Sept | Oct., 1969.

consumption has been truly termed as peasant agriculture.[9] Peasant agriculture does have its technical and social limitations. The small size of holdings means very little surplus to invest in improved techniques. As a result, there is persistent stagnation and consequent crisis in agriculture. This crisis in agriculture is compounded by the natural calamities that recur almost every year.[10]

Another charateristic of rural society of Bangladesh is the ever growing number of landless people. In 1951 landless labourers 14.25 per cent of all cultivators, while in 1961 the percentage rose to 17.52. Although comparable figures are not available for later years, one bench mark survey conducted in 1973-75 of 7710 rural household in 12 districts of Bangladesh showed the percentage of landless households (landless being defined as those households having (i) no farm and (ii) having homestead not exceeding 23 decimals), as 37.69.[11] The income of this poorest section of the rural population seems to have remained at more or less constant level over the last two and a half decades.[12]

According to 1974 Bangladesh population census 92% of the people live in rural areas. Over the last decade the increase of population in the rural areas has been 33% and despite the operation of the massive family planning programme, the population is expected to double itself within the next 25 years. Because the infrastructure is not yet developed the prospect of industrialization is not any further bright. Naturally not enough increase in population can be absorbed in the urban sector. So with land being very limited and rural population increasing at a constant rate, we would expect rural landlessness to be growing.

9. Abu Abdullah, et. al., "Agrarian Structure and the IRDP—Preliminary Considerations", *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 2, April, 1976.

10. The total loss of property on account of the occurrence of natural calamities for the decade 1960-70 has been estimated to be around 4436.6 million Taka. See UNROD, *Some Aspects of Development Planning in Bangladesh*, Dacca, Vol. 2, 1973, Annex, 3, p. 22.

11. Abu Abdullah, *op. cit.*

12. S. R. Bose, "Trends of Real Income of the Rural Poor in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), 1949-66", *The Pakistan Development Review*, Dacca, Vol. VII. No. 3. Autumn, 1986. Also see M. Alamgir, "Some Analysis of Income, Consumption, Saving and Poverty in Bangladesh". *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. II, No. 4, Oct. 1974.

The main problem of rural development[13], therefore, is one of modernizing the production method which means giving access to modern production input such as irrigation facilities, high yielding varieties, credit, extension, etc. so that necessary diversification in agricultural production and intensification in cropping pattern can be achieved for helping our peasants to significantly raise farm income and also for creating more employment facilities for the landless people. And giving this access to the peasantry is essentially a problem of "institutional development." There is a great need to establish institutions in which the different elements of a modern agricultural system are organized and in which, more equitable relationship among different groups of people can gradually evolve. Institutions are also needed to establish a viable link between the rural population and the development agencies of the Government for facilitating extension of agricultural knowledge and supply of credit and production inputs for transforming our agriculture. The backwardness and stagnation of agriculture also demands building an administrative service which is competent, honest and ready to help local people to participate in development tasks.

In this paper an attempt will be made to discuss the manner in which development administration approach was sought to be utilized in the various rural development programmes in Bangladesh.

V-AID Programme—some lessons learnt

The Village Agricultural and Industrial Development[14] was the first officially launched national community development programme. It was started in 1953 with the purpose of securing maximum possible

13. Anker defines rural development as "Strategies, Policies and Programmes for the development of rural areas and the promotion of activities carried out in such areas (agriculture, forestry, fishing, rural crafts and industries, the building of the social and economic infrastructure), with the ultimate aim of achieving a fuller utilization of available physical and human resources and thus higher incomes and better living conditions for the rural population as a whole, particularly the rural poor and effective participation of the latter in the development process." See Desmond L. W. Anker, "Rural Development Problem and Strtaegies", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 108, No. 6, Dec. 1973.

14. For a detailed discussion of the different aspects of V-AID Programme, see Jack D. Mezirow, *Dynamics of Community Development*, (New York : Scare Crow Press, 1963).

participation of the rural people in the developmental tasks being carried out by the various nation building departments of the Government. In former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) the thana covering approximately a population of 10,0000 was made the Development Area and the development project was headed by a Development Officer. The Development Officer and the V-AID Supervisors tried for co-ordination among the Government departments that had some roles to play in rural development. The Multipurpose Village Level Workers (V. L. Ws.) became the link between the nation building departments and the villagers. The Village Workers acted as extension agents and demonstrated improved methods in agriculture, animal husbandry, health and sanitation, adult education, etc. The need for Village Organizations was realized and some Village Councils of Elders were constituted. The V-AID programme brought new spirit and hope to the people who had practically no relationship with the public officials until the programme was launched.

Although the V-AID programme was quickly expanded throughout the whole country, yet it was very short lived. The programme was abolished in 1959. It laid emphasis on results rather than on process. Scanty attention was given to the grass root process of community organizing and as such institution building did not receive the seriousness it deserved. The Village Councils, whereever they were constituted, were dominated by the wealthy people and hence these councils in many instances distributed government subsidies to friends and supporters. The co-ordination among the departments at various levels of Government was a real hard nut to crack. Friction and conflict also cropped up between the V-AID and the technical departments. Agriculture department regarded it as a rival functionary and did not provide it with necessary supplies and services. Co-ordination with the civil administration also broke down and although Sub-divisional and District Magistrates were made ex-officio Chairmen of the Advisory Committees (for co-ordination at the district and project levels, they too did not lend enough support to the V-AID Programme.

The V-AID Programme, though continued for about six years, it was none-the-less significant for two reasons. It led to the creation of two Rural Development Academies in the erstwhile two wings of Pakistan. The Academy at Comilla, popularly known as Comilla Academy began to conduct training programme for the V-AID personnel and officers of the various nation building departments.

Secondly, despite many weaknesses, the V-AID programme was not all in vain. The Comilla Academy after having learnt a few lessons from the operation of V-AID, made Comilla thana[15] as its laboratory area and undertook pilot programmes and action researches simultaneously in order to find out suitable approaches to rural development[16].

Comilla Experiments

The Comilla approach to rural development was one of institution building. Institutions were created in an attempt to build the economic base of rural Bangladesh, to help villagers understand the dynamics of planned change process and to motivate them to participate in programmes of socio-economic development. By far the most important objective of such institutions was to bring the villagers and the development agencies of the government into closer relationship and to try to enable the personnel of such agencies to give needed leadership in the developmental process. Moreover, thana as a vital administrative unit and an effective centre of development activities got utmost importance in Comilla experiments. During the British rule in India thana symbolised the maintenance of law and order (hence the name police station). Comilla Academy sought to transform it into a nucleus of rural development activities.

a) Co-operatives

Two-tier co-operatives—primary village based agricultural societies and their federation at the thana headquarters were chosen as the vehicles for carrying out the social and economic reorganization of the rural society of Bangladesh. Although co-operative movement has been in existence since 1904, it failed to take a sound root in this country due to various organizational and management problems. The members in earlier co-operatives did not learn how to save. Such co-operatives were in effect merely channels for pumping credit. Necessary supervision was also lacking and this led to non-utilization of credit for productive puposes.[17] Comilla Academy, on the other

15. A thana is an administrative unit which is an equivalent of U. S. County. Bangladesh is divided into the following administrative units in a descending order: Centre, division, district, sub-division, thana, union and village. The area of Comilla thana is approximately 100 sq. miles and its pop. was 1, 57, 885 (1961 census).

16. A. Edgar Schuler, "Role of Pakistan Academy for Village Development, Comilla," *Journal of PAVD*, Vol. 3, No. 1, July, 1962.

17. Government of Pakistan, *Credit Enquiry Commission Report*, (Karachi: Government of Pakistan Press, 1959.

hand, set as many as ten essential conditions for the members of primary co-operatives to follow in order to ensure their effective functioning. The members, among other conditions, had to attend weekly meetings, make weekly thrift deposit, keep proper records, do joint production planning, etc. Comilla Thana Central Co-operative Association was established to provide support, supervised credit and knowledge and information to the primary village societies.

The Comilla Co-operatives seem to have developed a relatively effective system of rural credit.[18] If capital formation and loan repayment were considered as some indicators of growth, the village co-operatives in the Comilla experimental thana can be said to have attained continued success for the period form 1961 to 1969.[19] They provided a suitable institutional framework for the establishment of effective communication between the villagers and the officers and staff of the thana and union based Government departments. This relationship increased the rural people's accessibility to inputs and knowledge which were available with the departments.

An unique extension method was tried by Comilla Academy. In place of traditional external agent approach the village co-operative selected the model farmers from among the members to attend weekly training courses at the thana headquarters and disseminate the new knowledge to the next weekly co-operative meeting. The model farmer could easily influence the fellow villagers in adoption.[20] A wide variety of other agents was also chosen by village co-operatives to undergo training in health, education, family planning, etc. The selection and training of female organizers for dissemination of family planning information, distribution of contraceptives among villagers and the follow-up steps examplified the manner in which co-operatives could be used to effectively introduce social and economic development programmes.

18. Elliot Tepper, *Changing Patterns of Administration in Rural East Pakistan*, (Comilla : Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, 1966). p. 121.

19. A *New Rural Co-operative System for Comilla Thana*, Nineth Annual Report, (Comilla : Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, 1970), p. 22.

20. For a fuller discussion of the role of model farmers in adoption and diffusion, see S. A. Rahim, *Diffusion and Adoption of Agricultural Practices—A Study of Patterns of Communication, Diffusion and Adoption of Improved Agricultural Parctices in East Pakistan*, (Comilla : Pakistan Academy for Village Development, 1961).

b) Thana Council of Co-ordination and Local Planning

The Academy experimented with another institution at the thana level which would provide a suitable forum to the thana based departmental officers and the elected representatives of the people to thrash out common problems. The local government agency at the union level was the Union Council (they were called Union Boards during the British period and presently known as Union Parishads) that executed development schemes under the supervision of thana council. The Academy started the thana council's co-ordination efforts even before the termination of the V-AID Programme. When V-AID was facing this co-ordination problem in programme implementation everywhere, the Academy undertook much needed steps for effecting co-ordination among all the departments as well as between the departments and the Union Councils.[21]

At the beginning the officers found it extremely difficult to sit and discuss with the repesentatives of the people on equal terms. The Academy helped the council to adopt fixed agenda and gradually educated the officers to report to the council about the activities of their respectives departments. Thana Councils brought the people and the officers at one place and they were beginning to understand and appreciate each other's problems. Raper[22] comments, 'Never before had they (Village leaders) as a group representing all the unions met with the thana departmental officers as a group. Here was an action-oriented forum in which the village leader could say what he wanted to say, and in turn hear what he himself as a leader would need to do before his requests could be effectively met ". It provided an excellent opportunity to try co-ordination in three ways—co-ordination between the departments themselves, between the departments and the union council and between the union councils themselves. Besides, a weekly co-ordination meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Circle Officers. Since all the thana based officials and the representatives of the Central Co-operative

21. A. K. M. Mohsen, *The Comilla Rural Administration Experiment History and Annual Report 1962-63* (Comilla : Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, 1963). p. 17.

22. Arthur F. Raper, *Rural Development in Action. The Comprehensive Experiment at Comilla, East Pakistan,* (London : Cornell University Press, 1970). p. 104.

Association attended this co-ordination meeting, it became easier for the officers to take stock of the needs and problems of the whole thana and mobilize resources to take care of these needs and problems without loss of time.

Thana Council too provided opportunities for undertaking local planning. The Councillors (Officers also became councillors by virtue of their position) could work out the details of the development project and supervised their execution.[23] The participation of the officers was advantageous in that they could help thana level planning by providing expertise in the council's deliberations and keeping the planning process within realistic limits. The planning and execution of rural public works progamme under the direct leadership of the thana council were deemed to build the infrastructure of the country on a sound basis and utilize the idle manpower for development. An elaborate planning procedure was followed before the plans were finalized.[24] Implementation of works programme helped thana and union councils to become active and practical administrative agencies. It initiated a planned process of developing and mobilizing local leadership by activizing the union councils.[25]

c) Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC)

Thana Training and Development Centre completes the chain of institutions that the Academy considered essential for rural development. With the evolution of thana council as a planning and co-ordinating agency and creation of Central Co-operative Association thana development efforts required that integration among thana council, Central Co-operative Association and all the department and the comprehensive training programmes must be achieved for better co-operation. Since development efforts are fundamentally inter-departmental and inter-sectoral in character, development projects

* Head of civil administration at the thana.

23. Richard O. Neihoff, *Basic Democracies and Rural Develpoment*, M. S. U. Asian Studies Centre, Reprint series, No. 1, Fall, 1966.

24. Akhtar Hameed Khan, *An Evaluation of the Rural Public Works Programme*, (Comilla : Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, 1963). pp. 19-20.

25. But one Bangladeshi Professor viewed the works programme as politically corrupt and of little econmic value. See Rahman Sobhan, *Basic Democracies Work Programme and Rural Development in East Pakistan*, (Dacca : Bureau of Economic Research, University of Dacca, 1968). p. 238.

have to be darwn up with maximum support and co-operation of all departments concerned and organizations so that each is in a position to know what is expected of it for the successful implementation of the project. Further, the Academy felt that all organizations and departments should be located at one central place in the thana headquarter in order that they could easily co-operate with each other and the villagers could establish meaningful contact with the public officials. Accordingly Comilla Thana Training and Development Centre was established by the Academy.

The Academy visualized a completel new role for the thana officers who were given the responsiblity of teaching and training a large number of extension agents and village leaders engaged in the implementation of pilot programmes. The co-operative members, model farmers, co-operative organizers, family planning organizers, union council members, members and chairmen of work project committees and others came to the Thana Training and Development Centre and attended theoretical courses as well as practical demonostrations orgnized and taught by the thana based officials. Training enhanced people's ubility to handle such affairs which they so long considered mpossible. Such non-formal educational programmes could make the trainees to prepare and execute practicable plans. It was the training that exposed them to new knowledge and values and it was the continuity of the training that helped the trainees internalize them.

d) Training for Reorientation of Officers.

One spectacular feature of Comilla Academy's experiments was the organization and conduct of continuous training programmes for officers. Periodic training courses, ranging from a few weeks to a few months' duration were (and are still) organized and attended by different categories of government officials serving at different levels. The training had both theoretical and practical components and the curriculum contained integrated courses on rural sociology, economics, social psychology, education, community organization, development administration, etc. The purpose of these training programmes was to bring about basic changes in the traditional elitist attitude and outlook of the public officials and administrators, and to prepare them to shoulder the onerous tasks of development. The Academy put priority on the training programmes for the thana based officers and staff belonging to the generalist and specialist departments.

Since these officers have direct contact with the villagers, training courses were particularly directed to enable them to play their new roles of change agents and leaders of development.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Swanirvar Movement

By 1968 Comilla rural development experiments were duplicated in all the twenty thanas of Comilla District. The results of the experiments were adjudged satisfactory by the erstwhile planning commission of Pakistan. The Government adopted Comilla approach on a national scale in 1970 and called it Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). After the emergence of Bangladesh, the Government decided to expand IRDP throughout the whole country gradually. So far 250 thanas have been covered. The primary objective of the programme was to devise an administrative and organizational framework 'for popular participation in the planning, organization, implementation, co-ordination and control of all matters vital to the well-being of the rural population'.[26] Thana was made the IRDP area involving three types of programmes in imitation of Comilla experiments :

(i) The two-tier co-operatives,
(ii) The Training and Development Centre,
(iii) Rural Public Works for employment of idle manpower and development of rural infrastructure.

The IRDP co-operatives elect a manager and a model farmer who goes once a week to the thana training and development centre for supplies and services including credit and for training. These leaders in turn become change agents. The Thana Project Officer, who is also the ex-officio Secretary of Thana Central Co-operative Association, is providing over-all leadership and guidance in the achievement of IRDP objectives, The Thana Central Co-operative Association is working as a banker to the primary societies, arranging marketing of products and is doing business. It has supervisory and field personnel to maintain contact with the village societies.

26. B. J. J. Stubbings, "Integrated Rural Development in Pakistan," *Journal of Administration Overseas*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April, 1975.

At the national level the creation of National Rural Development Board was recommended by the First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh. The responsibility of formulating over-all policies and directing the affairs of IRDP was to lie with the proposed Board. This Board is also to co-ordinate the afforts of all relevant ministries and departments with IRDP. A sixteen-member National Council for Agriculture and Rural Development with the President of Bangladesh as its Chairman has recently been constituted. Now the central direction of the programme rests with the headqurater office of IRDP headed by a Director General. A separate Ministry of Rural Development and Co-operatives is in charge of IRDP. Project Directors are entrusted with the task of co-ordinating IRDP activities with district administration and other government departments at the district.[27] He also supervises the implementation of IRDP in the district. At the thana level Thana Circle Officer is to perform the pivotal role of a co-ordinator.

Swanirvar or self-reliance as a movement was launched by the Government of Bangladesh in November, 1975. The Swanirvar movement, though not a new venture in this country (one I C S Officer named T I. M. Nurun Nabi Chowdhury started Pally Mangol Samities or Village Welfare Societies in the forties to stimulate rural people in Bengal to undertake self help rural development activities) was officially started to encourage and educate all sections of village people to participate in consciously undertaken self-help efforts affecting all spheres of village life particularly agriculture.

The origin of the Swanirvar movement can be traced to the undertaking of local agricultural rehabilitation programmes, under government sponsorship, in different districts of Bangladesh in order to tide over the ravages of the flood disaster of 1974. The evaluation of these programmes identified their successes and failures and ultimately led to the launching of the nationwide 'self reliance' movement in 1975. The motto of the movement has been described as to "turn the beggar's hands into those of a worker" and its avowed purpose is to bring planning and implementation of rural development programmes to the grass root level through the mobilization of local resources and manpower in co-operation with the government agencies.

To instil the ideal of self-reliance among the villagers work camps are organized at the villages and they are attended by officials and

27. Prior to December, 1975, The IRDP Co-ordination meeting in Rajshahi was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi. But now the IRDP Project Director performs this responsibility.

villagers. The participants are divided into several groups to collect village statistics, identify the nature of various local problems and design and implement simple village development plans. Implementation of physical works is followed by group discussion in the evening when the day's works are reviewed and future development plans drawn up. But since such plans were haphazardly drawn in the beginning, the National Swanirvar Committee prepared a *Manual of Village Development* with the help of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development and Mymensingh Agriculture University. Training programmes were also organized for the villagers and the officials to prepare them to play their respective roles successfully. So far about 410 work camps have been held all over Bangladesh. The next phase is the preparation of a village development plan in at least one village in each thana.

At the capital one full time Secretary is in charge of the operational control of the Swanirvar movement. The National Swanirvar Committee that consists of both official and non-official member, has recommended the establishment of similar committees at different levels. These committees particularly the village committees comprise the cross-section of the society and as such are regarded as more broad based than any previous organization.

Swanirvar movement has been called a new approach to rural development is that it enables government officials to work hand in hand with the local villagers. The representative of officials in various Swanirvar committees and their participation in work camps are intended to establish officer-people relationship on a sound basis and also enhance communication among the government departments themselves,

Experiences of Rural Development Programmes

How effectively was the strategy of development administration applied in the rural development programmes ? Even though impressive results were claimed for the concentrated experiments of Comilla Academy the concept could not be applied as expected. The founder Director of the Academy after having personally visited the operation of Comilla Pilot Programmes in all the twenty thanas of Comilla District, expressed his pessimism in respect of the performance of the thana officials in an excellent report called *Tour of Twenty Thanas*.[28] He skeptically observed that some officers were reverting to the traditional paternalistic attitude which negate the basic objective of

28. Akhtar Hameed Khan, *Tour of Twenty Thanas* (Third edition), (Comilla : B A R D: 1973), pp 1-28.

development administration, because they did not consider the participation of people in development activities as crucial.

The operation of Integrated Rural Development Programme presents a more gloomy picture. Creation of IRDP has led to the intensification of inter-departmental rivalry and conflict as was true during the V-AID days. The Agriculture, Co-operative and other related departments are complaining that their functions have been usurped by IRDP and hence are not giving needed co-operation to the successful implementation of IRDP objectives. The distribution of production inputs like pumps and fertilizers, for example, illustrates the existence of this interdepartmental rivalry. The distribution is in fact served by vertical decisions and the thana project officer of IRDP has little power to influence Thana Agricultural Development Committee (that distributes pumps and fertilizers now).[29] The Circle Officer does not enjoy much status as to enable him to successfully perform the difficult role of a co-ordinator at the thana headquarter.

A recent study[30] clearly points out that the Thana Project Officers, Deputy Project Officers and the Technical and Supervisory Officers of thana central co-operative association have not played any conspicuous motivational and educational role in the growth of village co-operatives. It is also evident from the same study report that thana based government officers are not properly performing their extension and training resposibilities. Many of them are demonstrating utter negligence while others are lacking in imagination and capability regarding the organization and conduct of training programmes.

The relevant experiences in Swanirvar movement, which is not even two years old, are not very optimistic either. Some amount of success has been achieved in some Swanirvar villages primarily because the officers have taken personal interest in bolstering the movement. But the available evidence strongly suggests that the relationship between the officers and the village people has not substantially

29. Abu Abdullah, et. al., *op. cit.* The Annual Development Plan of Bangladesh for 1974-75 too recognises the existence of this interdepartmental rivalry. "The main snag is the lack of co-ordination among the different development agencies and the IRDP in their functions at the field level. This is, specially, with regard to the supply of production units to the societies". See Planning Commission of Bangladesh, *Annual Development Plan for 1974-75*, Dacca, 1975, pp. 211-212.

30. M. A. Hamid, et. al., *Integrated Rural Development Programme : An Evaluation of Natore and Gaibanda Projects*, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, 1975 (Mimeo.)

improved but rather it has deteriorated in many places.[31] One of the main reasons for this deterioration is the inability of the government officers to provide the villagers with the help, guidance and assistance that they have promised during the work camps.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we can say that the concept of development administration is not yet firmly established in our country. Rural development programmes under official sponsorship have been in operation for more than two decades in one name or another and conscious efforts were directed toward preparing the government officials to pay a changed role, yet the goals of development administration could hardly be achieved.[32] The reasons are not probably far to seek. The country has been passing through transitions and we are yet to evolve a socio-political system that could provide a direction of purpose to the people as well as to the bureaucracy. In the absence of a viable political leadership and national purpose, on real change can take place in the attitude of the public officials at all levels. Operation of local government bodies remained suspended until very recently since the emergence of Bangladesh and consequently, the desired decentralization and co-ordination which are regarded as the heart of Comilla approach could not be achieved in areas outside Comilla Thana. For the same reason desirable changes have not come about in our socio-economic structure. As already mentioned, about 40% of our rural population are near or completely landless and any programme that tries to bypass this basic issue can not be expected to take a sound root. Moreover we have had too many changes in the name and content of the rural development programmes, and that also creates confusion both for the people and public officials.

31. M. A. Hamid, et. al., *Swanirvar Bangladesh : An Evaluation of Swanirvar Village of Rajshahi, Pabna and Kushtia and Jessore districts*, Rural Development Studies, series 6, Department of Economics, Rajshahi University, December, 1976 (Mimeo).

32. Maniruzzaman provides a somewhat optimistic view of the performance of the public bureaucracy when he says that the goals of development administration during the first Martial Law regime in Pakistan (1958-69) have been achieved due to a strong political leadership. See Talukdar Maniruzzaman, "Development Administration in Pakistan", *Public Administration*, London, Vol. 46, Summer, 1968. Similarly President Ayub Khan of Pakistan attributed the achievement of the targets of the Second Five Year Plan (1960-65) to what he calls, 'a stable political climate'. See Field Mohammad Ayub Khan, "Pakistan's Economic Progress", *International Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 1, January, 1967.

CORRIGENDA

Page	Paragraph	Line	Ward	Incorrect	Read
39	1	5	2	wll	well
41	2	9	5	represention	representation
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